

# IMPACT

SUMMER 2018



AMERICAN ASSOCIATES  
Ben-Gurion University  
of the Negev

*From the desert for the world...*

## WORKING TO KEEP US SAFE IN A SMART WORLD

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SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH:  
BREAKING BORDERS

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INSPIRING SOCIAL WORKERS  
FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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FORGING A UNIVERSITY PATH  
FOR BEDOUIN WOMEN

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A COMMUNITY RESTAURANT  
THAT SERVES THE SOUL



# RESEARCH FOR TOMORROW— AND RIGHT NOW

BY **TONI YOUNG** AABGU PRESIDENT



Researchers in many disciplines tell us that major discoveries often emerge over the course of time. Of course they're right in asking the public—and those who fund research—to support basic science that does not promise immediate outcomes. But what I treasure about BGU is the dedication of so many faculty members and diverse departments to advancing both scientific and practical knowledge in order to give people better lives in the near future.

This issue's stories clearly demonstrate this dual orientation. The University's cyber security specialists pursue broad academic research to safeguard us in an increasingly scary digital universe. At the same time, many of the faculty members also work—along with their students—in the Cyber@BGU labs. This umbrella enterprise is housed at the Advanced Technologies Park, where the “white hat” hackers (the good guys) partner directly with industry to counter urgent threats.

In BGU's social work department, a rich array of academic research is underway to improve professional knowledge and practice. But both teachers and learners aim to put this knowledge to immediate use through helping the Negev's underserved minorities, immigrants and refugees.

You'll read about an example of the department's success in identifying and meeting unmet needs—Beer-Sova—a “soup kitchen” that has evolved to become a valued restaurant and community resource.

In this issue, you'll also discover BGU's newly created School of Public Health, the most comprehensive, multidisciplinary school in Israel devoted to the local community and, simultaneously, the world at large.

And I know you'll enjoy meeting Dr. Sarah Abu-Kaf, the Negev's first clinical psychologist from the Bedouin community, who was educated at BGU. Today she exemplifies the University's “giving back” spirit and its twin commitment to both the long range and the immediate—playing a key role in helping BGU's Bedouin students adjust to college life and accomplishing significant research on how young people cope with stress and cultural shift.

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# DEVELOPING ISRAEL'S FINAL FRONTIER—THE NEGEV

BY **GARY ROSENBLATT** NEW YORK JEWISH WEEK EDITOR AND PUBLISHER, reprinted with permission

**DOUG SESERMAN** came to New York as CEO of American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev last fall. After a successful business career in marketing for Quaker Oats and cable television, the Denver native took on a new challenge as he was turning 40, heading up the professional leadership of the Denver Jewish federation, a position he held for 15 years.

During a recent interview in his Midtown office, Seserman said his connection to Israel is most profoundly felt through the Negev. So the opportunity to help realize David Ben-Gurion's vision for the region by working with the university named for Israel's founding prime minister seemed like an ideal choice.

## What was it about the Negev desert that appealed to you?

I'm from Colorado so I guess I have that pioneering spirit the Negev is all about. I relate to the sense of inspiration and awe from the land, as well as the focus on the new rather than the old. The Negev is 60 percent of Israel's land mass, yet home to less than 10 percent

of the population. Much of it is still undeveloped. I see the Negev as the new frontier for 21st-century Zionism.

People are attracted to the Negev for the future it represents. Of course, good jobs and a nice environment to raise families are important. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, with its main campus in Beer-Sheva, plays a key role. What Stanford University has meant to the development of Silicon Valley, Ben-Gurion University means for the development of the Negev, which some refer to today as "Silicon Wadi".

BGU has become an entrepreneurial high-tech oasis of innovation in the desert. Beer-Sheva is the cyber capital of Israel, and BGU is the engine that makes it happen with its leading research and academic departments. It's also a key contributor of culture and arts to the community.

## In raising awareness about the region and raising funds for the University, how do you approach the American Jewish community?

Our key message is combining the great work of the University with the strategic importance of developing the Negev.

Pursuing Ben-Gurion's dream to develop the Negev is above the political fray when it comes to supporting Israel. The Negev was part of ancient Israel. It is uncontested land and will be part of any future plan for Israel.

Also, for those under 40, who may not be driven by

a historical obligation to Israel, we emphasize with pride Israel's

*Continued on page 6*

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**"The Negev was part of ancient Israel. It is uncontested land and will be part of any future plan for Israel."**

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— DOUG SESERMAN

**Top Photo:** Doug Seserman, at the site of David and Paula Ben-Gurion's graves overlooking the Zin Canyon, explains Ben-Gurion's vision to a group of American journalists.





## “BETSY ROSS OF ISRAEL” FLAG DONATED TO THE BEN-GURION ARCHIVES

**IN HONOR** of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, AABGU has donated an Israeli flag created by Rebecca Affachiner, often called the “Betsy Ross of Israel,” to the Ben-Gurion Archives on BGU’s Sede Boqer Campus.

Rebecca Affachiner made *aliyah* in the 1930s. In May 1948, when an American consular official urged her to leave Jerusalem immediately due to the expected outbreak of hostilities, Affachiner refused.

“I cannot abandon my sisters and brothers,” she told the newspaper *Ma’ariv*. “I have waited my entire lifetime to see the rebirth of a Jewish state. I do not intend to miss it.” She was confined to her apartment on Jabotinsky Street, unable to buy supplies, but she spent her time creating an Israeli flag from her bed sheets. She sewed on a

six-pointed star and colored the flag’s stripes with a blue crayon.

Late in the day on May 14, when Affachiner heard David Ben-Gurion proclaim the formation of the new State of Israel, she proudly went out to her balcony, within sight of the Egyptian forces gathered nearby, and hung her flag. She continued to fly the flag every Israel Independence Day until her death in 1966, when she entrusted the flag to her good friend and caregiver, Ezra P. Gorodesky. She made him promise he would take good care of the flag because “it was my personal way of welcoming Israel into existence.”

Gorodesky, who made *aliyah* from Philadelphia in the early 1960s, is widely known in Israel as an avid collector of books, buttons and photographs, to name a few, which he has donated to the National Library and Shenker College, among others. He preserved the flag in his small apartment for 50 years.

For the 70th anniversary of Israel, he decided it would be the appropriate time to find a permanent home for the flag. Gorodesky contacted his friend Rabbi David Geffen, who had made *aliyah* from Delaware in the 1970s, and asked for his help. Rabbi Geffen, a longtime

friend of Toni Young, president of AABGU, contacted her immediately and that new home was found.

“I am incredibly honored to be a link in this chain of Americans who created, preserved and understood the value of this flag,” says AABGU President Toni Young.

“Since the beginning, American Jews have worked side by side with Israelis in creating and sustaining the State of Israel. In its new home at BGU’s Ben-Gurion Archives, the flag will remain as a symbol of the creative passion that brought Israel into existence and the sustaining passion that helps ensure Israel’s future. Ezra has fulfilled his promise to Rebecca and enabled the flag to reach its rightful place as part of the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism.”

Affachiner was born in Nesvitzh, Poland (now Belarus) and grew up on New York’s East Side. She was the first female graduate of New York’s Jewish Theological Center in 1907, and was a teacher, administrator and charity worker. She also lived in Connecticut and Virginia before making *aliyah* in 1934 at age 50. Throughout her life, she was devoted to the welfare of Jews in Israel and around the world. ■

**Top:** The flag which Rebecca Affachiner, the “Betsy Ross of Israel,” made and first flew when David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the new state of Israel in 1948. It will now reside in the Ben-Gurion Archives at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, along with the first prime minister’s diary and other significant artifacts. Jerusalem collector Ezra Gorodesky transferred ownership of the flag to BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi in honor of Israel’s 70th anniversary.



## ZIN FELLOWS

**THE FOURTH COHORT** of AABGU's Zin Fellows Leadership Program recently spent three days in Florida learning about issues relevant to the Negev and its sustainable development.

The 18 fellows studied the region's historical significance with Dr. Paula Kabalo, director of BGU's Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism. Most fascinating for them were the agricultural triumphs being experienced in this extremely arid region, presented by Prof. Simon Barak of the French Associates Institute for Agriculture and Biotechnology of Drylands at BGU's Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research.

The cohort will meet again in November for another three-day seminar, followed by a week-long seminar in the Negev in March 2019.

The Zin Fellows Leadership Program creates a community of next-generation leaders committed to helping further the realization of David Ben-Gurion's vision for Israel's Negev region. ■



A particular highlight was a staged reading of "Sands in the Negev," a 1949 play about Negev kibbutz members fending off the Egyptian army during the War of Independence.

**SAVE THE DATE**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2018

## A UNIQUE NEGEV EXPERIENCE

Join us for a post JFNA-GA day trip  
to Beer-Sheva and Ben-Gurion  
University of the Negev

## THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL IS IN THE NEGEV.

And the future of the Negev is driven by Ben-Gurion University. Come experience it for yourself!

Departing from/returning to Tel Aviv by  
(60 minute) train. \$50 fee covers train and meals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT [VISIT@AABGU.ORG](mailto:VISIT@AABGU.ORG)

### CHAIRS

Evelyn Kenvin ■ Michele Levin ■ Toni Young



## INTERVIEW WITH DOUG SESERMAN *Continued from page 3*

contributions to modern society: helping solve world problems such as the need for clean water; advancing medical research to cure diabetes and Alzheimer's; and exploring artificial intelligence, robotics and cyber security to combat terrorism. We are an apolitical connection to the future of Israel through investing in its most important renewable resource—the best in higher education for its young people.

### What are some of the unique aspects of Ben-Gurion University?

Founded in 1969, Ben-Gurion is the only Israeli university established by a government mandate to help develop the Negev region. The financial goal is to raise \$500 million by May 2020,

in celebration of the University's 50th anniversary. The campaign is about 60 percent complete. BGU is in the midst of a major capital campaign and campus expansion.

We are the fastest growing university in Israel. We have 20,000 students—one-third of whom are pursuing advance degrees—and since it is in the desert, it is not a commuter school—rare for Israelis—but a place for students to live, thrive and create community.

There is a big emphasis on volunteer service and social action. About 6,000 undergrads volunteer in some capacity while going to school. There are also approximately 600 Bedouin students, mostly women. BGU provides them the

opportunity to advance their own culture as part of Israeli society.

### Do you believe the University's importance transcends the goals of traditional institutions of higher learning?

Yes, in the sense that the mission is not only to create a world-class university but to help fulfill David Ben-Gurion's vision of a vibrant Negev and to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship, offering a cause we all can rally around by engaging younger Jews in the school's accomplishments.

As Ben-Gurion said, "Israel will ultimately be judged not by its army but by its moral values and contribution to the world." That's what makes the University so special. ■

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW TAX LAW ON PHILANTHROPY

BY NEAL MYERBERG, ESQ. AABGU PLANNED GIVING ADVISOR

**THE NEW TAX ACT** presents opportunities for income tax savings through charitable giving in a number of ways:

### Make a Bequest in Your Will and/or Trust

A gift through your will to AABGU fully excludes the donation from federal estate taxes. Your bequest may be a specific dollar amount, a percentage of the residuary of your estate, real estate, or any other specified items of value. A bequest may be designated for a particular purpose or program at BGU.

### Reduced Itemized Deductions and the Charitable Deduction

For many individuals and couples, tax rates will be lower in 2018. However, moving into more favorable tax brackets may depend upon the amount of itemized deductions that you make use of in determining taxable income.

With SALT (state and local tax) and mortgage interest deductions capped, it may be that increasing your deductions through various types of charitable giving will have even greater economic value than charitable gifts have provided in recent years.

### Increase in the Standard Deduction

Many individuals who have traditionally made annual charitable gifts did not itemize deductions. Their contributions, as with those who itemize, were motivated by their desire to support organizations, like AABGU, which fulfill charitable missions dear to them.

Now that moving above the standard deduction amount may be good tax planning, giving more to AABGU is a way to reduce adjusted gross income (AGI). You'll pay less income tax while

contributing to the good that AABGU does for the future of Israel.

### Increase in the AGI Limits for Deducting Cash Contributions

An additional benefit under the new law is the increase from 50 to 60 percent in the percentage of AGI that can be deducted for cash gifts to charities in the year made. In 2018, this can be significant for some taxpayers. The five-year carryover remains in the law to the extent that the full amount of contributions in a particular year cannot be fully deducted.







## Fact:

Israel leads the world in cyber security, and researchers from Ben-Gurion University lead Israel.



## Cyber@BGU Has Made Beer-Sheva Israel's Cyber Security Capital

By establishing an AABGU Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA), you will receive lifetime income with fixed rates that are among the highest in the country, while helping to protect Israel's virtual borders.

