



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
جامعة بن-غوريون في النقب



# ENGAGING HOPE

BGU students are leading social action and community engagement



*Only through a united effort by the State in planning and execution, by a people ready for a great voluntary effort, by a youth bold in spirit and inspired by a creative heroism, by scientists liberated from the bonds of conventional thought and capable of probing deep into the special problems of this country, shall we succeed in carrying out the great and momentous task of developing the south and the Negev.*

*David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister*



*As positive role models, BGU's student volunteers can literally change lives.*

*Prof. Daniel Chamovitz,  
University President*

# Our Vision

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev was founded with a special pioneering spirit – a desire to realize the potential of the frontier region, which comprises some 60 percent of Israel but is home to less than 10 percent of its population.

Created by government mandate, BGU's mission is to transcend the boundaries of academia and create a new model of education and research that has a direct impact on people's lives.

Today, BGU has succeeded beyond all expectations, having built an academic institution that is deeply

rooted in the community, while achieving international recognition for its inspired scholarship and impact-based research.

Our students don't just learn about people in need, they live and learn with them – both in Israel and among some of the world's poorest communities – teaching English, building wells and reaching out to make a difference. We are particularly proud of the hands-on approach that represents the true BGU spirit of learning through doing and believe our students' lives are enriched by the experience.



*Our students get involved, engaging directly with the community around them as part of their education.*

*Adv. Vered Sarussi Katz, Director,  
Department of Community Action*





# The Aviv Project



## Ohad Wormser, 27

Recipient of a Lubner Prize for Community Service

Hometown: Gedera

4th-year student, Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School



The program promotes the integration of Ethiopian immigrant children into their adopted culture and homeland. Students mainly from the Faculty of Health Sciences serve as volunteer mentors at the Haruv Absorption Center in Beer-Sheva, running a number of special activities, such as storytelling, enrichment classes, tutoring and Holiday celebrations, bringing the youths together with other sectors of the population.



*We focus on the principle of double giving as part of our activity – the students who volunteer give the Ethiopian children the opportunity to make their own contribution to the community. Whereas they are accustomed to receiving help from others, this program empowers them to make a difference to the elderly and to those in greater need.*





# HaBarvaz Theater Group



Shir Ophir, 22

Hometown: Raanana

2nd-year Psychology and Cognitive Sciences Student



When the cornerstone of the Deichmann Building for Community Action was laid in 2000, a dream was fulfilled: benefactor Dr. Heinz-Horst Deichmann had always hoped to build a symbolic meeting place that would invite community members into the University. Today, the building houses the Sara Tadmor Auditorium, built specifically for the HaBarvaz Theater Group.

Organized by the Community Action Department, the HaBarvaz Theater Group provides a healthy framework for Beer-Sheva's seventh to twelfth graders to come together and perform theater under the caring guidance of a professional director. The group seeks to empower those teenagers with a passion for theater, who may have no other opportunity to express themselves artistically. The group produces a major original play at the end of each year.



*This is an amazing program that allows participants to use acting as an empowerment tool, helping them gain confidence and open up emotionally, while escaping from their troubling reality.*







# Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program



Yehonatan Goren, 20

Hometown: Beer-Sheva

2nd-year Economics and Business Administration Student



Students of the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program make their home in the socio-economically challenged neighborhoods of Beer-Sheva. In exchange for rent-free accommodation, students provide eight hours a week of community service. Many families benefit from the program's wide range of activities, including after-school tutoring and workshops, children's and elderly residents groups and summer programs, while our students learn the tremendous significance of giving back to society.

Yehonatan Goren offers an artistic graffiti workshop to a group of teenagers, teaching them a variety of styles and techniques and providing constructive criticism of their work. Instead of engaging in vandalism, they apply their newly acquired skills to the embellishment of the neighborhood.



*I come from a similar background and am happy to have the opportunity to serve as a role model for these kids, spending quality time with them and teaching them a whole new art form.*



# Life in the Community



## Simona Yoffe, 28

Hometown: Beer-Sheva

4th-year student, Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School



This program offers first-aid training, free of charge, to the diverse Negev population, thus empowering the participants and enhancing their sense of security and wellbeing. The volunteers, all of them students in the Faculty of Health Sciences, establish unmediated personal connections with local residents, particularly young parents and preschool teachers, many of whom have had no previous exposure to the University.



*I am constantly impressed by people's willingness to learn. An elderly woman once approached me at the end of a session with tears in her eyes. She said that she had given up learning at the age of 14, thinking herself incapable of it, and now felt useful for the first time in years, asserting that she could actually save a life. I was very moved.*



# Osim Rechov

## (Street Makeover)



Matan Saad, 28

Keren Moshe Leadership Program

Hometown: Beer-Sheva

MA Student in Urban Planning



An initiative of the Student Union, Osim Rechov aims to bring students together with the residents of Beer-Sheva living near the University. Together, they engage in the restoration and enhancement of the neighborhood, through clean-up operations, the cultivation of community gardens and the installation of street furniture. A colorful street fair is held as part of the event, including arts and crafts workshops, mural painting, musical performances and food stalls.



