

Dear Seymour and Edna,

Please read the following letter from Sylvia, an expert in early childhood education, who has been volunteering at the Prima Kings Hotel in Jerusalem.

In others emails I will be attaching photos of children playing with toys purchased with the funds made available by the Edna Toy Fund.

Much love

Barry

Shalom,

On behalf of the families who were evacuated to the Prima Kings hotel from Shlomi (a town on the Lebanese border), I would like to thank Edna and Seymour Eisenberg for their generous contribution. Shortly after the outbreak of the war in October 2023, entire communities from Northern towns and villages were evacuated to hotels in the center of the country. An ultra-Orthodox community living in Shlomi arrived *en masse* to the Prima Kings hotel in Jerusalem. These families are, on the large, the periphery of the periphery: They are both culturally and geographically distanced from the rest of the country.

Many have large families, are economically disadvantaged and are accustomed to sending their older children to residential yeshivas to live and study, returning home only on shabbat. The evacuation from the North and the move to a hotel posed multiple challenges, to which they have adjusted admirably – in part due to their communal resilience and mutual assistance, and in part to contributions such as the one received through you.

I have been working with the children, teachers, and parents of the Shlomi families at the Prima Kings hotel over the past three months. At first, I helped set up a Child Space afternoon program for children up to the age of 8. This program was open to all. The room provided a quiet, playful setting with supportive volunteers who joined the children in their play, connected to them and provided a critical daily break for their parents.

We used part of the contribution to equip the Child Space with a puppet theatre, hand puppets and other toys and puzzles.

In January I turned my efforts to assisting the *ad hoc* preschools that were set up in the hotel to care for children aged 3-6 during the morning hours. The teaching staff are veteran teachers from Shlomi who were evacuated together with their families and the whole community to the hotel. Twice each week I arrive at the hotel during preschool hours. I use this time to observe the children, provide professional supervision to the teachers and offer parenting advice to the mothers.

The generous contribution was used to purchase a large wooden construction set for the children. This amazing building set is shared by the two preschools and invites the children to focus and play out their emotions around the concept of “home”: Recalling details of the homes they (temporarily!) left behind in Shlomi, constructing imaginary homes for themselves and their dolls, pretending and working through emotions accompanying this period of instability – and envisioning the day when they will once again live in their homes in Shlomi.

One of the attached photographs shows a bulletin board with pictures drawn by the children of things they miss from their home in Shlomi: their beds, their scooters, their toys. I believe that the children’s

play with the construction set was a factor in prompting this important conversation between the teachers and the children.

The donation also allowed me to provide fun and educational materials and games for the preschools: developmental puzzles, pretend-play props and costumes, and recently – finger puppets to act out the story of Purim.

Thank you once again,
Sylvia