Your tax-saving CGA will support Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, including researchers at its Cyber Security Research Center who are working to defend Israel and its allies from cyber attacks.

### Sample Annuity Rates

Age	65	70	75	80	85	90
Rate	6%	6.5%	7.1%	8%	9.5%	11.3%
Tax Free*	64.6%	68.3%	71.5%	74.6%	79%	81.8%

*\*In the month you use cash to establish a gift annuity, a final calculation is made determining the portion that will be paid to you tax-free.*

For more information or to request a CGA rate illustration, e-mail [plannedgiving@aabgu.org](mailto:plannedgiving@aabgu.org), call 800-962-2248 ext. 1401 or visit [www.aabgu.org/cga-request](http://www.aabgu.org/cga-request)

[WWW.AABGU.ORG](http://WWW.AABGU.ORG)

### What Types of Charitable Gifts Might Individuals Use in 2018?

Outright gifts remain the easiest way to support charities and are deducted at full value in the year made. However, the more tax-efficient way to make outright gifts (unrestricted or designated) is to use appreciated property (e.g., marketable securities) to make contributions.

#### Appreciated Stocks

Transferring appreciated stocks (long-term capital gain property) directly to

AABGU generates not only a full-value charitable deduction, but also full avoidance of any tax on the long-term capital gain.

#### The CGA or CRT Opportunity

For those who want to generate lifetime income from your gifts and obtain an income tax charitable deduction, you can consider high fixed lifetime-rate charitable gift annuities (CGA) or fixed-rate charitable remainder trusts (CRT).

#### Real Estate

Contributing investment real estate that has exhausted its tax benefits and has a low adjusted basis might prove economically beneficial when either donated outright or when used to fund a CGA or CRT.

As 2018 unfolds, we will review planning trends resulting from the new tax law and provide updates. For more information or to speak to me, contact your local AABGU regional office or call 800-962-2248 ext. 1401. ■



**MARVIN ISRAELOW** fell in love with the Negev in 1966.

He spent that summer in Lahav, a progressive, idealistic kibbutz. “It was a time of great exploration and adventure. The idea that we could accomplish anything here made it an extremely appealing introduction to Israel and the Negev.”

Recalling the camel market then held in Beer-Sheva every Thursday, he remains fascinated by the city’s transformation from a desert crossroads to the thriving city of today, galvanized by Ben-Gurion University.

“Every time I go back there, it literally takes my breath away. To be able to observe in my lifetime what’s taken place in the country, the city, the University, with such speed gives me an enormous sense of pride and perspective. BGU is emblematic of the best of the history of modern Israel.”

Israelow’s association with the University began in the late 1970s. During their honeymoon, his brother-in-law and spouse were persuaded to take a side trip to visit BGU, which at the time was little more than a few old buildings in the city, and a dream.

“They were inspired by the vision and drew the rest of our family into the University.” The family involvement “took a big leap forward,” he says, 23 years ago when his father-in-law, BGU benefactor Irving Goldman, passed away, leaving his children as trustees of a foundation. The then-president of the University proposed an endowment to support a major expansion of BGU’s medical school. The family agreed, and the Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School has grown in quality and prestige ever since.

Five years ago, already serving as a member of AABGU’s board of directors, Israelow was asked to contribute in a different way. The head of AABGU invited him to help start an advisory committee for BGU’s companion medical school, the Medical School for International Health (MSIH), which is taught in English and trains doctors to work with underserved populations in today’s global environment. “This meant rolling up my sleeves to learn more about the medical school, to get more actively engaged.”

The MSIH Advisory Committee, which Israelow now chairs, has funded initiatives to bring greater visibility to MSIH and to step up recruitment. Thanks to the new Ben-Gurion Global Health Scholarship, an outstanding



**MARVIN ISRAELOW**  
CHAPPAQUA, NEW YORK

## EMBRACING THE SPIRIT OF THE NEGEV

student will be awarded a full four-year scholarship every year.

Israelow proudly shares that this year’s graduates achieved a 100 percent match: All were accepted by residency programs they wanted to attend, a rating medical schools use to measure success.

Before embarking on his highly active retirement, Israelow was an organizational consultant for three decades. He specialized in career development and managing change, a background he frequently draws on for his avocations. “I enjoy applying my professional skills in meaningful ways.”

Another major commitment is an enterprise he joined 20 years ago called Wise Aging. “Our goal is to change the paradigm of aging in this country away from seeing it as a time of decline to recognizing the opportunities for us to grow and contribute as we move into the third chapter of our lives,” he explains.

Wise Aging is now a program of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, which his wife, Dorian Goldman, helped found. Israelow leads wise aging groups in New York City and trains new cadres of leaders to facilitate groups across the country.

Beyond their various enterprises and charitable causes, Marvin and Dorian are hands-on managers of their “suburban farm,” which includes an organic vegetable garden, raising egg-laying chickens, fruit trees, and, most recently, harvesting honey and making wine. With three married sons they find their family expanding as well, a huge source of pleasure. “By the time I’m 71 in August, God willing, our nuclear family will have grown to 14!”

Israelow believes more strongly than ever in the importance of investing in Israeli higher education and BGU in particular as the key to Israel’s future.

“Every time I visit BGU and see the work going on to solve the world’s most pressing problems—in the fields of water scarcity, solar energy and cybersecurity—it reminds me of the can-do attitude I experienced in 1966 and strengthens my commitment.

“To observe that Israel is very charged politically is an understatement. But if you care about the future of Israel, BGU is a way to strengthen the country that has nothing at all to do with politics. It’s our opportunity to make a difference in big ways like no other place I know of in Israel.” ■

**ELLEN MARCUS** was one of the first people in the United States to be trained in genetic counseling and to earn board certification as a genetic counselor. Practicing the new profession for 15 years, she found herself also helping other health professionals market their businesses. Her interest gradually shifted to marketing communications, a career she then pursued for the next 15 years in the healthcare, asset management and ultimately oil and gas industries.

Ellen achieved another first when she suggested that her parents, Dr. Howard and Lottie Marcus, leave the bulk of their estate to a cause they believed in rather than to her. The cause they believed in was Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and the \$400+ million endowment bequeathed by the Marcuses is probably the largest ever made to any Israeli institution.

“We always lived very modestly,” Ellen recounts. “My parents moved to Great Neck [on Long Island, New York] before I was born because of the excellent school system, and I lived there until I left for college.” Her parents didn’t talk about philanthropy, “but they did emphasize that I should think more about others than myself.”

Nor did they talk about their estate. “In about 2004, my father was 95, and I knew their estate-planning attorney had passed away many years before. So I suggested that they consult with another attorney to ensure that their legal affairs were in proper order.

“When the attorney they hired saw the value of their estate, she asked, ‘Does Ellen—your only child—know what’s coming?’ They said no, and the attorney suggested they bring me to see her. When she told me that their investments were worth about \$200 million, I almost fell over. And they turned out to be valued at more than twice as much by the time my mother died.

“I told my father, ‘just leave me enough so my daughter and I will never be hungry or homeless, and give the rest away.’ They left me \$10 million and gave the rest to AABGU on behalf of the University.”

The Marcuses’ financial success is another unusual story. Howard and Lottie both fled Nazi Germany in the early 1930s and met in New York in 1942. Howard built a dental practice in Manhattan. Lottie worked at a Wall Street firm as head of the secretarial pool. She became friends with Benjamin Graham, known as the “Father of Value Investing.”



**ELLEN MARCUS**  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

## TAKE WHAT YOU NEED AND GIVE THE REST AWAY

In the early 1960s, Graham introduced the couple to his star graduate student at Columbia University Business School, predicting that the young man’s new business would be very successful. That student was Warren Buffet.

Buffet described the relationship this way: “I met Howard and Lottie through a mutual friend, my lifetime hero, Ben Graham. We hit it off and they joined my investment partnership. Knowing them, it comes as no surprise that they elected to use their financial success to enhance the lives of thousands of Israeli young people.”

The Marcuses began supporting BGU in the late 1990s, funding a laboratory and scholarships in the fields of water desalination and desert studies—research they hoped would support future peace in the region. Ellen first visited BGU in 2005 with her parents and daughter, Jennifer, for the naming of the Marcus Family Campus.

“I was blown away,” she says. “Today, I’m very enthusiastically involved with BGU and AABGU. BGU is one of two

passions in my life and I do everything I can to further the University’s mission.” She has served as vice chair of BGU’s board of governors since 2006, is an AABGU board vice president, and Austin chair of AABGU’s Greater Texas Region.

Ellen’s second passion is animal rescue. She volunteers weekly at the Austin Humane Society and also helps another organization reunite lost pets with their families. Another driving interest is her new grandson, born in January.

Ellen sincerely believes that “each of us only needs a certain amount of money to be financially secure. Beyond that, the rewards of giving to a cause that’s important to us is immeasurably satisfying. I would encourage the offspring of other wealthy parents to ask for what they think they’ll need to be financially secure, and encourage their parents to donate the rest to a charity of their choice.”

In making BGU her choice, Ellen continues the family legacy. “It’s one of the premier universities in Israel and the only one with a mission to develop the Negev and improve the lives of the people who live there. It’s always exciting and impressive and a lot of fun to see how the University is growing and excelling in so many fields that help people around the world.

“It makes me feel that I’m achieving my life’s goal—to leave the world a better place than it was when I arrived.” ■





*Cyber@BGU:*

# WORKING TO KEEP US SAFE IN A SMART WORLD

**MALWARE...clickbait...machine learning...black hats...air gap...IoT...** The new vocabulary we're learning mirrors a virtual universe that along with unimagined benefits presents a growing roster of threats to our security.

"We're running as fast as we can," says Prof. Bracha Shapira, "to protect our technology systems. It's like a race: We try to find vulnerabilities before an attacker gets an idea. We figure out, how will he think?"

Prof. Shapira is deputy dean for research at BGU's Faculty of Engineering Sciences and former chair of the Department of Software and Information Systems Engineering. She also directs research projects at Cyber@BGU, an umbrella entity encompassing many cyber security research initiatives.

In addition to the BGU research labs, Cyber@BGU incorporates industrial partners: Telekom Innovation Labs, IBM, Israel's National Cyber Bureau, and the Israel Police. This complex

organization is housed in the Advanced Technologies Park, adjacent to the Marcus Family Campus in Beer-Sheva. Many students, as well as teachers, divide their time between its labs and the academic department at the University.

BGU scientists have been researching cyber security challenges for 20 years, well before the threats to our institutions and personal lives began hitting the headlines regularly. "The name for it hadn't even been coined back then," says Prof. Yuval Elovici, who heads Cyber@BGU. He joined the faculty as a computer scientist in 2000, parallel with a huge evolution in internet use. "This created a lot of opportunities for cyber attackers, so we started working on topics related to privacy."

A few years later, BGU's growing reputation for computer expertise drew Deutsche Telekom (DT), Germany's telecommunications giant, to collab-



Prof. Bracha Shapira, Carole Weinstein Chair in Information Systems Engineering

orate with and fund University research to protect its network from malware: malicious software intended to damage computer systems. The successful project led to 13 patents, numerous publications and a mushrooming set of Israeli and international collaborations with industry. Today, this is the only DT research facility outside of Germany.

Beyond its importance to Israel's safety, the cyber security industry is a top economic priority for the government. Israel already supplies 10 percent of the world's cyber security products and attracts 15 percent of its venture capital investment in cyber security. The government intends to monetize this expertise and make Beer-Sheva the world's cyber security capital, centered at BGU.

## MORE BENEFITS—MORE RISKS

As computers become smarter, so do hackers. "Black hatters," those who

Top: Malware Lab, Cyber Security Research Center at the Ben-Gurion Advanced Technologies Park

break into digital systems with malicious intent, range from tech-savvy teenagers who enjoy wreaking havoc to those in search of financial benefit, whether by stealing bank passcodes or holding a personal computer or institution for ransom. And, as we are finding, government-sponsored teams hack into adversarial countries' systems to further their political ends.

The worries were glimpsed as early as 1995, says Dr. Yossi Oren. "But people weren't doing so much on their computers then. Today they're a different beast—they're in our pockets. People are trusting computers, telling them their secrets. We ask them to make decisions for us. They decide: Do you get this job, this loan, this medicine? And now the attackers have much more they can target."

One reason the playing field expands is the burgeoning "Internet of Things," or IoT. Digital devices today range far beyond the computer that sits on a desk, a lap or in a pocket. Our newer appliances, televisions, smoke detectors, headphones, medical devices, doorbells, and cars are "smart."

