

the children, many of whom live in environments that are troubled. We were deeply impressed and gratified that we are making a contribution to this special place.



analyzing women's technology training processes in a military context.

Now in her final year of doctoral studies, Adit Naor has been researching microorganisms that live in high salt environments that are able to exchange their genetic material with other species.

Forty-year-old Orit Zach Schwartz, mother of four, is a physician and Ph.D. student. She is involved in participatory action research on the experience of childbirth. "My hope is to broaden the space, in medical discourse and practice, for women's needs, both physical and emotional, concerning childbirth.

Kibbutz-born Reut Shavit is a Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Her research examines the role of toxin-antitoxin systems in bacteria that cause disease in cucurbit plants.

All recipients expressed their deep gratitude and appreciation for NA'AMAT's financial help and encouragement.

Expand Labor Protections for Home Care Workers!

by MARCIA J. WEISS

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) was passed in 1938 to set standards for minimum wage, overtime, record keeping and youth employment. The Act requires employers to compensate covered nonexempt workers at not less than \$7.25 per hour and to pay "time and one-half" for work over 40 hours a week.

However, due to the so-called "companionship services exemption" under the FLSA, home care workers, such as domestics, housekeepers, child care providers and caregivers for the disabled and elderly were not included in the minimum wage scale. In 1974, Congress expanded coverage to include "domestic service" workers performing services in a private home. At the same time, the 1974 amendments created a limited exemption for "companionship services" such as casual babysitters and companions for the aged and infirm as well as for live-in domestic workers.

The in-home care industry has undergone a vast transformation since the regulations became effective. While there has been a growing demand for long-term, in-home care, these workers remain among the lowest paid, averaging \$9.70 per hour, and some earn less than minimum wage. Nearly 40 percent of the home care workers, who are mostly women, rely on Medicaid or food stamps.

The Obama administration announced in September 2013 that it will extend minimum wage and overtime protections to direct care workers effective in January 2015. This will ensure that

nearly two million workers, such as home health care aides, personal care aides and certified nursing assistants, will have the same basic protections already provided to most U.S. workers.

Third-party employers, such as home care staffing agencies, will no longer be able to assert the exemption for employees who provide companionship services. The scope of the term "companionship services" will be narrowed and limited to "fellowship and protection" services. Incidental care services, such as meal preparation, driving, grooming, and bathing will be limited to 20 percent of total hours worked per week in order for the exemption to be claimed.

Opponents of the proposed rule argued that these changes will drive up the cost of home care, potentially forcing families to institutionalize seniors, but those arguments apparently have been unsuccessful.

Activists are campaigning for increased labor protections for domestic workers in the form of Domestic Workers Bill of Rights legislation. If enacted, such a law would guarantee the following: overtime pay at one-and-one-half for more than forty hours or forty-four hours for in-home service; a day of rest of twenty-four hours every seven days (or overtime pay if that day is worked); three paid days of rest each year after one year of service to the same employer; and protection under the state's human rights law for a cause of action if the employee suffers sexual or racial harassment. California is the most recent

state to pass a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. New York and Hawaii have already passed versions of the law.

TAKE ACTION! If your state has not already passed similar protections for workers such as housekeepers, child care providers and caregivers for the disabled and elderly, contact your state legislator and urge the passage of a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in your state.

Marcia J. Weiss, J.D., is the NA'AMAT USA advocacy chair and national vice president for Program and Education.

TAKE ACTION!