

Supporters visit Shevet Achim, Jerusalem

2013 was a bumper year for supporters getting in touch with us to express their interest in visiting Shevet Achim in Jerusalem. It is so encouraging to learn that many of you follow the reports of Shevet Achim online and via the regular e-mail updates, and that there are an increasing number of those amongst you who want to go and witness the work in Jerusalem firsthand by meeting the Shevet Achim community there - the volunteers as well as the children, both pre- and post-surgery, and their accompanying parents.

The team at Shevet Achim, Jerusalem, is always delighted to welcome visitors and supporters, so please contact us to enquire about arranging a visit if you are intending to go to Jerusalem.

One dedicated supporter, Jessica Thurley, and her parents took a group with them last year to meet the Shevet Achim community. Jessica takes up the story ...

In November I had the amazing opportunity to visit Shevet Achim in Jerusalem. As our Church supports Shevet Achim on a regular basis, and I raise money with my craft stall, I was very excited to go with my parents and a tour group they were leading to see the children and volunteers there.

I was delighted to meet the founder, Jonathan Miles, who gave us a short explanation about how Shevet Achim started; we also heard about the current visa situation and he introduced the children there.

I went over with a volunteer to say 'hello' to 13-year old Dalya from Northern Iraq, who had just arrived a few days before. She was so sweet and friendly! Her Great Aunt, Habiba, had come with her and was also so chatty and kind! Just being there with the children, their parents and the volunteers was a wonderful experience - the feeling of unity and family, that we are all in this together. Whether we're raising money, helping out in Israel or going to the hospital for surgery, each one is part of God's amazing plan of healing.



Jessica with volunteers and children



Jessica Thurley (above left) with Dalya

We also visited the Wolfson Medical Center in Holon, where many children go with the help of Shevet Achim to get heart surgery. We gave out soft toys - collected through the generosity of our community in the UK. The volunteers guiding us round were brilliant young people, Jesse, Merissa & Lina. We asked questions, learned more and had a great experience. I was given the privilege of visiting the ICU with Lina, and I met a sweet four-year-old girl called Halla. She was there with her dad, from Gaza. He was also very friendly and knew a little English.



Jessica visiting Halla in the ICU

So, for me, the whole trip to Israel with my parents was made even more special by the enormous hospitality we received at Shevet Achim and at the Wolfson Medical Center. I have many treasured memories from my time there. Thank you so much for all you are doing out there in Israel and The Middle East - it is an incredible work, may God bless you all!

Shevet Achim UK would like to extend its heartfelt appreciation to all its supporters, both old and new, who have given so very generously during the continuing period of austerity measures here in the United Kingdom. Despite such difficulties, there has been a significant increase in the number of one-off donations received since 1 April, the beginning of the charity's financial year. Shevet Achim UK is therefore pleased to report that its total income to 31 December 2013 reached £33,026. This sum actually surpasses the grand total for the whole of the previous financial year, and for this we are extremely grateful. Added to this, gifts received through monthly direct debits have remained constant, with new donors contacting us at around the same time as some longstanding donors have decreased or terminated their donations.

Every gift is highly valued by both the team at Shevet Achim UK and the community at Shevet Achim, Jerusalem, as it makes possible the continuing work of saving lives, one heart at a time. Shevet Achim UK has been delighted to be able to send £25,500 for this amazing work since 1 April last year, with a further amount in the pipeline. Again, our grateful appreciation for each and every gift so generously given.

Shevet at the Summit Appeal

Part of the income received in the period to 31 December last year (mentioned in the above item) was the sum of nearly £2,900 raised in sponsorship by the team of seven who 'conquered' Ben Nevis in August. And what a conquest it was! Unrelenting mist and rain did not exactly enhance the climbing conditions for the seven, who started off at the foot of Ben Nevis, eager (and in a few cases just a little anxious!!) to reach the summit. Only 4,409 feet to go!!



Encouraged by a great team spirit and a verse read that morning - Psalm 73:26 'My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever' - the Shevet at the Summit team realised their goal in 4½ hours. Most of the team would have completed the climb in much less time, but unity of purpose was paramount, and everyone reached the summit at the same time, jubilant and relieved, as evidenced in the photograph (left) taken by another climber shortly after the seven achieved their goal, wet-through, legs and backs aching, but

ecstatic nevertheless! As the seven wearily held up high their Shevet Achim UK balloons in the buffeting wind, the relief was palpable - prayers had been answered and much-needed funds had been raised to help save precious lives.