They carry sensors, electronics and software that observe and record our habits and routines, what we buy, what we listen to, whom we communicate with, what we search for online, and much more. All these smart machines communicate with each other and all this data is stored in the "cloud."

The benefits to our business, institutions and personal quality of life are countless. But there's a downside.

"The smart fridge knows how many times you open it and when," Elovici points out. "My smart watch knows my heart rate for the whole day. Our devices collect this valuable information and it can be used against us. I want to know my stress levels, and now 'they' know it. What is it worth to an insurance agent to be able to calculate my life expectancy? Will they raise my insurance rate? People need to be aware of the risks to safety and privacy."

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**"It's a cat and mouse game...the best solution is to be proactive rather than reactive..."**

— YISROEL MIRSKY, PH.D. STUDENT

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Anticipating the risks that a smart world creates for us as individuals, and the larger world we inhabit, is the focus of Cyber@BGU. And once the researchers identify vulnerabilities in our systems, they look for solutions.

### WHITE HATS VS. BLACK HATS

"You need to be the devil's advocate and think outside the box," says Yisroel

Mirsky, a Ph.D. student and project leader who has already garnered 18 significant publications during his studies at BGU.

"It's a cat and mouse game: You have an app, an attacker finds a hole, you patch it, he finds a new hole. The best solution is to be proactive rather than reactive—rather than patching known flaws, we try to think of what an attacker might do and block it."

Both white hat (defenders) and black hat (attackers) hackers draw on developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and use machine-learning technology—computers able to learn and improve their own performance. Smart machines can find weaknesses much faster and more efficiently, with less investment of human time, says Shapira. Solutions also depend on these technologies, and the department's allied strengths in AI, machine learning and big data give the cyber security researchers an important edge.

"Like any knowledge, it can be used for good purposes and bad purposes," Elovici says. "We use these techniques to detect compromised systems and prevent attacks. Then the attackers do adversarial AI to bypass the defense system."

Prof. Shapira brings specific expertise in AI and data science to her cyber research. Her projects on "personalization," the process of customizing digital

Graduate and doctoral students in BGU's Malware Lab. Yisroel Mirsky is on the far right.





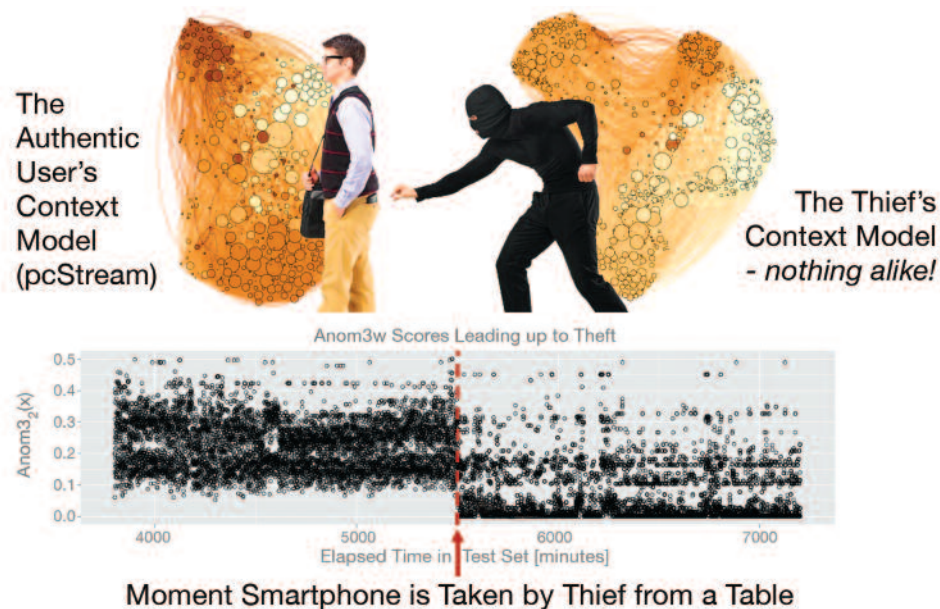
interaction to the individual user, epitomize the risk-versus-benefit aspect of the work. She has developed methods to improve the filtering of online news for the user's interest and to make internet transactions more efficient.

But personalization can carry a cost. "We like the convenience of finding what we want when we want it, quickly and easily, but it can also put our privacy at risk," Shapira says. "With technology there are always tradeoffs."

Her team also looks for ways to protect privacy. One effort is to develop ways that users can access information over the Web without revealing their profiles and interests. Another direction is to profile attackers so researchers can understand what is behind their attacks and identify better ways to foil them. The team also experiments with strategies to mislead hackers by feeding them false information to confuse and deflect them.

### PROFILING FOR PROTECTION

Yisroel Mirsky's team used advanced machine-learning techniques to profile the behavior of smartphone users as a safeguard against theft and data leakage. In one recent large-scale project, the researchers set out to map the normal behavior of smartphone users.



Yisroel Mirsky's graphic representation of how technology can distinguish between a smartphone owner's normal pattern of use and a thief's.



Prof. Yuval Elovici was one of three BGU cyber security experts asked to present at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The premise was that by modeling the normal behavior of the user and his or her apps, it is possible to identify when someone other than the owner is operating the device, or trying to hack it.

They developed a machine-learning algorithm that would learn an individual's normal behavior in different contexts, and then question the behavior

that stands out as different. "If you model the way a user handles his phone—the length of his arm, how he behaves and moves, whether he uses it while running—the phone can be made to automatically determine if an unknown person is interacting with it. The device will then lock itself."

To test the idea, the team developed a data collection app called Sherlock that was deployed on 50 smartphones. They distributed the phones to people throughout Israel to use for two years. During that timeframe the group simulated 12 attacks.

"We were very successful in detecting a large variety of attacks," Mirsky says, "including attempts to fool the user into clickbaiting, which causes malware to be accidentally downloaded. But the real achievement was the rich data set we collected that can help researchers apply machine learning to the domain of cyber security. It's the only dataset like it in the world to follow 50 people for two years, collecting so much information."

The dataset has been shared with over 48 universities around the world and has been published at a major conference. Mirsky's team may follow up with a commercial solution in the form of an algorithm to run on future devices.

## HACKING EVERYDAY REPLACEMENT PARTS

Some projects are triggered by personal experience. Dr. Yossi Oren, who focuses on preventing hardware attacks and ensuring consumer and voter privacy, often needs to replace his smartphone touchscreen. “I’m clumsy and drop it a lot, and so does my family.” But he found that replacing a broken iPhone screen with an authentic one is expensive in the United States, where Oren was doing postdoctoral work, because Apple restricts availability to its own vendors.

“So I started buying my own replacement screens and installing them. Then I thought: What am I doing to myself? I’m buying something maybe from a questionable source and plugging it into the most sensitive piece of equipment in my house that knows everything and follows me everywhere. We decided to see if it could be used maliciously.”

Oren put a student, Omer Shwartz, on the hacking task. He not only succeeded but was able to do so quickly. “We were very surprised at how easy it was. In two hours of reading source code, Omer was able to completely compromise the phone through the replacement screen. We looked at another model and that one took him only 45 minutes.”

Dr. Yossi Oren (sitting far right)  
with his research assistants

In line with the guiding protocol for all white hat research, Oren alerted the relevant companies and the results were published shortly thereafter. Now the group is working on building a firewall that can protect the phone from malicious attack. “We’ll develop a tiny one to put inside every phone for a few cents, then see if the manufacturers are interested.”

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**“An adversarial government can identify talented hackers and train them to be very good. The possibilities are huge and could be impossible to defend.”**

— PROF. YUVAL ELOVICI

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A number of vendors take note of research center discoveries, as do the military, police and other government agencies. Cyber@BGU is becoming

an international go-to place when industries and organizations need solutions to their problems. The faculty garners impressive numbers of patents, generating startups, some of which are gaining traction. Discoveries and techniques are shared through conferences and publications.

“In our collaborations with industry and even the Ministry of Defense, we never enter into research if we will be limited in the ability to publish,” Elovici says. “We don’t do research that limits our academic freedom.”

The cyber researchers’ set of ethics—which all students learn—also requires giving fair notice to affected organizations. “The process is called responsible disclosure,” Oren says, “and distinguishes good guys from bad guys. We must report what we find to the right people at the right time and give them time to react—to use our solutions or find one before we publish.”

Different entities react at different speeds, the researchers note. Invariably, countermeasures carry a cost. A “patch” to prevent data leakage, for example—usually announced in the form of an update for an operating system or software—may diminish a computer’s speed or a device’s battery time.





### WHERE THE WORRIES ARE

Of 180 M.S. and Ph.D. students engaged in Department of Software and Information Systems Engineering research, about 100 focus on cyber security. Elovici and his colleagues are

disabling a power plant, for example. That's why we don't see many more cyberattacks in the world."

On the negative side, it's taken for granted that attackers often remain undiscovered. "Companies are attacked and don't know it," Shapira says.

But what worries Elovici more is the threat of government-sponsored attacks. "The possibilities become more frightening. It can be a nightmare to protect our organizations," he says. "An adversarial government can identify talented hackers and train them to be very good. The possibilities are huge and could be impossible to defend. One way to cope is by building the technology capabilities and hope they will deter our opponents."

Another danger is the common use of outdated technology. After studying the U.S. 911 emergency system, Yisroel Mirsky, together with Dr. Mordechai Guri, published a paper last year showing how an attacker could, with little effort, grind it to a complete halt. Decades-old technology made the system an easy target. The information was given to Homeland Security and other relevant entities along with a list of solutions.

### WHERE THE RACE IS GOING

Addressing the proliferating challenges of the IoT—which harbors many vulnerabilities but flimsy defenses—currently occupies many of Cyber@BGU researchers. One approach they explore is using devices like smart appliances to monitor each other and detect

*Continued on page 35*



BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi and Police Commissioner Inspector-General Roni Alsheikh launched the Center for Computational Criminology at BGU's National Center for Cyber Security.

happy that the domain's high profile brings in enthusiastic, top-flight young people who love breaking the boundaries and coming up with new defense mechanisms. Students also come from industry, bringing valuable experience.

But are the cyber labs training future black hat hackers? Elovici says not. "We use existing malware and try to teach them how to develop new defense mechanisms, so, yes, students acquire a lot of knowledge on how to develop attacks.

"But it's not actually a concern. The competence can be acquired without any academics. In my experience, the defender needs the background, but attackers do not."

Nor is Elovici overly concerned about malicious teenagers, who may not understand the seriousness of the harm they can cause, nor even the for-profit hacker. "When you use vulnerabilities to create damage, you burn them—so you prefer to collect intelligence rather than

"Everybody is attacked. It may take many years to find out that attackers are stealing knowledge."

## TAKING PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Everyone should be aware of the dangers that lurk in our advancing digital universe—Cyber@BGU researchers tell us to be less trusting of technology. "But don't be frightened. Understand the risks and you can prevent a lot," says Prof. Bracha Shapira. "Self-educate," Yisroel Mirsky advises. "Be cautious but don't lock technology out of your life."

### Some practices they recommend:

- Update your systems no matter how inconvenient: Updates contain security patches to fix newly discovered vulnerabilities.
- Always change default passwords on all smart devices.
- Use two-factor authentication to add an extra level of protection and keep hackers out (the manufacturers provide advice on how to do this).
- Create strong passwords not based on personal history information that smart machines can figure out. A string of at least 16 letters is recommended.
- Don't fall for clickbaiting: Resist opening unknown links, attachments or mysterious e-mails.
- Don't load random applications onto your devices.
- Don't use unknown USB drives or plug into public USB ports like those at airports to recharge your smartphone or other devices; they may be loaded with malware.
- Consider using pen and paper for your confidential information!



# *The New School of Public Health* READY FOR TODAY'S WORLD

**“WE’RE BREAKING THE BORDERS,”**

Prof. Nadav Davidovitch M.D., Ph.D. says about BGU’s newly created School of Public Health. “We’ve developed all the ingredients over the past 20 years and now we’re adding new ones to create the largest, most interdisciplinary and community-oriented school of public health in Israel and beyond.”

Two years of strategic planning by the Faculty of Health Sciences brings together under one roof the department’s graduate programs of public health, epidemiology, sociology of health, gerontology, health systems management, and emergency medicine. The result is the only school of public health in Israel that integrates all relevant disciplines for public health research and teaching, from epidemiology and biostatistics to sociology, anthropology, health economics, disaster management, public health ethics, health technology assessment, and more.

Prof. Davidovitch, chair of the Department of Health Systems Management—a program shared by the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management—was chosen to head the comprehensive new school. He is a public health physician and epidemiologist with a Ph.D. in sociology.

Davidovitch relishes the expanding

vistas he sees for translating academic research to global and community health needs.

