



Israel Turgeman

“We are so lucky in Dimona to be working with the Network of Independent UJC Communities as our Partnership 2000 (P2K) community. The Lunch and Learn program that I direct, which is supported by the Partnership, keeps children off the street and gives them incredible emotional, social and educational support.”



Israel Turgeman, 29, is a true social activist. Growing up among six brothers and sisters in the southern development town of Dimona, he was always helping people in the community. While in high school he traveled to Beersheva to help new immigrants from Ethiopia acclimate to their new life in Israel.

As a soldier in the elite Paratroopers unit, Israel was in the *Hesder* Yeshiva program, which combines Jewish studies with military service. During this time, he received his BA in Jewish education.

When he married Livnat, a social worker, at the age of 25, they decided to move to Rehovot to help the Ethiopian and Yemenite communities. "The work was very satisfying, but we felt that we were needed more in a place like Dimona, where there are many socio-economic problems, and not enough social activists like ourselves," says Israel.

Israel is now the coordinator of the Partnership 2000 Lunch and Learn program, for children from first through sixth grade, which operates in all 14 elementary schools in Dimona. The program provides children in need with a hot lunch and afternoon enrichment and tutoring activities.

"Most kids go home at 2:30 p.m., but these kids stay at school, where we serve them lunch and then engage them in different



הודפס בבית הדפוס של הסוכנות היהודית

activities – sports, music and art, and help them advance in school," explains Israel.

Israel feels that the most important outcomes of the program are the children's growing self-confidence and newfound belief in themselves. "This program is essential," says Israel with enthusiasm. "It keeps these children from aimlessly roaming the streets in the afternoon, and shows them that they are able to succeed. When you show children that you care, they respond."

As the father of two young children, Israel sees P2K as an important component of growing a new generation of Israelis who know about, and can connect with, Jews around the world, thus strengthening the vital bond of the Jewish people.