*Something wonderful is happening on the street – students and residents join forces to create their own public space, and the results speak for themselves. Nothing makes me happier.*











# The Perach Tutorial Project



Anwar Wanni, 20

Hometown: Shefaram

1st-year Pharmacology Student



The nationwide Perach Tutorial Project “strives to support a society based on mutual caring and responsibility through the creation of meaningful relationships between mentors, students, and youth.” Its southern division is based in a section of the Deichmann Building for Community Action that includes a library, game rooms, an enrichment center and a computer lab.

Anwar Wanni volunteers with Arab children at one of the enrichment centers located in Beer-Sheva’s diverse neighborhoods, offering them a challenging and enjoyable learning experience, while promoting creativity and curiosity through sports, arts, cooking and theater workshops, in addition to individual tutoring.

[www.perach.org.il](http://www.perach.org.il)



*Not only do we strive to improve the children’s scholastic achievements, but we also offer them an unforgettable experience. The program has enabled me to bond with these children and I enjoy every moment spent with them.*

# Green Campus



## Alon Freund, 28

Hometown: Ma'ale Adumim

4th-year Communication Systems Engineering Student



Green Campus seeks to create a cleaner environment at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and throughout the city of Beer-Sheva. Among its activities, it operates a community garden jointly with the Be'er-Sova non-profit organization, which also runs a soup kitchen and a socio-educational enrichment center. The community garden at Be'er-Sova hosts a slew of activities open to the public, including Holiday celebrations, recycling workshops, the cultivation of fresh, organic produce for the needy and an opportunity for groups of special needs children to grow their own plants.



*The garden is alive and flourishing; it offers tremendous gratification to all those involved in its cultivation.*











# Alpha



## Or Ben-Waiss, 28

Hometown: Eshkolot  
2nd-year Psychology Student



*It has been such a privilege to get to know Viola. Every week as I visit her in her home, I feel that we grow closer and learn to trust each other. This is an ongoing conversation.*



The organization aims to improve the lives of the elderly, and especially of Holocaust survivors, by helping them claim their benefits, making home visits, recording their life stories and ensuring their food security. Students establish personal connections with individuals and support them while they are hospitalized, organize special Holiday celebrations and raise funds to supply them with basic necessities, such as blankets, heaters and food.

Or Ben-Waiss makes weekly visits to 98-year-old Viola Török, a Czech Holocaust survivor who began her medical studies prior to the war. In 1944 she was sent to Auschwitz and then transferred to a labor camp, where she worked in the clinic. She settled in Beer-Sheva in 1959 and was among the founders of BGU's Faculty of Health Sciences. In 2004 she was awarded the Ben-Gurion Negev Award in recognition of her contribution to medicine in the Negev. Her daughter, Hanna Yablonka, is a professor of Jewish History at BGU, specializing in the Holocaust.







# Students for Refugees



## Moran Mekamel, 30

Public Leadership Training Program

Hometown: Kiryat Motzkin

Graduate Student in the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work



The goal of this student-led initiative is to assist the refugees seeking shelter in Israel by providing them with tools for success, through such programs as Hebrew- and English-language instruction, first-aid workshops and lectures informing them of their rights. Moreover, in an attempt to build a bridge between the asylum seekers and the Israeli public, informal joint activities are held, including Sudanese-Israeli women's evenings, jam sessions and fieldtrips. Moran Mekamel was among the founders of this program and continues to be actively involved, having established strong personal relationships with the refugees.



*Aiding asylum seekers is not just about assisting them. We believe that an education to tolerance will create a better society for all of us, one marked by mutual respect, brotherhood and solidarity.*

# List of Activities

The following is only a partial list of the many activities and organizations in which our students are involved:

## BGU LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

### **Keren Moshe Leadership Training Program**

A competitive, unique and innovative scholarship program for BGU students, aiming to nurture social and political responsibility among Israel's future generation of leaders. Some 120 students annually attend lectures, tours and skills-based training to strengthen their social awareness, enhance their leadership skills, and

encourage them to initiate their own entrepreneurial projects in the community. Keren Moshe students are deeply committed to hands-on community involvement through a range of social activities aimed at a variety of needs, ranging from the Kidma (progress) Project, which provides adults with basic education,

to individual initiatives and projects. Thanks to the enduring support of Esther and Michel Halpérin of Switzerland, these students are provided with the knowledge and tools to ultimately help create a more just and inclusive society.





### **Lubner Prize for Community Service**

Sponsored by Bertie and Hilary Lubner of South Africa, the Lubner Prize is awarded to BGU students who have distinguished themselves in their selfless devotion and contribution to a social cause.

### **Public Leadership Training Program**

The program provides knowledge of Israeli society in order to cultivate active and involved individuals. The students participate in a wide range of social projects and theoretical training, including lectures and workshops.

### **Rothschild Cube**

A unique “social simulator,” in collaboration with the Edmond de Rothschild Foundation, offering experiential academic training and guidance aimed at promoting effective social involvement. Its programs provide professional tools and skills and expand knowledge for various stakeholders in the social arena, including student activists.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Ilan Ramon Youth Physics Center**

Students offer local elementary and high-school children experiential science-oriented enrichment programs.