“We want excellence in research, but also in social mission to connect science with policy,” he says. “We’ll train students who’ll be future public health

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**“The new school meets all our faculty’s goals—to do cutting-edge scientific research, help shape public health policy and improve the quality of life of people in this community and around the world.”**

— PROF. NADAV DAVIDOVITCH

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leaders and healthcare professionals in Israel and abroad—people involved in their communities and who see the global picture. Our graduates will understand both local and global contexts and be prepared to operate within both.”

The school will offer graduate and doctoral degrees. Students from all health disciplines can now easily cross school boundaries to take courses of interest. Additional courses that are

impractical for individual departments and programs to mount are planned. Among those already in place are big data, advanced mixed methodologies (quantitative and qualitative) and grant writing.

Innovative learning opportunities will include courses that incorporate online teaching in partnership with a growing roster of universities, among them, the University of Michigan, Drexel University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Canada’s University of Toronto. A joint Ph.D. program in public health with Drexel and Yale’s School of Public Health is under development. And, internship and faculty exchange programs are already active with the University of Michigan and Drexel, among others.

**WHERE GLOBAL MEETS LOCAL**

An integrated school of public health “takes us in both directions, global and local,” Davidovitch says. “Global health issues are in all our backyards. We can’t deal with problems like the Zika virus and influenza pandemic just in one place. We need to understand and address them at both local and global levels. Issues like food and nutrition are local but they’re also influenced by

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**Top:** Students from the health disciplines ride to raise public awareness of diabetes.



global forces. Preparing for climate change and refugees is high on the agenda for many places. We have such grave discrepancies between countries that coordination is critical.”

At the same, Davidovitch says, “we’re much more attuned to the needs of our community—the Negev. You can’t have ‘copy and paste’ universal solutions.

We can learn a lot from the experience of other countries, but must address the local context: the barriers, the roots of inequalities, the incentives you can give to promote a program in each place.”

The new school’s interdisciplinary nature aligns with how public health professionals must deal with today’s major challenges. “We can go from cutting-edge genetic research to anthropology to epidemiology to health economics. To deal with resistance to influenza vaccine, for example, we must analyze stakeholder perceptions, bring in data, perform qualitative as well as quantitative research, and connect with policy makers.”

Having a significant impact on public health policy is intrinsic to the school’s mission. Accordingly, strategic partnerships are being strengthened with organizations including the U.S Center for Disease Prevention, National Institutes of Health, World Health Organization, American and European Public Health Association, and of course Israel’s Ministry of Health and the various health funds.



Prof. Nadav Davidovitch, M.D.

The collective faculty brings together full-time academic, clinical and adjunct instructors from the field. Many come to their new roles with close connections to major institutions. Davidovitch, for example, is chair of the Association of Public Health Physicians in the Israeli Medical Association and a member

of the executive committee of the European Public Health Association. Other faculty members have held senior positions in the Israel Ministry of Health.

Another partner is the Negev Now Coalition, a group of seven Jewish North American federations supporting the Negev. The Coalition collaborates on a course called Healthy Place-Making, which challenges students to plan communities that offer physical activity and sources of sustainable food, and are fun to live in.

Students are also at work with non-governmental organizations in Jewish and Bedouin communities in Beer-Sheva, Dimona, Ofakim, Rahat, and more “to bridge between academic research and impact on the community.” A major goal of Davidovitch’s own research is to reduce health inequalities in the Negev, especially among minorities and immigrant populations. He looks forward to the advances that more cross-disciplinary collaboration will foster.

BGU’s new School of Public Health also collaborates closely with Soroka University Medical Center and other hospitals, the Advanced Technologies Park, other BGU academic departments, and its Medical School for International Health. A graduate program in English focusing on global health will expand the global health summer course.

### THE FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Along with an ambitious vision for the future, two years of groundwork have enabled the school’s planners to forge a set of bylaws to determine how it will operate. “We’re already doing many of the things we’ve planned,” Davidovitch says, “but now we want to do them in interdisciplinary ways. At this point we’re thinking about the new faculty we want to recruit, people who can see the global picture within the different disciplines.”

Recruiting more students interested in global health, health promotion and health policy is also high priority. To help grow the international component, courses will be taught in English. Another plan is to enlarge current programs that award a combined Ph.D. and M.D.

“This is an exciting moment. Everybody is very enthusiastic,” Davidovitch says. “We know that it strengthens us to be together. The new school meets all our faculty’s goals—to do cutting-edge scientific research, help shape public health policy and improve the quality of life of people in this community and around the world.” ■

The Global Health Summer Program draws students from all over the world.





# *The Spitzer Department of Social Work*

## BUILDING PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE TO HELP THE COMMUNITY

**FROM ITS BEGINNINGS** in 1982, the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work has inspired students to involve themselves in the community and view social change as a primary goal of their profession.

“I should know—I was there!” says Prof. Dorit Segal-Engelchin, who leads the department today.

“I started in 1983 and graduated with the second class. We’ve always aimed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to improve the quality of life for the underserved, and to advocate for more effective social policies and services. We’re known for this special focus and many candidates come to us because of it.”

Bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral students all connect closely with the community. Undergraduates spend two full days per week working at social service organizations during the second and third years of study. Everyone gains, Prof. Segal-Engelchin notes. Students benefit from an early grounding in fieldwork realities, and community agencies benefit from their active

participation in providing services.

Graduate students, like their supervisors, perform research that often links directly to the community. “We aim to create new knowledge that will translate into practical knowledge,”

Segal-Engelchin says.

Her own research focuses on women’s health and newer family configurations that are becoming more common in Israel, such as families headed by single mothers by choice, and the partnering of a heterosexual mother and gay father to raise children together though living separately.

Other faculty member projects include research on Bedouin children and families; immigrants and refugees; people living in poverty; the impact of stress, including war-related stress, on different populations; psychiatric rehabilitation; art therapy; and the challenge of dealing with illness and loss in the older population.

When community needs are identified, faculty members may create new programs. This was the case with the

Center for Women’s Health Studies and Promotion, created in 1999, which Segal-Engelchin co-directs. It carries out multidisciplinary research and operates services for community women that focus on enhancing parenting skills

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**“We’ve always aimed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to improve the quality of life for the underserved.”**

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— PROF. DORIT SEGAL-ENGELCHIN

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and handling stress. Personal counseling is also offered. Beer-Sova, a restaurant to serve the poor, was created by a faculty member two decades ago (see story on page 24).

Various programs provide support to immigrants. And recently, in response to a perceived lack of knowledge about Israel’s young people at risk, a special

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**Top:** Social work student Moran Mekamel (center) is a founder of Students for Refugees.



Prof. Dorit Segal-Engelchin





Opening of the exhibit “Objects in Transition” where Prof. Julia Mirsky’s project on Immigrants’ Lives in Israel was inaugurated. Jill Ben-Dor (left), BGU’s director of donor and associate affairs, was interviewed as an immigrant from the U.S. by social work student Shirin Marsiano, at right.

track was created for students who want to work with these populations.

Faculty members share their research with the larger community through the classic academic channels—publication and conferences—but the field’s practical nature enables them to disseminate new knowledge quickly. Many of the department’s graduate students are already employed and come for advanced training to deepen their expertise and become more effective professionals.

One example is a Ph.D. student who works in a rehabilitation community for the mentally ill. “She decided to study the experience of being there,” Segal-Engelchin says, “from the perspective of those receiving help so she can better understand the process they go through during their stay.”

It’s a two-way street, she adds. “People do research where they work, bring the field into their studies with us, then take the findings and what they learn back to the field.”

Another Ph.D. candidate is an army social worker researching how young women adjust to combat service. “She is already one of them and trusted, so her research will help the army better support women,” Segal-Engelchin says.

It is through its active faculty that the department connects with its community, local and beyond. According to their individual expertise, many faculty

members work to generate social policy changes. They create programs and projects to demonstrate what new thinking can accomplish, advise professional associations on improving standards and practices, and bring data-supported ideas to political leaders and government decision-makers. Increasingly, their voices earn response.

“This is an innovative department in many ways,” Segal-Engelchin sums up. “Our teaching and programs and research are very connected to the community and to the profession. We grow in all the dimensions.”

## INTEGRATING OUR IMMIGRANT SELVES

“The majority of Israelis are immigrants,” Prof. Julia Mirsky says. “Israelis are typically first, second or third generation, but someone relocating from the north to the south goes through a cultural transition, too. And, we can become immigrants without moving at all because the world around us changes drastically—as it has for the Bedouins in Israel, for example.”

A clinical psychologist, Prof. Mirsky has been interested in the experience of migration since her early work as

a psychotherapist. “The psychological process of adapting, adjusting, is not only common, but a common denominator that could bring us Israelis all together. But instead, society is very divided and we seem to have little in common.”

Prof. Mirsky experienced the immigration challenge firsthand. Her mother and grandmother were on the last train out of Rostov-on-Don, Russia before the Nazis arrived and killed all the town’s Jews. They became refugees and were taken in by a Muslim family. Mirsky moved to Poland at six and to Israel at 11. “I went through the whole thing—not knowing who I was, not speaking the language, trying to catch up.”

Today she heads the school’s Ph.D. program and supervises numerous graduate students. Many are involved in her research, exploring psychological aspects of immigrant families and adolescents. Mirsky hopes to “facilitate a more benevolent adjustment” and connect more people with the immigrant experience, both other people’s and their

own. “Losing your home and rebuilding yourself and social life and identity... to live with losing part of yourself. There’s not enough discourse about this.”

Understanding differences matters on a practical basis as well as in the larger perspective, Mirsky says. For example, a doctor who comes from a Western culture believes strongly in patients’ rights and will

tell sick people the diagnosis as well as the prognosis.

“But a Russian may not want to know he has cancer. The doctor tells him face to face, totally neglecting the different cultural understanding. Of course you can’t have enough information about every cultural group, but you can have some about major ethnic groups—and you can remember to ask questions.”

She cites a kindergarten teacher who wanted to teach the Ethiopian children in her class how to become Israelis. “She trained them to talk to her looking



Prof. Julia Mirsky

directly into her face. So these small children go home and get punished because for the family it's not respectful to look an older person in the eye.

"This happens a lot to immigrant kids. They want to be like everyone else. So they don't learn or ask about their heritage, may be ashamed of it and thus lose their roots. Mature, stable people who combine all parts of their lives, their heritage, past and future—those are the ones who can adapt and make our society better."

Prof. Mirsky's research is frequently published, but she looks for more direct ways to involve and influence the community. One initiative is the BGU Project for Research and Education on Migrant Lives in Israel. Students are interviewing immigrants via smart phone video to document their lives as a resource for research, teaching and community projects.

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**"The psychological process of adapting, adjusting, is not only common, but a common denominator that could bring us Israelis all together."**

— PROF. JULIA MIRSKY

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The process is just as meaningful for the people interviewed. "It's important for people to tell their stories and be heard," Mirsky says. The interviews are shared with the families of the people recorded. She expects to have 200 interviews in hand by the end of the year, with immigrants from Yemen, Morocco, India, Hungary, Russia, and Ethiopia, as well as asylum seekers and refugees from Darfur, Sudan.

Prof. Mirsky is also the coordinator of an international consortium called DEMO, which consists of six Israeli higher education institutions and five European universities. Funding comes from the European Council Erasmus+ program. The goal is to develop courses that center on the rich experiences of

migrants and refugees for use in educating social workers, counselors, teachers, psychologists, and others in contact with immigrants.

Consortium members have begun to meet and work out teaching strategies. "We plan to use oral history approaches and other innovative techniques to support emotional connectedness," Mirsky says. Next October the first six courses developed will be taught in Israel as a three-year pilot.

"Then we'll convince others to adopt our models. It will be a lot of work to produce systemic change for licensing and training, and among the professional associations. We will work with them to affect the system from the bottom up."

## CONNECTING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK

Dr. Tehila Rafaeli, with experience as a social worker and parole officer, was drawn to BGU two years ago by the department's reputation. "I really liked the idea of how involved it is in the community and in changing policies."

She heads the department's Adolescence and Young People Studies track, created to give students the knowledge and skills to interact well with youth. "Working with this generation is a different kind of social work," she says. "You need to use special professional skills to meet them on their own grounds. For example, it takes more time and effort to reach out. Sometimes encouraging them to come to a meeting with a social worker is the biggest challenge."

Students choosing this specialized track take a number of specific courses and perform related field work. "They contribute to the community by working in services that need the help," Rafaeli says, "and the services help them become professionals in this work. Plus, we coach the supervisors, so we can see a spiral process from the community to the University and back."



