

Jewish Federation of Ocean County IMPACT

YOU Made an Impact through the Jewish Federation of Ocean County – Kfar Silver

135 Students. One Triumphant Night. Kfar Silver’s Graduating Cohort of 2026

JFOC has supported Kfar Silver since 2019 helping this graduating class through COVID, students that fled Ukraine, and October 7.



Amos Gofer, Kfar Silver Youth Village CEO, speaks to students. Image credit: Ori Averbuch

June 19, 2026

The stage was packed, the music was loud, and 135 students at World ORT Kadima Mada’s Kfar Silver Youth Village in Ashkelon walked across the stage with their heads held high. This was no ordinary graduation. It was a celebration earned the hard way, and everyone in the room knew it.

For a cohort which had persevered through the COVID pandemic, no one imagined anything worse happening. And then came October 7. Kfar Silver is located just eight miles from Gaza, and these students were amid the chaos as tragedy unfolded on that fateful day and all the days after. They survived repeated attacks by Hamas, Iran, and Hezbollah and kept showing up. And on graduation night, that persistence and determination looked like joy.

Kfar Silver is home to more than 1,000 students, a quarter of them boarders, including new immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union, and students who have arrived since the war in Ukraine began. For many, Kfar Silver is more than a school. It is a home, with the counseling and tutoring that helps them feel secure enough to thrive.

Amos Gofer, CEO of Kfar Silver Youth

Village, summed it up best during the graduation ceremony. “Leonard Cohen wrote, ‘There is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in,’” he said. “You became the great light that broke through the cracks. Despite everything, you built meaningful, joyful, and formative experiences.”

And what a celebration it was. Students performed sketches that had the room laughing, took the stage for presentations they had clearly poured themselves into, and danced, both formal and informal, late into the evening. The annual Na’ale prom dance brought out everyone’s best outfits, with students dressed to the nines and dancing like they meant it.

The celebration drew local dignitaries eager to share in the moment, including the head of the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council, Itamar Revivo; head of the Lakhish Regional Council, Shlomo Boaz; and Chairman of the Kfar Silver Board, Benny Sela.

“Today marks the conclusion of an important chapter and the beginning of a new and exciting journey,” said Ronit Hasin, who oversees pedagogical programming. “At World ORT Kadima Mada, we place great importance on nurturing the next generation. This year alone, we invested close to five million shekels in Kfar Silver, including scholarships for graduates, international delegation opportunities, and initiatives connecting students to the global community of World ORT.”

Dear graduates, we are proud of you,” she added. “Go forward with confidence, and may you achieve great success in all that lies ahead.”

Both Gofer and Hasin paid tribute to the team that makes it all possible: Kfar Sil-



Students performed sketches and gave presentations at the ceremony. Image credit: Ori Averbuch

ver’s educators, counselors, therapists, and the operations and security staff who keep the Village running.

Kfar Silver was bought by World ORT in 2016 and today includes a high school,

junior high school, boarding school, and agricultural farm. Generous donors fund the projects and emergency support for security, mental health, and stress-relieving programming that make nights like this one possible.



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Jewish Federation of Ocean County IMPACT

YOU Made an Impact through the Jewish Federation of Ocean County – Shutaf, Lev Otef and Crossroads

At the June board meeting JFOC's board approved additional Israel grants to Shutaf, Lev Otef, and Crossroads. Here is a report from Shutaf.

Shutaf Inclusion Programs in Jerusalem and Camp Shutaf's Inclusive Junior Counselor Track – More than a Summer Job

Every summer, Camp Shutaf's impact extends far beyond our campers. Twelve teens and young adults – with and without disabilities – join our Junior Counselor (JC) program after completing a five-month leadership training course. By the time camp begins, they are prepared to take on real responsibilities as valued members of our staff.

Some of the JCs choose to work only part of the camp day so they can also participate with their camper group – spending time with friends, enjoying activities, and experiencing camp from both perspectives. For many, this balance provides a meaningful first step into the world of employment while allowing them to continue enjoying the camp experience they have always loved. It is an ideal introduction to work in a supportive, mentored environment.

Junior Counselors take on roles that reflect their individual strengths. Some work directly with camper groups, while others help serve meals, support activity specialists, or assist with the countless behind-the-scenes tasks that keep camp running smoothly. Throughout the summer, they receive ongoing mentorship, build lasting friendships, and grow together as a team.

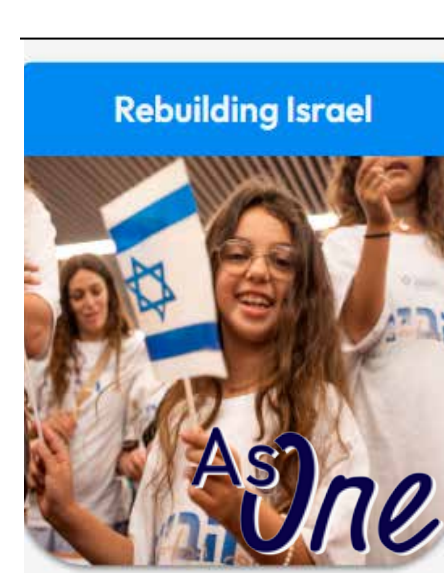
At Shutaf, we don't lower expectations because a teen has a disability. Instead,

we provide the support and guidance that enables every young person to succeed and contribute in meaningful ways.

Like every other staff member, Junior Counselors earn a real hourly wage. Each summer, parents tell us how emotional it is to see their child receive that first paycheck. Yet for these families, it represents far more than a paycheck. It is a defining moment – a tangible affirmation that someone believed in their child, entrusted them with real responsibility, and provided the opportunity and support to succeed.

The impact on the teens is profound. They gain confidence by doing meaningful work, develop a strong sense of responsibility, and become role models for younger campers. In return, they earn the respect of campers, fellow staff members, and their peers while taking important steps toward greater independence and future employment.

We are deeply grateful to the Jewish Federation of Ocean County for your partnership. Together, we are creating life-changing opportunities for teens and young adults with disabilities to build the skills, confidence, and independence that will serve them long after summer ends. Because when we believe in young people, they begin to believe in themselves.



Ah Yes, We Remember it Well

Do you have historical recollections or reflections from fifty or more years ago about the Jewish Federation of Ocean County or the Jewish Community that you want to share as we approach JFOC's 50th anniversary? Send them to: jewishocean@gmail.com. Submissions will be reviewed for possible publication by the Jewish Journal Editorial Committee.

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