

Local campaigns, national support raise critical funds for day care centers

During NA'AMAT's centennial celebration in Toronto in May, Executive Director Kim Marks asked the three daughters of the late Phyllis Sutker if they could raise \$25,000 to support the Ti-



NA'AMAT USA President Susan Miller and Beth Krom of Bat Galim chapter in Orange County, California.

berias day care center named in her honor. The sisters and their daughters decided to launch an online fundraising campaign on Sept. 5, Phyllis Sutker's birthday. By the end of the year, they had raised \$63,270 from friends, family and NA'AMAT members.

"It was a remarkable tribute to our mother, who was highly respected as an international leader of NA'AMAT," said her daughter Edie Sue Sutker. Granddaughter Elana Dermer added that she had the opportunity to visit the day care center. "Raising funds to strengthen a place so closely connected to my grandmother's legacy made the experience especially gratifying," she said. The men in the family also stepped up to raise money, including Phyllis's son, Allen Sutker, as well as grandsons and nephews.

The funds will be used to cover infrastructure improvements such as new doors and floors at the day care center, which serves 78 infants and toddlers. A portion of the money raised will go toward a safe room for the facility.

Soon after the Toronto gathering, National President Susan Miller visited the NA'AMAT Bat Galim chapter in Orange

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Scholarships advance women's careers, Israeli society

In 2023, Dr. Idit Tessler was a Ph.D. candidate at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, studying a congenital heart valve defect. She was one of eight doctoral candidates to receive a NA'AMAT research grant that year, four in science and four in gender studies. With NA'AMAT's support, Tessler's doctoral research ultimately led to an international collaboration that discovered a genetic cause for the defect.

Each year, NA'AMAT awards about

200 scholarships for students pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees, in addition to the research grants. The Scholarship Fund was established more than 40 years ago, and began awarding doctoral grants about 10 years ago.

"The Scholarship Fund is one of our most meaningful flagship programs," said Shirli Shavit, director of NA'AMAT's International Department and the Scholarship Fund. "Through the years we have helped thousands of young talented women to achieve higher education and we have supported multiple Ph.D. students in their inspiring and meaningful research."

In July 2025, NA'AMAT awarded three

scholarships to Ph.D. candidates in gender studies and honorary research grants to Dr. Shoshan Haran, who was kidnapped with her family on Oct. 7, and Tair Plotnik, a doctoral student in Atmospheric Sciences at Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Plotnik represented the 18 female field surveillance soldiers and operations room sergeants who were murdered at the Command Center at Nahal Oz. They were among those who reported unusual Hamas activity at the Gaza border months before the attack; their warnings were disregarded by intelligence officials.

At the ceremony, NA'AMAT Israel

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WZO participants visit Kanot Youth Village (above, at right) in October.



Members attend WZO Congress, leadership seminar

In late October, 40 NA'AMAT members from the U.S., Argentina, Belgium, Canada and Mexico arrived in Israel to tour NA'AMAT facilities and attend the 39th World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem along with delegates from 43 countries. The group visited the new middle school at NA'AMAT's Kanot Youth Village; Sderot, where the police station was destroyed during the terrorist attack on Oct. 7, 2023; Meshanot, NA'AMAT's Women's Empowerment Center; Kibbutz Nir Oz, site of a brutal massacre; and the Nova Music Festival memorial site.

In December a group of leaders from the U.S. and Canada toured the south of Israel and Jerusalem. In addition to visiting the sites of the Sderot police station and the Nova festival, they were inspired by their visits to the Ze'elon Daycare Center in Sderot, and the Old City, Temple Mount, the Western Wall and Meshanot in Jerusalem.



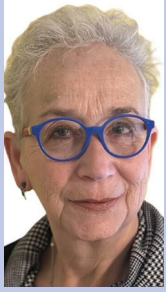
U.S. and Canadian members tour Sderot (above) and Jerusalem (below) in December as part of their leadership seminar.



Meshanot, the NA'AMAT Center for Gender Equality, opened on April 26, 2022. The center tells the story of the NA'AMAT movement's struggle for equality.



Message from the President



By Susan Miller

NA'AMAT USA leaders from across the country came together in Israel for our December Leadership Seminar—a powerful week of learning, connection and renewed purpose. For many participants, it was not only a chance to deepen their understanding of NA'AMAT's work on the ground, but also a reminder of why our mission matters so profoundly now.

Sheri Schoenwald shared that the seminar offered “a front row seat to the heart of NA'AMAT.” She said that visiting day care centers and youth villages reaffirmed that every size contribution creates ripples that change lives. “Seeing the impact firsthand makes me want to work even harder. It reminded me why NA'AMAT isn't just an organization—it's a lifeline.”

Robyn-Lee Rabin spoke about the sense of unity she felt among the participants. “We came from different cities, different backgrounds and different leadership roles,” she said, “but we found common ground in our commitment to Israel's families and women.” She was especially moved by the conversations with local NA'AMAT staff, many of whom have been navigating extraordinary challenges over the last year. “Their resilience is contagious,” she noted. “It inspired me to think more boldly about what we can accomplish back home.”

For Arlene Weissman, the seminar was a moment of both reflection and vision. She emphasized how valuable it was to learn alongside fellow leaders and gain tools for strengthening chap-

ters. “I left with pages of ideas,” she said, “but more importantly, I left feeling connected—to Israel, to our members, and to the future of NA'AMAT.” Arlene also highlighted how meaningful it was to meet beneficiaries of NA'AMAT's scholarship programs, whose stories she described as “both heartbreaking and hopeful.”