Dr. Tehila Rafaeli

She points out that research on young people is important. "Generally we don't have many studies about them in Israel, especially those at risk. But today there's a new interest in emerging adults, who are depending on their parents financially and concretely for

longer periods of time, as well as in the emerging adults who can't be dependent on their parents due to poverty, parental absence, etc."

Dr. Rafaeli researches how young people who age out of supportive situations, such as residential facilities, cope with independent living.

She also collaborates on longitudinal studies of

Jewish and Bedouin 18- to 25-year-olds from the Israeli periphery, many of whom are interested in acquiring higher education, but are unable to do so because of very low achievement in high school. "We're trying to identify their needs and what will help them with their most important difficulties."

Some young people appear to succeed against all odds. "How do you find support when you need resources and don't have family to rely on? Some are able to integrate into higher education and lead a very organized life, even though support is so limited."

In researching what accounts for such resilience, Rafaeli found some surprising results. "In part, it may be personal resources such as self-efficacy, but mainly it's the ability to accept that you can't do it alone, to know when you need help and to recognize a good place that will give you help—to ascertain who can help you and who cannot.

"We find that one person is not enough. There's too much to handle—where to live, work, learn, buy food, how to handle a bank account. It doesn't take a village, but analyzing the stories of successful young people shows that different kinds of support and advice are needed."

She also finds intriguing differences between cultural groups. Compared to



Jewish at-risk young women, Bedouin women report feeling less economic stress. One reason, Rafaeli suspects, may be that Bedouin youth assume a community support that assures their basic needs will be met.

Dr. Rafaeli shares her findings on youth at risk with residential centers, care providers, social service organizations, and government ministries. She recently participated in a committee on improving residential care in Israel and serves on a committee of non-governmental organizations that is investigating new policies for young people in care and aftercare.

She hopes her work will contribute to building a network of multiple services for all young people who need it, and that they will be directly involved in the process. "If they work with us, tell us what's good for them, what to explore, the issues to research—they will help us in creating better services for themselves."

### HELPING SOCIAL WORKERS CONNECT WITH POVERTY

Prof. Michal Krumer-Nevo has been interested in the experience of people living in poverty throughout her career. "I want to change the way social workers understand and think about people in poverty and how they work with them."

With a background in social work specializing in psychotherapy, Krumer-Nevo developed a "Poverty-Aware Paradigm." This approach encourages re-thinking the nature of poverty, the relevant knowledge needed to evaluate situations, and the ethical standards that social workers and the public at large should apply in regard to poverty.

"Academic knowledge is not enough," Krumer-Nevo believes. "Social workers need to know that they should be interested in the knowledge of people in poverty themselves. They need to know how to develop a solidarity with people in poverty—to understand their struggle, not just to correct their behavior or change it."

When social workers find families in poverty hard to reach and non-cooperative, their behavior, she observes, may

seem irrational and counter-productive. However, she explains, "social workers should see that poor people resist poverty on a daily basis and work very hard to do the right things."

For example, Krumer-Nevo says, a client may come with a specific need: "My electricity is disconnected, please help me." The social worker typically says, "I can't do that. I can send you to a program that will help you learn to manage your budget better (or raise your kids differently or stop buying expensive Nikes)."

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**"I want to change the way social workers understand and think about people in poverty and how they work with them."**

— PROF. MICHAL KRUMER-NEVO

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"That's a failed dialogue," Krumer-Nevo explains, "because the social worker isn't interested in understanding the difficulty of living without electricity, while the client isn't interested in managing her budget. To make it a successful dialogue of help, poverty has to be perceived as a grave material need. The client doesn't have the money necessary for basic needs. Social workers should learn how to take the need seriously and not interpret it in terms of behavior or moral dysfunction."

"Next, social workers should take the emotional needs and the relationship with the client seriously. Social workers should be less occupied with re-education and more with establishing a partnership to work hand in hand in the struggle against poverty. We teach workers to respond to problems creatively."

Thus, in handling the electricity bill problem, Prof. Krumer-Nevo encourages

social workers to say something more like, "That's awful. First of all, we need to find a way to help you... how can we solve this together... maybe we can give you some money toward the bill... and maybe we can call the electric company together."

Prof. Krumer-Nevo believes that people may be able realistically to improve their income but cannot on their own escape poverty. "Poverty is too big. It's lack of opportunity for good housing, schools, employment, personal security in poor neighborhoods—and opportunities for respect and recognition."

Her viewpoint is reaching significant ears. She began training students to use her approach eight years ago and the program's success drew interest from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services. It has sent hundreds of employees to BGU for similar training, and now operates programs based on her paradigm in six Negev cities. Two years ago, the ministry adopted the paradigm for all Israeli welfare departments and "borrowed" Krumer-Nevo for a year to help implement the approach into policy and in the field.

A recent conference on her paradigm drew 450 people from all over Israel, and the Israeli Academy Foundation is funding an international seminar at BGU in June.

These days Prof. Michal Krumer-Nevo receives an abundance of opportunities to make an impact among communities of teachers, counselors, government administrators, and others who interact with the poor, as well as social workers. She feels fortunate to enjoy such influence but unable to accommodate all the interest. She envisions a research center dedicated to social justice that reflects her thinking.

"To be involved in real life and respond to real people, to use the highest levels of theoretical development and empirical research—this is our job, our expertise, our mandate." ■



Prof. Michal Krumer-Nevo



*Dr. Sarah Abu-Kaf*

# PIONEERING THE UNIVERSITY PATH FOR BEDOUIN WOMEN

**DR. SARAH ABU-KAF**, who holds a B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degree from BGU, is the first Bedouin Arab in the Negev to become a clinical psychologist. She is also a BGU faculty member of cross-cultural psychology in the Conflict Management and Resolution Program. She leads University initiatives to counter dropout among Arab and Bedouin students. And, she is accomplishing significant research on a subject close to her heart: how to help minority students from communities like her own navigate college life successfully and cope with the stress of being “the other.”

Dr. Abu-Kaf lived these challenges firsthand. She came to the University in 1995 from her Bedouin village, near Beer-Sheva. Family resources were scarce but education was priority number one, she says. “My parents pushed us. They saw education as giving my brother, sister and me a safe future financially—a way to survive and live respectably. My mom helped us in classes until the material began to be difficult. And if we had homework

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**Today, approximately 1,200 Arab students study at BGU. About 450 of them are Bedouin and 70 percent of the Bedouin are women.**

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we were told, ‘Don’t do anything else—go study!’”

She married directly after graduating from high school. Her husband, Jazi, who is himself a BGU alumnus, further encouraged her. “I worried that I wouldn’t be good enough. I didn’t have a clue about what to study. He pointed out that I have strong recall and that I’d always liked helping people.

“We also considered that our society needed psychologists because our living conditions are so stressful and there’s

so much change in our lives. So we decided it would be smart for me to study psychology.”

The idea that Bedouin students could need psychological support met reality once Abu-Kaf engaged with the college environment. “Coming to the university so young was difficult. The Jewish students were all older with such different life experience. The gaps between the groups became obvious to me.” Firsthand experience sparked motivation: Bedouins—especially the women—were dropping out at a high rate. She wanted to help them adapt to university and succeed.

When it came time to develop her doctoral dissertation, “Personality Vulnerabilities to Depression and Somatization Among Bedouin Arab

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*Dr. Sarah Abu-Kaf, above, in 2014, was named to the Women in Science Hall of Fame by the U.S. Department of State as one of a group of 11 women from the Middle East and North Africa. In 2016, she won the Israeli Council for Higher Education Award in the young researcher category.*



and Jewish Students,” she discovered that the relevant knowledge base was surprisingly limited. “The little research that had been done on the differences between the populations was written by people outside, who saw things in black and white. It was difficult for them to adapt their thinking. I felt I had to examine different aspects of students’ mental health and the clinical aspects from the perspective of my community.”

In interviewing female Bedouin students for this project, she learned that without enough money to spend time in the cafeteria between classes, they had to sit outside on the grass, sometimes all day, until the bus arrived to take them home. “Many also said that they needed somewhere to go for help. And I saw that they didn’t know each other because they were in different departments.” The University personnel were sympathetic but the students didn’t come forward, so typically their situation wasn’t understood until it was too late.

“I began to think about creating a common space, a physical place to meet, get to know each other and find resources,” Abu-Kaf says. A way to make this happen materialized when she met Robert Arnow and his wife,

Joan (of blessed memory), during a campus visit. Arnow was already a long-term BGU benefactor and AABGU leader. Touched by Sarah’s personal struggles to stay in school, the Arnows helped her find the resources to accept a postdoctoral opportunity as a Fulbright scholar at Harvard.

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**“Perceptions have changed radically. Women see education as an avenue to be financially independent and enjoy modern life.”**

— DR. SARAH ABU-KAF

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To help more Bedouin female students, they created a scholarship program and a meeting place that evolved into the Robert H. Arnow Center for Bedouin female students. In this comfortable place they can spend their free time socializing, studying, and making use of a mothering center, social worker and computers. Seminars that include workshops in Hebrew are offered.

Language proficiency is a primary need, Abu-Kaf knows. “If they manage Hebrew, students will succeed. When they have difficulties with the language, social as well as academic problems follow.”

### MAJORITY-MINORITY ISSUES

Dr. Abu-Kaf’s research focuses on how people are affected by moving from one culture to another, and the coping mechanisms that help minority groups adapt to the majority culture. To investigate how Jewish and Bedouin students can interact better, she recently led a major project financially supported by Sohn Howard from the Fohs Foundation.

Her team was looking for commonalities—but results were not as expected. “It was amazing—we found that each group’s barriers are so different that just managing the data and explaining the results seemed impossible.”

She found that the differences derive more from minority versus majority status than from cultural differences. “The Bedouins want to form social relationships and they try, but their culture shock and language problems leave them little time. The Jewish students are not similarly motivated. They want to have friends and succeed,



but building multi-ethnic relationships is not a high priority for them.” Since students in both groups experience stress and depression, although for different reasons, both need support.

Female Bedouin students are especially at risk because they find it difficult to ask for help. Many retreat into a state that psychologists call “avoidance”: unwillingness to face their problems. “They try to cope but it costs them too much. They become very self-critical and this makes them passive and, in many cases, severely depressed.” The need for emotional support is acute, Abu-Kaf believes.

“I try to encourage people to think about differences without being judgmental. If you want to help, you must understand other people’s motivations—why they take care of their mother a certain way; why they have many children; why the father takes direction of his children’s lives.” Collectivist societies, which value interdependence, produce very different perspectives



from Western-style individualistic cultures, which value independence.

Stereotypes interfere with understanding, Abu-Kaf notes. She found, for example, that University administrators tended to interpret a student’s failure to ask for help as a sign that she is not serious and respectful of the educational opportunity.

Despite all the challenges, “I’m a very optimistic person!” Abu-Kaf says. “I see hope in the numbers. I see hope because today we are in so many different professions—medicine, high-tech,



**Top and Below:** Joshua Arnow, son of Robert Arnow, meets with students at the Robert H. Arnow Bedouin Center and views the resources available for their use.

psychology.” She estimates that five years ago, five percent of young Bedouins were interested in a college education. Today it’s almost 10 percent, but economic stresses force many to the job market rather than education.

### A PROMISING FUTURE

“The tremendous hope is women,” Abu-Kaf says. “Twenty years ago more boys got a higher education, but today the trend is the opposite. Perceptions have changed radically. Women see education as an avenue to be financially independent and enjoy modern life. Even those who don’t pursue education work actively to improve their financial status.”

Her research suggests that women in general adapt more easily to living in and with other cultures. Young men, more apt to feel their social status is being threatened, are currently experiencing a higher dropout rate. “Now, to keep men in the system, we have to support them, or the whole society will suffer with the imbalance.”

Dr. Abu-Kaf brings her knowledge home. Among her six children, two daughters are currently enrolled at

BGU and have come to appreciate the supportive services available to them, in large part due to their mother’s advocacy over time. But she encourages her son to first work in the Jewish community for a few years and learn to speak Hebrew as well as possible.

She knows that her work has implications far beyond BGU. “This isn’t a unique situation. It’s relevant to other minorities in Israel and many other countries. The need is huge for ethnic and cultural knowledge so services can be more effective.” Her publications are widely read. She speaks often to audiences in the wider Beer-Sheva community. And she presents internationally—all toward giving young people and those who support them better tools.

“A society needs to see the different colors it contains,” Abu-Kaf believes. “To have more knowledge, more interaction, more tools to work with—that will bring us to a more positive and plentiful present and future.” ■

The Arnow family is generously matching donations made to Bedouin scholarships. Go to [www.aabgu.org/donate-bedouin](http://www.aabgu.org/donate-bedouin)



# Beer-Sova Community Restaurant

## SERVING UP FOOD FOR THE SOUL

**PROF. VERED SLONIM-NEVO** sees a clear path between her own childhood and the soup kitchen she created with colleagues 20 years ago to serve Beer-Sheva's poor.