On the way back down, the mist cleared at times to reveal some magnificent panoramic views of the majestic Scottish Highlands. It was not an easy descent, but a dinner shared together later was an opportunity to celebrate the conquering of Ben Nevis for the sake of the children helped to a better future by Shevet Achim.



Shevet Achim UK DVD - 'Unspoken Love'

Readers of Shevet Achim UK News will be familiar with the fact that the charity has commissioned a DVD to be produced, featuring the work of Shevet Achim in Jerusalem, and filmed at its building there and also at the Wolfson Medical Center, Tel-Aviv, where most of the children assisted by Shevet Achim are treated.

Shevet Achim UK is now delighted to report that the DVD, 'Unspoken Love' is now in the final stages of production, and should be available in the very near future. The master DVD has now been finished, and will proceed to the next stage - duplication and packaging - very shortly. This is obviously a very significant venture for the charity, and we do hope that the film and narrative about Shevet Achim will help to give a greater depth of understanding about the following aspects of its work and vision:

- the work of Shevet Achim - including how and why it all started
- the essential role of the partnering cardiac units
- the complexities of some of the heart defects encountered and treated
- the life and contribution of the volunteer community in Jerusalem
- the role of Shevet Achim UK - how and why the charity came into being

You will also meet some of the children assisted by Shevet Achim - one of these is little Rhemas from Gaza, pictured right. Whilst filming, her beautiful smile never left her lips. She captivated all those in the ICU at the time - cameraman, Shevet Achim volunteers, consultants and nursing staff! Everyone was truly smitten!!



All supporters on our mailing list will be entitled to a complimentary copy of the 'Unspoken Love' DVD on request once it becomes available by contacting 01633 401201 or by e-mailing uk@shevet.org. It is anticipated that the DVD will be ready by the third week of February. Progress will be announced on our webpage, www.shevet.org/uk.

Shevet Achim Calendars



Shevet Achim in Jerusalem has sent us some 12-month calendars for 2014, and a complimentary copy is enclosed with this newsletter for all those supporters on our database. (Due to the unpredictability of international mail, the calendars arrived in the UK later than intended.) The theme of the calendar is taken from 1 Peter 2:5, 'You yourselves like living stones are being built up into a spiritual house ...', and it has been compiled by the staff in Jerusalem. Should you wish to order further copies, please contact Sally Morton on 01633 401201 or at uk@shevet.org. A small donation will be welcomed for additional copies ordered to cover

the cost of printing and postage; this amount will be passed on to Shevet Achim, Jerusalem.

Shevet Achim, Jerusalem - End of Year Appeal



Readers may be familiar with the annual End of Year Appeal launched from Shevet Achim in Jerusalem to cover any costs due to the partnering medical hospitals with which Shevet Achim works closely, and without whose help Shevet Achim would not exist.

The target of last month's campaign amounted to US \$76,825. At first glance, the figures looked extremely challenging, to say the least! However, as of early this month - barely a couple of weeks after the launch of the appeal - every outstanding bill has been met. We give thanks for this provision, and we are deeply grateful to all those supporters in the United Kingdom who, together with donors from other countries, rallied to make it possible for Shevet Achim in Jerusalem to start 2014 with a clean slate as far as bills are concerned - completely debt-free!!!

Spreading the News

Shevet Achim UK always welcomes the opportunity to speak to groups throughout the British Isles about the unique work of Shevet Achim in repairing hearts and uniting brothers for life in The Middle East - one heart at a time. If your group would be interested in finding out more about how this Jerusalem-based community of volunteers is changing lives, please contact Sally Morton, UK Co-ordinator at uk@shevet.org or call 01633 401201, to arrange for a speaker to visit and share about this unique work. If you are based in the South-West and would like a speaker to attend a meeting, please contact Khalil Estaytieh at khalil@shevet.org.

Diary : January - July 2014

- 25 January : Trustees Meeting, Shrewsbury
- 7 - 8 March : Stall and display at ICEJ Conference, Billingie
- 9 March : Presentation and speaking engagement : Albany Park Baptist Church, Bexley
- 9 July : Presentation and speaking engagement : Mount Pleasant Baptist Church Wednesday Group Meeting, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan

Fuller information and updates regarding future engagements and meetings will be posted on the Shevet Achim UK webpage, www.shevet.org/uk.



Trustees

Trustees of Shevet Achim

Pastor Clive Owen (Chairman), Rev. Peter James, Mr Andy Morton (Treasurer)

Honorary Trustee: Mr Richard Purcell

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