These impressions remind us of the importance of global sisterhood—something we will be celebrating in a very special way on International Women's Day, March 8. This year's theme, centered on empowerment and opportunity, aligns beautifully with our mission. NA'AMAT has always believed that when we invest in women, we invest in stronger families and communities. International Women's Day gives us the chance to amplify that message, honor women's achievements and reaffirm our commitment to gender equity in Israel and beyond.

In that spirit, this spring, NA'AMAT USA and NA'AMAT Canada will cohost a special event that will bring our North American and Israeli work into focus. It will celebrate the power of women's leadership, learning and connection across borders. We will share the event's details at naamat.org when they become available. In the meantime, please check out our FY2025 Annual Report at <https://naamat.org/blog/naamat-usa-annual-report-2025/>.

Our December leadership seminar reminded us that leadership is not just about planning and decision-making; it's about connection, vision and heart. As we carry these lessons into the new year, I look forward to continuing this important work together—with strength, clarity and optimism.

Scholarships

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President Hagit Pe'er said the event was dedicated to “the young, brave and intelligent women who spoke out loudly and clearly - but no one listened... who remained on duty until their last breath, until their voices fell silent.”

Haran spoke of being held hostage, along with other family members. Her daughter and grandchildren were released after 50 days. Her husband, sister and brother-in-law were murdered. Haran is an agricultural expert and the founder of Fair Planet, an organization that supports impoverished farmers in Africa.

Today, Tessler is doing a residency at Sheba Medical Center, specializing in Otorhinolaryngology (diseases of the ear, nose and throat) and Head & Neck Surgery. After completing her residency next year, she hopes to get a fellowship in the



Dr. Idit Tessler

U.S. and bring new knowledge and skills back to Israel. Recently, she was part of an Israeli delegation to an international conference in Japan with Nobel Prize laureates from around the world.

“The NA'AMAT grant helped support the international presentation of my Ph.D. findings,” she said.

Among her many accomplishments

was helping to launch LeMa'anam (“For Their Sake”), a volunteer-driven initiative providing free, high-quality medical care to Holocaust survivors. In 2022, when war broke out in Ukraine, LeMa'anam helped mobilize a team of healthcare professionals to treat Ukrainian refugees in Moldova.

Tessler is also active in the Briah Foundation, which seeks to improve Israel's healthcare system for women. On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, she was invited to the Israeli presidential residence to help launch a program to improve healthcare treatment for sexual assault survivors.

“Knowing that there is an organization like NA'AMAT that supports women in research, that promotes women, helps to inspire me when things get difficult,” she said.

To donate to NA'AMAT's Scholarship Fund, please visit <https://naamat.org/education/scholarships>.

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Local campaigns

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County, California. She challenged the group's leaders to raise \$25,000 to address pressing needs at the day care center in Sderot, close to the Gaza border. The relatively new club, comprising women in their 50s to 70s, had held successful programs and events, but had never conducted an active fundraising campaign.

"There was a fair amount of skepticism," said Beth Krom, one of the chapter's founders and a member of the leadership team. "Left to our own devices, we'd probably have been more comfortable with \$10,000." Nevertheless, they agreed to try. They got a boost from Krom's mother, Elaine Weinstein, whose own mother, Anna Chase, had been active in Pioneer Women (now NA'AMAT). Weinstein donated \$5,000 as a matching grant. "Thanks to some very generous end-of-year donors, Bat Galim exceeded its \$25,000 goal," Krom said.

Bat Galim launched about two years ago after NA'AMAT's former executive director Susan Seely invited a group of women to a NA'AMAT event in Orange County. Krom and others had family connections to Pioneer Women; when they realized that NA'AMAT is the same organization, they decided to form a new group.

The NA'AMAT national office supported both fundraising campaigns by designing and managing websites using a

dedicated software platform, explained Executive Director Kim Marks. "We invested in technology that allows us to take online donations, track them and customize fundraising landing pages. Digital marketing is where the new generations of donors are."

Marks added that the national office is available to help volunteers achieve goals they couldn't reach without the support of the professional staff and new technology. "Since 1921 NA'AMAT Israel has consistently adapted to the needs on the ground. So in the U.S. we are adapting to what the next generations of American Jewish women need and want."

NA'AMAT's national staff worked closely with the organizers of the Phyllis Sutker Tiberias campaign to produce a customized website. "They invited us to provide feedback on the look and functionality, and made useful suggestions, such as appealing to donors on an emotional level," said Jennifer McGowan-Tomke, Phyllis Sutker's granddaughter.

"We originally thought we would have to spend time technically developing a website or paying someone to do it. They provided an out-of-the-box, professional-looking solution, which made it very easy to conduct the campaign to our con-



Phyllis Sutker visits a NA'AMAT day care center in the 1980s.

tacts," McGowan-Tomke added.

Referring to Bat Galim's Sderot campaign, Krom said, "Its success reflected the commitment and creativity of our group." Krom, who was the mayor of Irvine, California, has a lot of fundraising experience. Nevertheless, she said she appreciated the assistance from the national staff. "Whenever we asked for something, they helped us."

The two campaigns were the first to use the new technology. Marks said that the organization learned that when groups set their goals high and staff supports them, they are not just hitting those goals, they're exceeding them." Added Krom, "This is a testament to what is possible when you match a meaningful goal and an urgent need with a story that inspires donors to make a difference through NA'AMAT."