She was raised in Jerusalem by a single mom whose family was destroyed by the Holocaust. "We had very limited resources," Slonim-Nevo says. "My jealousy of other children with their wonderful clothes and schools and homes was always present. So the issues of being treated well—and equally—have always been very important to me."

Her early memories evolved into a resolve to help others. Prof. Slonim-Nevo studied social work, becoming a family therapist and counselor "involved in community projects from day one." After working in the field, she decided to move into academia. Soon after earning her Ph.D. from UCLA she found her way to BGU's Jack J. and Charlotte B. Spitzer Department of Social Work. Her husband had been hired to teach philosophy. "They had no need for a social work lecturer, but they opened a special place for me."

Today, Slonim-Nevo is an influential advocate for the poor and powerless, an admired teacher and a widely

published researcher on issues of poverty and immigration. The former soup kitchen—now the Beer-Sova Community Restaurant—embodies these integrated passions. It is credited with saving thousands from hunger and giving many of its customers a new start on life.

### FIRST COMES FOOD

In 1999, Slonim-Nevo was moved by pictures of elderly people looking for food in Beer-Sheva. She was also intrigued by a television show about soup kitchens for the poor operating in Tel Aviv.

"My friend Yael and I went to visit them and told the founder, Gilad Harish, that we wanted to open a soup kitchen in Beer-Sheva, but we had no money. He said, 'I'll give you a loan to open a place.' So we did. We collected food from institutions and markets, which we no longer do, and slowly were able to pay back the loan."

BGU supported the venture from the outset, enabling staff members to donate from their salaries through the University payroll system. Grants, fundraising events and outside donations helped. Dozens of faculty and staff came on board as volunteers.

The name chosen for the non-governmental organization was a play on the name of the city it serves. Beer-Sheva literally means "seven wells."

Beer-Sova is a full well, which is the "feeling of being satisfied after a delicious, nutritious meal." Beer-Sova is still run by volunteers, including its governing board, the workers and Slonim-Nevo herself.

Despite many loyal donors as well as unpaid managers and workers, sustaining the project has been challenging for most of its two decades. Today, the restaurant is close to self-supporting but even more important to Slonim-Nevo is how its scope has evolved. "It started as a charity and it's now a community resource. It works for justice and equal opportunity; it employs people who need the work; it gives students a place for the practicum part of their training—field experience."

The restaurant is open six days a week. Takeaway family food packages are distributed on Fridays and additional packages go to needy Beer-Sheva families at holiday times. Additionally, the restaurant has begun opening its doors for family celebrations like



Prof. Vered Slonim-Nevo

Top: Lunchtime with a smile from one of Beer-Sova's many volunteers.

bar mitzvahs and holiday parties, in close partnership with the municipal welfare department.

“We can hold up to 100 people for an event, which would ordinarily be very expensive for people on welfare,” Slonim-Nevo says. “We charge \$10 or \$5 per person. And it looks like a nice place! Even though you’re poor, you don’t want your event to look like a soup kitchen.”

“At Beer-Sova, poor people get rich service!”

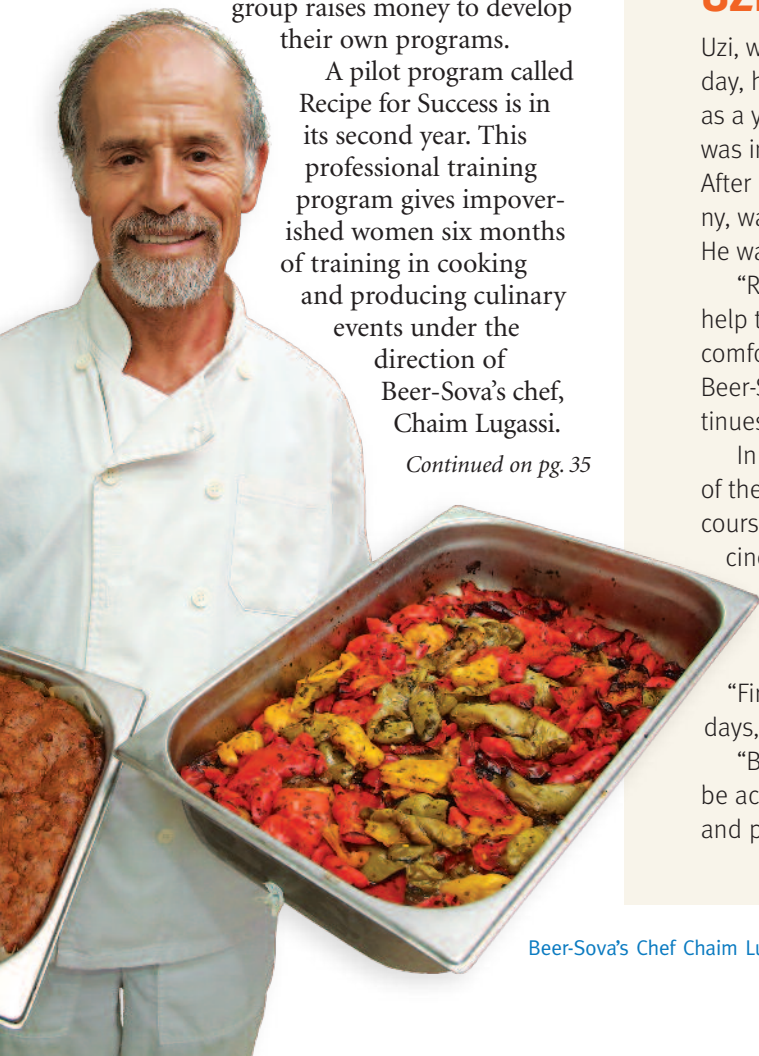
## FROM RESTAURANT TO COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Important as feeding the hungry is, Slonim-Nevo’s intentions are more expansive. “We want to empower people to move out of poverty.”

Today’s Beer-Sova is a community center. An upstairs space is home to a project that grew out of the restaurant: NEMESH—Women Advocating for Social Change. Drawn from the clientele, the members work together and learn from each other. Their aim is to influence policy toward the alleviation of poverty, and the group raises money to develop their own programs.

A pilot program called Recipe for Success is in its second year. This professional training program gives impoverished women six months of training in cooking and producing culinary events under the direction of Beer-Sova’s chef, Chaim Lugassi.

*Continued on pg. 35*



Beer-Sova’s Chef Chaim Lugassi

## ZAHAVA: DISCOVERING A LIFE FOCUS

Fifteen years of physical and emotional abuse finally forced Zahava to take her three young children, two of whom are legally blind, and leave her husband. This solution was not an accepted one among families from Georgia in the former Soviet Union, so Zahava found herself very much alone. She sought therapy at the Municipal Center for Domestic Abuse. She became stronger after a year of services, but could not free herself from feeling lost, without direction.

She had not worked while being married so she began to volunteer in the Beer-Sova Community Restaurant. She helped serve the meals; listening to the diners as they shared their own various problems, she found her perspective expanding. She joined Beer-Sova’s nascent women’s group NEMESH. Fifteen women, including Zahava, joined together to learn about their rights, advocate for change and become the voice for many women who could not speak out for themselves.

NEMESH opened the door for Zahava to gain civil rights formerly denied her. With guidance, she has evolved to become one of the group’s leaders. She sought and found work as a chef in a hostel for the mentally impaired. When the Recipe for Success training program was announced, she was among the first to commit to the 10-week course given under the auspices of the Beer-Sheva Chef College. Certificate of completion in hand, Zahava became a chef in a local restaurant.

From despair, abuse and fear, Zahava has emerged as a confident individual with a definite direction and meaning to her life.

## UZI: WORKING HIS WAY BACK UP

Uzi, who greets Beer-Sova customers with a smile and reassuring manner every day, has lived through an unusually large share of challenges. He made *aliyah* as a young Zionist from Chile in 1970, but his absorption into Israeli society was interrupted for years by his mother’s illness back in his home country. After her passing, he returned to Israel, married, worked for a chemical company, was laid off, opened a business, divorced, and was beset by poor health. He was unable to work and found himself living on the streets of Beer-Sheva.

“Reaching the very bottom, one can only go up,” Uzi thought. He sought help through Clalit, the national health service. It found him a place to live comfortably with others who had also been homeless. And he was referred to Beer-Sova. He ate his meals there daily and soon began volunteering. He continues to do this, and gives time to a local nonprofit as well.

In 2010, the local Lions Club honored Uzi as their community volunteer of the year. And he was awarded a scholarship to take college preparatory courses at People’s University. After completing courses in psychology, medicine and business administration, he applied to BGU—and was accepted.

He has been a student in BGU’s Pinchas Sapir Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for the past three years.

Asked how his association with Beer-Sova affected his life, Uzi said: “First, it gave me nutrition for survival, then a hope for enduring the difficult days, and even more, a quiet for my soul to look toward a positive future.”

“Beer-Sova has given me the opportunity to be the best human being I can be according to each role I need to fill: parent, social worker, psychologist, and protector of volunteers and diners.”



# GREAT LAKES

Larry Goodman, *Honorary Chair*  
 Robyn Schneider, *Director*  
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## SHARING DAVID BEN-GURION'S VISION FOR THE NEGEV

Some 50 community leaders and congregants of Chicago Loop Synagogue gathered to hear Great Lakes Regional Director Robyn Schneider speak as part of the Shabbat Dinner and Lecture Series on Israeli Innovation presented by the Crain-Maling Foundation.

Robyn discussed BGU's cutting-edge research that is impacting the world, including advances in alternative energy, desert and water research, cyber security, and nanotechnology, with a focus on the University and legislative partnerships in the Great Lakes area.

## LEADING THE NEXT GREEN REVOLUTION

Prof. Shimon Rachmilevitch, director of BGU's French Associates Institute for Agriculture and Biotechnology of Drylands, recently visited the Chicago area. In addition to a meeting with Aviv Ezra, consul general of Israel to the Midwest, Prof. Rachmilevitch gave a special presentation to members of the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce and led a lunch discussion for members of The Standard Club and BGU supporters.

During his visit, Prof. Rachmilevitch shared how BGU is improving modern agriculture as it takes the lead in the next green revolution, discovering ways to respond to food commodity prices and food scarcity. He highlighted how his research reveals the ways plants can adapt and acclimate to stress with an emphasis on global change. He also discussed his role as the director of Root of the Matter, a new interdisciplinary

nary center that includes 25 labs and over 12 companies in Israel created to advance modern agriculture through the root zone.

## KEEPING UP WITH REGIONAL WATER COLLABORATION

While in the area for a research visit at Northwestern University, Prof. Noam Weisbrod, director of BGU's Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research, joined AABGU supporters at the home of Judith and Ernie Simon. Prof. Weisbrod talked about the Institute's latest water research and the local partnerships that are helping to ensure the availability of high-quality water not only for Israel, but for the world.



1. America-Israel Chamber of Commerce (AICC) Event Host Ted Banks; AICC Executive Director Michael Schmitt; Great Lakes Regional Director Robyn Schneider; BGU Prof. Shimon Rachmilevitch; AICC President Susan Rosenstein 2. Prof. Shimon Rachmilevitch; Great Lakes Regional Director Robyn Schneider; Matt Frieden; Tom McGovern, Iowa state director, Christians United for Israel 3. Ernie Simon, BGU Board of Governors member; Robyn Schneider; Nina Appel, event host

## CHAPTERS FORMING ACROSS THE REGION

To increase AABGU's visibility and empower the Great Lakes Region's steadfast and generous donors, chapters are being formed in Milwaukee, Detroit and Chicago. To kick off this initiative, Nina Appel hosted an intimate gathering at her home in Chicago that included a brainstorming session for increasing regional and local support.

If you are interested in starting a chapter or getting involved with one, contact [Robyn Schneider](#).

# GREATER FLORIDA

## GREATER FLORIDA

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Robert Colton, Len Epstein,  
Billy Joel, Edward Kaplan, Jan Liff,  
Alan Newman, Joel Reinstein,  
Martin Weinberg  
Reva Feldman, *Director*  
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## BLOOMING WITH INNOVATION

The Greater Florida Region was delighted to host AABGU's Mid-Winter Meeting at the PGA National Resort and Spa in Palm Beach Gardens and welcome national board members and friends from across the country.

