

K'Far Yeladim David, Jerusalem Children's Village of Jerusalem

It wasn't easy finding a one day service project in Israel that sounded worthwhile for our whole family. After months of searching, we found just the thing. We found an organization that helps girls at risk in Jerusalem. There are about 16 girls who live in the facility, and another 200 or so who visit after school for meals, homework help, activities, therapy, and other services. Their parents are often either miserably poor or addicted, and they can receive services there too. The organization is called K'Far Yeladim David, and is funded in part through the department of social services and in part through private donations.

On Sunday, June 27th, 2010, the day before Alex's bat Mitzvah, we arrived at K'Far Yeladim around noon. First, the founder and his wife, who is the communications director, gave us a briefing on the organization's history and mission, and then took us on a tour of the facility. After a homecooked meal, we went to meet the girls—about 50 of them were there that afternoon, aged 7 to 15, plus a number of counselors and staff.

We brought with us materials to make dolls—presewed basic bodies, fabric glue, cloth for clothing, yarn for hair, ribbons, and lots of stuffing. In steps, we showed the girls how to stuff the doll bodies, glue them shut, and design and create clothing, hair and accessories. We had 9 volunteers plus their staff running around like mad, trying to help each girl. At first, they only asked their counselors, but as the afternoon wore on, the girls began to approach the Americans and attempt to communicate with us, ask us for help, try to learn more about us. At the end of 3 hours, the girls were fighting for hugs, dancing around Alex, and singing to her. Each girl went home (or back to her dorm room) with her own new doll she had made herself, and the pride that showed in the girls' eyes was quite powerful.

Alex videotaped parts of the day and edited the videotape to create a memory of the day. She plans to show it at her "party" here in the US, and may use the opportunity to match up her friends with girls at K'Far Yeladim and make something for them.

--Kohl Family