**Partnership 2Gether Yokneam Megido Atlanta**

For over 25 years, the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta is connected to the city of Yokneam and to the Regional Council of Megido in Israel as part of the Partnership 2Gether platform of the Jewish Agency for Israel. The federation support is divided into three main parts:

***Yokneam***

The city of Yokneam was founded at 1950 as a small town inhabited mainly by "Olim" from Morocco. Until the mid 70's the town remained under 5000 inhabitants, mostly depended on the one Factory who's main customer was Iran. Today the city is close to 25,000 people from all layers of Israeli society and streams. It has a national known Hi-Tech park and considered a high level plave to live in. Much of this change is due to the partnership with the Jewish Federations of Atlanta and St. Louis.

In Yokneam, the Federation’s donations focus on the Ethiopian Jewish Community. While the Ethiopian Jewish community still faces challenges across Israel, Yokneam remains committed to supporting and empowering its families and improving their opportunity for success in education, employment, and their overall economic security. Thanks to the donations Yokneam’s 1,263 Ethiopians:

* Have higher matriculation rates (68%) than the national average for Israeli Ethiopians (52%)
* Have lower school dropout rates (1%) than the national average for Israeli Ethiopians (2.5%)
* Have seen a significant increase in the number of young people seeking higher education – from 5 several years ago to 55 students today
* 80% of all Ethiopians who participate in a key Federation/Yokneam program around family empowerment, report that they were successful in achieving their education, occupation, or parenting goals.

The federations programs represent a variety of needs – from welfare and families at risk to leaders, students, people who want to upgrade their work position and more.

Nevertheless, the huge initial cultural gap and the challenges of the second generation make it clear this needs to be a multi-generational effort. The focus of the activities now is on the second generation in hope that their children will be free from this loop and will have an equal opportunity.

Aviva is a mother of 4 children from 2 different fathers, raising them all by herself in Yokneam. Due to her participance in the program, she got funding for school assistance for one of her girls, she improved her occupational status and salary and she is now striving to get higher education. During the past 6 years the number of students in higher Education from the Ethiopian community increased from 5 to 55.

Another contribution of the partnership is the establishment of an Early childhood center. The federations previously supported 3-5 different small programs addressing heeds in early childhood (mostly for the Ethiopian community). In 2016 the federations "convinced" the municipality to create an early childhood center and so they did. The federations focus their part of the funding to the Ethiopian community and make sure they get all the services not just in the center but also close to their homes, in the neighborhood.

 **Megido**

The Megido regional council is one of the oldest regional councils in Israel, being established in 1945. The council houses close to 12,000 people on nine kibbutzim, three moshavim (settlements) and one Moshava located in its municipal territory.

The Federations program in Megido focuses on the three “Moshavim” that are in the regional council: Elyakim, Ein Haemek and Midrach Oz. The Moshavim have been suffering from socio-economic challenges, high rates of youth at risk and youth crimes and lack of support systems within the communities. This program is consisted of activities for youth and youth at risk within the Moshavim and making sure to prioritize kids and youth from the Moshavim. In Megiddo, the Federation supports the municipality in fixing a long period of inequality, providing services that the government is not funding. In most cases, the support of the Federations extends the quantity and variety of activities and in other cases; the programs are totally dependent on the support.

**Kesher**The Jewish Federation of Atlanta also focuses in the establishment and empowerment of long term meaningful personal relationships between the people in Atlanta and in Yokneam Megido. There are several flagship programs such as the school twinning program, professionals’ exchange, and tailor made visits in the Partnership region of families, groups, delegations etc in order to provide a personal perspective of Israel and to connect Atlanta community to the modern story of Israel. Last year, an all-time high of 591 Atlantans visited the region, deepening connections with Israeli students, teachers and families.

The school twinning network is getting stronger in Atlanta and there are ongoing educational programs between schools in Yokneam and Megido with the schools in Atlanta- AJA, The Epstein School, The Temple, The Davis Academy and The Weber School. The School twinning programs promote the sense of Jewish Peoplehood and shared responsibility – for students in schools in Atlanta Yokneam and Megido. Students have the chance to meet each other for dynamic conversations around issues such as Jewish Identity and Social Responsibility. Twinning programs, likewise, link educators for professional and personal enrichment. This year the Partnership region hosted a federation delegation of seven Atlanta educators for an educational Seminar in the region.

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