The event featured briefings by BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi and AABGU's Chief Executive Officer Doug Seserman. Prof. Hanna Yablonka was the keynote speaker at the opening dinner. She previewed her new book: a collective biography of the first generation of native Israelis born between 1928 and 1955. Guy Gilady, deputy consul general of Israel to Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Puerto Rico, brought greetings from the Israeli embassy.

At the popular AABGUniversity lecture series, national board members and local AABGU supporters attended talks by BGU faculty members Prof. Hanna Yablonka, Dr. Ya'akov (Kobi) Gal and Prof. Iris Shai about their research in Holocaust studies, artificial intelligence in education, and nutrition, respectively.

## VISITS FROM BGU FACULTY

Prof. Guy Ben-Porat, of BGU's Department of Politics and Government, spoke about the secularization of contemporary Israel at Temple Judea in Palm Beach Gardens and Temple Torat Emet in Boynton Beach, and

met with AABGU supporters.

Prof. Hanna Yablonka, the Aron Bernstein Chair in Jewish History in BGU's Department of Jewish History, gave a presentation at Temple Emanu-El of Palm Beach on the Eichmann trial and Israel, drawing a large crowd of AABGU supporters and congregants.

Prof. Arie Saposnik, from BGU's Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, spoke in commemoration of *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day). His talk, "Holocaust Memory and the Shaping of Israeli Identity," was given at Temple Judea in Palm Beach Gardens and Temple Emanu-El of Palm Beach.

The region also hosted Dr. Oren Wacht, clinical instructor in the Department of Emergency Medicine and head of BGU's Medical Simulation Center in the Faculty of Health Sciences. He was the guest speaker at the 19th Annual Snowbird Luncheon, a joint event held with AABGU's Mid-Atlantic Region, Philadelphia Chapter.

Dr. Wacht presented on "Emergency Medical Response in Times of War and Terrorism," a topic he knows firsthand as he heroically served as a paramedic for 52 days near the Gaza border during Israel's 2014 Operation Protective Edge. National Board Member Ed Kaplan and his wife, Marilyn; Len Epstein and his wife, Sherry; and Rob Colton co-chaired the event.

## VISITING BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV

Dorothy Polayes, a member of BGU's Negev Society-Arava, recently visited the University for the first time, accompanied by Regional Director Reva Feldman. They met with faculty members at BGU's Marcus Family Campus in Beer-Sheva, as well as students from the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program. They also visited BGU's Sede Boqer Campus and toured the Negev down to Mitzpe Rimmon.



1. Dorothy Polayes with Prof. Amos Katz, dean of BGU's Faculty of Health Sciences 2. Greater Florida Regional Director Reva Feldman; Sharon and David Shine; Prof. Iris Shai 3. Ed and Marilyn Kaplan; Dr. Oren Wacht; Reva Feldman



# GREATER NEW YORK

Kevin M. Leopold  
Executive Director — Northeast  
Ilana Lewin, Assistant Director  
Chani Pearlstein, Program Manager  
Sarah Broad  
Leadership Engagement Manager  
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## CELEBRATING WITH AABGU IN NEW YORK CITY

The Greater New York Region hosted a festive Chanukah luncheon program honoring members of AABGU's Asarot and Living Legacy Societies.

Guests were treated to a surprise "visit" via Skype with three BGU students in Beer-Sheva, who are fellows of the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program. Together across the globe, the students and longtime BGU friend and supporter Rochelle Etingin lit the Chanukah candles. Then everyone recited the traditional holiday blessings and sang *Ma'oz Tzur*.

The guest speaker was Dr. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, the Rosen Family Career Development Chair in Judaic Studies at BGU's Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought.

Dr. Bar-Asher Siegal explored the story of Chanukah and the Maccabees' fight with the Greeks from two different perspectives. She explained how the two accounts of Chanukah are depicted differently by two separate authors of the Book of Maccabees: one written from the point of view of a Jew living in Israel, and the other by a Jew living in the Diaspora.

Following the presentation, new members of the Asarot Society received a beautiful certificate expressing AABGU's appreciation for their continued support. Asarot means "tens" in Hebrew and its members are part of a



1. BGU students celebrate Chanukah with local supporters.
2. Paulette and Joseph M. Rose, new members of the Living Legacy Society
3. Executive Director Kevin Leopold and new Living Legacy Society inductee Sylvia Ascher

special group of donors who have contributed 10 gifts or more to AABGU over the years. The region was honored to recognize the group's commitment and generosity to BGU.

New inductees to the Living Legacy Society were also recognized. The Living Legacy Society includes those individuals who have included AABGU in their long-term estate plans. Longtime friends and supporters Paulette and Joseph M. Rose and Sylvia Ascher received a symbolic pomegranate representing the notion that "a seed

planted today brings beautiful blossoms tomorrow."

The program left guests with a warm, *hamish* feeling of being part of the AABGU and BGU family. This has become an annual event that friends and supporters look forward to each year.

For more information on the Asarot or Living Legacy Society, contact Ilana Lewin at 646-452-3695 or [ilewin@aabgu.org](mailto:ilewin@aabgu.org)

# GREATER TEXAS

Elizabeth Grzebinski and Robin Stein  
*Regional/Houston Chairs*  
 Ellen S. Marcus, *Austin Chair*  
 Dr. Michael Ozer, *San Antonio Chair*  
 Deborah Bergeron, *Regional Director*  
 Sissy Zoller, *Dallas Representative*  
 (713) 522-8284  
 texas@aabgu.org

## WELCOMING AABGU'S NEW CEO TO TEXAS

A Chanukah celebration was held at the home of Jonathan and Barbara Baliff to welcome AABGU's new Chief Executive Officer Doug Seserman. Cantor Meir Finkelstein of Congregation Beth Yeshurun began the evening by leading the group in a variety of the season's songs.

Wearing his "official" Greater Texas Region cowboy hat, Doug addressed some 45 guests, expounding on his vision for AABGU's future and noting how honored and proud he was to be part of this incredible organization's mission and vision.

## 17TH ANNUAL GOURMET KOSHER DINING EXTRAVAGANZA

This year's fabulous event was held March 19, 2018 at Houston's Royal Sonesta Hotel, co-chaired by Barbara Baliff and Lisa and Michael Sachs—all graduates of Cohort III of AABGU's Zin Fellows Leadership Program. Some 250 attendees enjoyed hearing from the evening's guest speaker, Dr. Daniel Gordis, award-winning author and columnist.

Dr. Gordis gave an eloquent, inspiring talk about how BGU has transformed the Negev and reflects the very best the Jewish State has to offer the world. All profits from the event, over \$1 million, are being directed to establish a much-needed Undergraduate Student Village on BGU's new North Campus.

The evening's dinner was prepared by six of Houston's finest chefs, including Ben Berg of Carmelo's/B&B Butchers; Tommy Elbashary of B&B Butchers; Mark Cox of Mark's Culinary Consulting; Robert Graham of the Royal Sonesta Hotel; Jason Goldstein of Genesis Steak House; and Kiran Verma of Kiran's. The meal consisted of five newly created kosher gourmet sensations; the reviews were simply outstanding—six stars all around!

A private Founders Reception took place earlier that evening to celebrate those who have made major philanthropic contributions to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. This honorable group was joined by BGU's Vice President and Dean for Research and Development Dan Blumberg, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Andy Icken, the city's chief development officer, AABGU's CEO Doug Seserman, and guest speaker Dr. Daniel Gordis.

1. CEO Doug Seserman receives his "official" cowboy hat and a warm Texas welcome.

2. David Breslauer; Sarah Braham; Prof. Dan Blumberg; Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner; Regional Director Deborah Bergeron; Denis Braham; AABGU's CEO Doug Seserman 3. 2018 Extravaganza Chairs Michael and Lisa Sachs; Chef Mark Cox; Chef Kiran Verma; Chef Jason Goldstein; 2018 Extravaganza Chair Barbara Baliff; Chef Robert Graham 4. Celebrating Israel's 70th in Dallas. AABGU co-hosted "Breakfast With Alon Ben-Gurion" with the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas, Akiba Academy and Yavneh Academy on the Schultz Rosenberg Campus. Pictured are AABGU Dallas Representative Sissy Zoller; Alon Ben-Gurion (David Ben-Gurion's grandson); AABGU National Board Members Jaynie Schultz and Tracy Bell





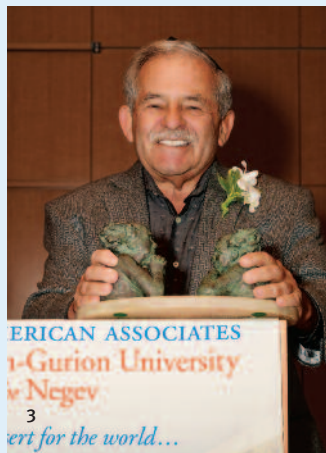
# MID-ATLANTIC

Connie and Sam Katz  
*Regional Chairs*  
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 (215) 884-4510  
 midatlantic@aabgu.org



## ANNUAL TRIBUTE BRUNCH

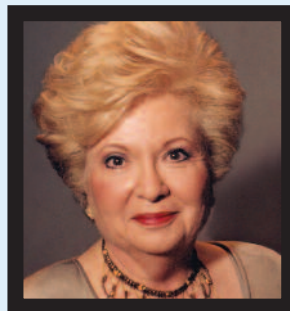
AABGU's Mid-Atlantic Region annual Tribute Brunch was not only a successful fundraiser in support of cyber security research, but a meaningful way to honor the region's leaders and welcome AABGU's Chief Executive Officer Doug Seserman to the community. It was also an honor to have AABGU President Toni Young in attendance at this festive event.



1. Ira and Eileen Ingerman hosted the Patron Party for the Tribute Brunch. Pictured are AABGU National Board Treasurer Ira Ingerman, Patron Chair and Philadelphia Chapter Vice Chair Sherrie Savett, BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi, and Eileen Ingerman 2. Dr. Robin Karol-Eng and Lee and Jane Bender 3. Gerald B. Shreiber, the inaugural recipient of the Albert and Harriet Soffa Lifetime Achievement Award 4. The Philadelphia Chapter's Winter Open Board Meeting and Luncheon featured AABGU CEO Doug Seserman and BGU alumnus Itai Weissberg, M.D., Ph.D. Pictured are: Doug Seserman; Sherrie Savett; Connie Katz; Dr. Itai Weissberg; David Blumenthal, Philadelphia chapter associate chair; and Claire Winick, regional director.

The event honored:

- **Dr. Robin Karol-Eng**, an ardent proponent of growth in Israel's Negev region for over 20 years. She served as chair of the Negev Funding Coalition within the Jewish Federations of North America and is now an associate chair of AABGU's Delaware Chapter.
- **Jane and Lee Bender** for their leadership of many local organizations, including the local chapter of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), of which Lee is co-president.



- **Gerald B. Shreiber**, recipient of the inaugural Albert and Harriet Soffa Lifetime Achievement Award. The Soffas introduced him to AABGU

Estelle Steinberg z"l was a dedicated AABGU leader for over 30 years, serving as Philadelphia Chapter co-chair from 1993 to 1995. She and her husband, David, were honored by the Philadelphia Chapter in 1996 at a very successful gala tribute dinner-dance, and they have served numerous times as chairs of events and on committees. The Steinbergs are Founders, members of the Asarot and Living Legacy Societies, and both have been Philadelphia Chapter associate chairs for several years. Estelle's beautiful smile and big heart will be sorely missed by those who were blessed to know her.

some 30 years ago. A member of BGU's Negev Society, Gerry has continued his financial support of several different projects for many years.

# NEW ENGLAND

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## BGU PRESIDENT PROF. RIVKA CARMİ IN NEW ENGLAND

In Newton, the Israel Action Committee at Temple Emanuel co-sponsored a program featuring a conversation between Prof. Rivka Carmi and Temple Emanuel's Rabbi Michelle Robinson. Among the topics discussed were David Ben-Gurion's vision for developing the Negev, the role of women in academia and combating the silent boycott of Israeli academics.

In Dedham, Bernice Krupp, longtime AABGU friend and supporter, hosted a program featuring BGU's president at NewBridge on the Charles. Prof. Carmi provided an overview on the latest developments at the University and highlighted new partnerships between BGU and other international institutions.

## WELCOME EVE RUBINSTEIN

AABGU is excited to welcome Eve Rubinstein as the new senior philanthropic manager for the Northeast. She has worked extensively in development on behalf of Israel-based and Jewish educational organizations, most recently as the U.S. director of the Israel Venture Network.

Eve also served for 10 years as senior development officer for major gifts at the Combined Jewish Philanthropies in Boston. Previous roles include fundraising, program support and spearheading service initiatives at Boston's Jewish Community Day School, the American Friends of the Open University and the 92nd Street Y in New York City.