### ***Kidma***

The program provides an opportunity for adults of various backgrounds throughout the Negev, including many new immigrants, to complete a basic education. BGU students teach them in evening classes on core subjects (Hebrew, math, computers, and English).

### ***Ma'amatz***

Workshops for high-school students and preparatory workshops for teachers to increase awareness of sexual harassment and violence among youths and to encourage behavioral change.



### **Windows onto Campus Dreams**

This award-winning program, in collaboration with the Israel Prison Service, brings inmates to the Marcus Family Campus for a positive learning experience through weekly classes on a variety of health-related topics taught by BGU students and professors.

### ***Pa'amonim***

Financial literacy for families in economic distress. Student volunteers work with an assigned family over the year helping them solve various financial problems and create a balanced budget.

### ***Shachar***

Students from the Faculty of Health Sciences introduce teens to the world of science and medicine with the goal of increasing motivation to continue to study and explore.

### **Women for Engineering Program**

Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering students give enrichment courses to middle-school girls in subjects such as math, robotics and programming, encouraging girls to pursue advanced studies in the Engineering Sciences.

## **HEALTH**

### **Think+**

BGU students, as relatable role models, teach high school youth how to lead a healthy sexual life and prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

### **Edy's House - Ma'agan Beer-Sheva Community Cancer Care Center**

Volunteers provide social and emotional support for people with cancer, offering patients, friends and family members networking opportunities, lectures, workshops and social events in a warm, home-like setting.





### **Teddy Bear Hospital Program**

Medical Students Association of the Negev (ASRN) volunteers accompany kindergarten children to the hospital, with their favorite teddy bear in tow, to ease the fear associated with visits to the doctor's office and hospital.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Beer-Sheva Loves Animals**

Students involved in this association seek to better the lives and treatment of the animals in and around Beer-Sheva, through educational activities, caretaking and adoption campaigns.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS**

#### **Beit Guy Hostel**

Students support and enrich the lives of the residents of this rehabilitative center for youths aged 18 to 30, who are struggling with mental illness.

#### **Canine Companion Program**

The Canine Companion program was established with the aim of training "Hebrew Speaking" dogs for Israel's Guide Dog Center. Each year, some 30 students foster the young pups in order to socialize them during their first year, before they embark on a lifetime of service to Israel's visually impaired. Dozens of seeing-eye dogs have "graduated" from BGU over the past decade.

#### **One-on-One**

The program, in cooperation with Best Buddies, matches students with cognitively impaired young people, in hopes of forging friendships and promoting tolerance and acceptance.

#### **Shema**

Volunteers cater to the special needs of hearing-impaired children and teenagers.

#### **Tzavta**

Students volunteer at an enrichment center for individuals with special needs.





## SOCIAL JUSTICE

### ***Hatsedek Itach***

The program, led by student volunteers in collaboration with Itach-Maaki – Women Lawyers for Social Justice, empowers participating women through exposure to various aspects of the law, a supporting group of peers, and guidance in navigating legal obstacles.

### ***Ayalim***

Students live and volunteer in the toughest areas of the peripheries, strengthening existing communities through social involvement, and encouraging graduates to remain in the area.

### **Forum for Social Justice**

Volunteers seek to empower the next generation of young Israelis to become agents of social change.

### ***Kama***

Raising public awareness of the status of women in Israeli society, promoting gender equality and effecting significant social change.

### ***Seleg***

This BGU student organization distributes food to the needy on a weekly basis. They ensure that fresh fruits and vegetables and dry goods find their way to over 200 households throughout Beer-Sheva.

### ***Jamila***

An outreach initiative to identify and help at-risk youth. Volunteers visit specific locations every night to speak with and establish personal connections to these adolescents, lending a sympathetic ear and providing a positive role model.

### **Big Brother**

Students who were formerly “lone soldiers” without family or support in Israel, help today’s lone soldiers based on their own experiences. They provide guidance and workshops, as well as one-on-one support.



# Israeli Hope in Academia at BGU



Ben-Gurion University joined “Israeli Hope in Academia,” a broad social initiative launched by the President of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, to increase diversity and mutual understanding within Israeli society. BGU’s mandate is social responsibility and outreach, so it was only natural that it would become a major partner in this important venture.

The initiative is being applied throughout the University with efforts toward making the University a more diverse work and study environment and increasing the number of students from under-represented population groups.



*Academia and the job market are  
the gateway to realization of the  
Israeli dream... a shared space where  
a common language and goals are  
initially created.*

*Reuven Rivlin, President of the State of Israel*

Produced by the Department of  
Publications and Media Relations

Photos: Dani Machlis

Design: Stephanie & Ruti Design

March 2015

2<sup>nd</sup> edition: September 2019

## Contact Us

To learn more or support students  
volunteering in the community, contact  
the Department of Resource Development:  
[www.bgu.ac.il/donor](http://www.bgu.ac.il/donor)

Donate online at: [www.bgu.ac.il/give2bgu](http://www.bgu.ac.il/give2bgu)



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
جامعة بن-غوريون في النقب



[www.bgu.ac.il](http://www.bgu.ac.il)