Eve will work from Boston, representing AABGU's first full-time presence in Boston since 2009. She will be part of AABGU's Northeast Region, which encompasses the New England and Greater New York Regions.

The New England Region has been a cornerstone of AABGU since its inception, and the community's steadfast dedication to its mission has been an inspiration throughout the United States. With this longstanding support and the experience Eve brings, AABGU looks ahead with great anticipation as we expand our reach in New England and deepen our impact for BGU.

Eve Rubinstein can be reached at 781-544-4518 or [erubinstein@aabgu.org](mailto:erubinstein@aabgu.org)



1. BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi speaks with Rabbi Michelle Robinson. 2. George and Liz Krupp, Bernice Krupp and Prof. Rivka Carmi 3. Northeast Executive Director Kevin Leopold celebrates Bernice Krupp's birthday. 4. Eve Rubinstein



# NORTHWEST

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## TIKKUN OLAM WITHOUT BORDERS

"I love my job," says Lynne Quittell, M.D., director of the North American admissions office of BGU's Medical School for International Health (MSIH).

"I've had the pleasure of being involved with MSIH from the beginning—more than 20 years—and have watched our medical students thrive in our unique program and develop into physicians serving throughout the world. Seeing them realize their dreams is enormously gratifying."

Based in New York, Dr. Quittell visited the Bay Area to give a presentation on "Tikkun Olam Without Borders: Healing the World Through Global Medicine" at San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El. She described how BGU's MSIH, taught in English, prepares doctors to address complex health concerns all over the world, and to practice medicine across cultural, geographic and technological boundaries.

"We provide specialized training for physicians to work in underserved populations in developing countries, rural areas, inner cities, and Israel's Negev region with large numbers of Bedouin and immigrant patients," she says.

Dr. Quittell, who is also a pediatric pulmonologist at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, shared how MSIH doctors receive the clinical skills and medical knowledge to put patients first—whether in a humanitarian crisis, a refugee clinic or in one of the world's leading medical centers.

For more information about the MSIH, visit: <http://msih.bgu.ac.il/>



1. Riki and Coby Dayan of Los Altos Hills hosted a festive Israeli luncheon for Doug Seserman on his first Bay Area visit as AABGU's chief executive officer. Pictured are: Steve Hurst, member of BGU's board of governors; Riki Dayan; Carol Saal, vice chair of BGU's board of governors; Doug Seserman; Harry Saal, BGU board of governors member; Coby Dayan, vice president, AABGU national board; Sonny Hurst, past president, Northwest region; Judith Alterman, Northwest regional director.
2. Dr. Valerie Jahan; Dr. Lynne Quittell; Senior Philanthropic Advisor Daphna Noily; Northwest Regional Director Judith Alterman; Lillian Jahan; Arlene and Steve Krieger
3. AABGU National Board Member Margie Offer; Zin Fellow Aaron Hendelman and his wife, Christina
4. AABGU National Board Member Kathleen Spitzer; Rob Spitzer; Brina Sanft; Doug Seserman

## "BEN-GURION, EPILOGUE" AT THE SEATTLE JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

"Ben-Gurion, Epilogue," winner of the 2017 Israeli Ophir Award (the Israeli Oscars) for best documentary film, was shown at this year's Seattle Jewish Film Festival to rave reviews. Co-sponsored by AABGU and the Seattle-Beer-Sheva Sister City Association, the screening was introduced by AABGU Chief Executive Officer Doug Seserman,

who explained how an intimate, in-depth interview with Israel's founding father emerged from the depths of the Ben-Gurion Archives located on BGU's Sede Boqer Campus, where it lay unrecognized for decades.

After the screening, National Board Member Kathleen Spitzer and her husband, Rob, hosted a reception for AABGU supporters at their Mercer Island home on Lake Washington.



# SOUTHWEST

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## “BEN-GURION, EPILOGUE” IN BEVERLY HILLS AND DENVER

The AABGU Southwest Region partnered with the Israel Film Festival on its opening night for the screening of the award-winning documentary “Ben-Gurion, Epilogue,” at the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills. Some 100 AABGU supporters attended the gala dinner, awards presentation and film screening, which drew nearly 2,000 guests. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev was a major topic in many of the speeches, including the film’s director, Yariv Mozer, and Meir Fenigstein, founder and executive director of the Israel Film Festival.

Doug Seserman, AABGU’s chief executive officer, received a warm welcome as he introduced the screening of “Ben-Gurion, Epilogue” at the Denver Jewish Film Festival. His introduction included an overview of BGU and highlighted how the audio track of the documentary’s film footage was discovered in the Ben-Gurion Archives located on BGU’s Sede Boqer Campus. Doug also participated in a panel discussion at the talkback after the screening, where a fascinating discussion was held on the topic “Israel’s 70th Year: Is Ben-Gurion’s Vision Still Relevant?”

## HIGHLIGHTING THE NEGEV’S LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Los Angeles Jewish Home’s Fountainview at Eisenberg Village welcomed Philip Gomperts, director of AABGU’s Southwest Region, for

a well-attended lecture and video presentation about BGU and the latest developments from the Negev. A lively question and answer session followed. AABGU donor and Fountainview resident Rhoda Levine, along with Gerald Picus, helped organize the event.

## SHARING EMERGENCY RESPONSE EXPERTISE IN LAS VEGAS

Dr. Oren Wacht shared his expertise on “First Aid Nation: Emergency Medical Response in Times of War and

Terrorism” to a group of AABGU supporters and new friends at the home of Helen and Bobby Feldman in Las Vegas.

Dr. Wacht spoke about his role as the head of the new Medical Simulation Center in BGU’s Faculty of Health Sciences, and provided a captivating presentation about preparing future paramedics for work in emergency services. BGU is the only Israeli academic institution that offers a bachelor’s degree in emergency medicine, a program also headed by Dr. Wacht.



1. Regional Director Philip Gomperts and Meir Fenigstein, founder and executive director of the Israel Film Festival 2. At the Israel Film Festival: Philip and Yvonne Gomperts; Ruth Flinkman-Marandy and Ben Marandy 3. At the Denver Jewish Film Festival: Associate Director Andrew Hoffer, Jon Madison and Art Kleinstein 4. At Denver’s “Ben-Gurion, Epilogue” talkback: Rabbi Joseph Friedman, JEWISHcolorado’s Israeli Emissary Osnat Fox and AABGU CEO Doug Seserman



# WASHINGTON/ BALTIMORE

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## WELCOMING AABGU'S NEW CEO

The Washington/Baltimore Region was thrilled to introduce AABGU's Chief Executive Officer Doug Seserman at two programs. Anat and Avram Bar-Cohen hosted a gathering of longtime AABGU supporters in their home in Bethesda, and National Board Member Jill Max hosted current and former Zin fellows at her home in Baltimore.

AABGU's Zin Fellows Leadership Program is an in-depth immersion into the development of Israel's Negev region as the future of Israel (see page 5). Harel Turkel, Jon Davidov and Steven Himmelfarb represent the region in the current Zin IV cohort.

## EXCITING LEADERSHIP CHANGES

AABGU is delighted to announce that David Speer has been promoted to regional director of the Washington/Baltimore Region, after serving as associate director for the past several years. David is excited to take the region to

new heights, together with Regional Chair Ira Wagner and community leaders. Please reach out to David with any questions or ideas you may have.

Keren Waranch, the region's director since 2007, has been promoted to vice president of regional operations. She joins AABGU's national senior management team with responsibility for donor affairs and regional staff across the United States.

## DESERT RESEARCH THAT IS CHANGING THE WORLD

Prof. Simon Barak of the French Associates Institute for Agriculture and Biotechnology of Drylands at BGU's Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research visited the area. His research focuses on identifying genes that allow plants to tolerate the harsh environmental stresses characteristic of arid regions.

National Board Member Deborah Fox and her husband, Maury, chaired a program at their synagogue, Congregation B'nai Tzedek, in Potomac. Prof. Barak also spoke at Baltimore's Beth El Congregation for a program co-sponsored by the synagogue and the Baltimore Zionist District.

## "BEN-GURION, EPILOGUE" COMES TO BALTIMORE

Co-sponsored by AABGU and the Macks Center for Jewish Education, "Ben-Gurion, Epilogue" premiered in the region at the Baltimore Jewish Film Festival at the Gordon Center for Performing Arts of the Owings Mills Jewish Community Center. "Ben-Gurion, Epilogue" is a documentary highlighting six hours of recently discovered David Ben-Gurion interview footage from 1968. The screening was followed by a Q&A session with David Ben-Gurion's grandson, Alon Ben-Gurion.

## HEALTH IMPLICATIONS FOR MARIJUANA USE

BGU Board of Governors members Drs. Morton and Toby Mower sponsored a symposium on marijuana use with the Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center (RADAR) at BGU, BGU's Toby Mower Curriculum for the Prevention and Treatment of Addiction, and the Department of Medicine at the University of Colorado. Titled "Health Implications of Marijuana Use: The Colorado Experience for Informed Decision-Making in Israel," the symposium featured workshops and speakers from BGU and the University of Colorado, focusing on the danger of synthetic cannabinoids.



1. AABGU Chief Executive Officer Doug Seserman; Anat Bar-Cohen; Regional Chair Ira Wagner; Avram Bar-Cohen 2. Baltimore Zin Fellows meet at the home of Jill Max 3. Ira May (right) visits BGU and learns about type 1 diabetes research with Prof. Eli Lewis (left).

## BEER-SOVA COMMUNITY RESTAURANT *Continued from page 25*

A social worker is on hand to provide support, as well as third-year BGU social work students, who provide additional counseling.

The restaurant also offers learning opportunities for both men and women to serve as volunteer assistant cooks, waiters and managers. A flexible environment makes it possible for many of these needy people to work, Slonim-Nevo points out. The standard eight-hour day is hard for people on

welfare who have children, often with special needs.

“They need suitable employment. And we make them part of the project, not just employees. We give them support, a car to use, they become rehabilitated—they find jobs and don’t need us anymore! Then they come to our public events and tell their stories. Some keep volunteering because they enjoy it.”

These days, Slonim-Nevo involves herself mainly in the planning dimen-

sion of Beer-Sova: meetings, raising money, grant applications. But she is spearheading another innovative offshoot—a new pub-restaurant on the BGU campus. This would give students a social place, provide employment opportunities and serve the University with catering and culinary events.

Prof. Vered Slonim-Nevo remains as energized as ever by her commitment to achieve equal justice and life opportunity for the poorest of the poor. These are big goals, she acknowledges.

“I believe strongly that if you work together and you are stubborn and continue, eventually you succeed.

“And the world is changing. We’re one global village and we have to take care of each other, live together.”

At moments when she feels discouraged, there’s Beer-Sova. “When I’m sad I go to the restaurant and feel wonderful. I see so many loyal friends. We’ve saved thousands of people. I’ve learned that when you serve others, you find that the more you do for them, the happier you are.” ■



The women of NEMESH—Women Advocating for Social Change—a group born at Beer-Sova that works for new national policies on poverty. [www.aabgu.org/donate-community](http://www.aabgu.org/donate-community)

## Cyber@BGU: WORKING TO KEEP US SAFE IN A SMART WORLD

*Continued from page 14*

anomalies that signal undesirable activity.

Establishing “air gap networks” is another broad approach. Physically isolating systems from each other and the unsecured public internet can prevent them from invasion and exploitation. However, the researchers are finding ways that hackers can circumvent such measures. “There’s always a new technology, and cyber attackers find their way right there,” Elovici says.

He and his colleagues see new challenges emerging in medicine,

aviation and autonomous vehicles and expect their research focus will follow. But in his vision, the realities familiar to us from science fiction are fast approaching.

Initiatives are already underway to connect the human brain to the cloud, he points out. “What if in 10 or 15 years our interaction with the world will be through our brains? What if the communication in the cloud or our stored memories are hacked?”

Let us hope the white hatters get there first. ■



Cyber security students work at an elusive goal—finding vulnerabilities in our systems before the hackers do. [www.aabgu.org/donate-cyber](http://www.aabgu.org/donate-cyber)





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## Plant an Olive Tree *to Seed Desert Research*



Plant an olive tree in *Wadi Mashash*, the experimental farm of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and support invaluable agricultural research that could mean the difference between starvation and sustenance for men, women and children who live in drylands and deserts.

Planting a tree for research in honor or in memory of a loved one, or to commemorate a milestone occasion, is a great way to show you care, while also helping to make the Negev desert bloom.

To make your 100 percent tax-deductible contribution,  
go to [WWW.AABGU.ORG/OLIVETREES](http://WWW.AABGU.ORG/OLIVETREES)

