

ERITREAN WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CENTER NEWSLETTER

MARCH-¹
MAY 2013



The Eritrean Community Women's Center in South Tel Aviv works in partnership with Release Eritrea. The center is a grassroots initiative developed to offer Eritrean women in Israel access to much-needed support.

International Women's Day 2013

In celebration of International Women's Day on 8th March 2013, the Eritrean Women's Community Center hosted a fundraising event. This event was a huge success in terms of showcasing the activities of the center, raising much-needed funds and bringing together Israeli, Eritrean and International supporters of the project.

Around 200 people attended the throughout the later afternoon and early evening. Everyone enjoyed

eating Eritrean food prepared by the women's group while listening to traditional music performed by a band. The Eritrean Forum on Domestic Abuse put on a play depicting the struggling of men and women in Israel who are dealing with domestic abuse.

Representatives from the community spoke about the center and its importance for Eritreans living in Israel. Guests, including Sara Robinson from Amnesty International and Orit Rubin

from ASSAF Organization also spoke about the role of the center in community development and belonging.

We would like to thank all of those who attended the event and helped to make it a success!





Dr. Habte, Health Q&A

In order to fully understand the topics and issues deemed most important to the Eritrean women, there are weekly Q&A sessions held by the esteemed Dr. Habte. During these weekly meetings, Dr. Habte comes to the Center and engages the women in various discussions on health matters from general nutrition to pregnancy to childcare.

Many women prepare their questions beforehand knowing that they will have the opportunity to sit and speak in a safe space and have their questions and concerns addressed in a culturally accessible way. It is from these sessions that the Women's Center is able to build a framework of the issues surrounding the community and begin to develop programming to address these topics. We would like to extend our gratitude to Release Eritrea for their continued support of this initiative.



WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

English and Hebrew Classes

The Center continues to provide English and Hebrew classes to many women, helping them to become much more confident in their ability to overcome the language barrier. From practical teachings on overcoming obstacles at work, in transportation to daily conversation, through these classes the women are able to

engage in lessons aiding them to speak, read and write in the respective languages. There are currently over 40 women taking either Hebrew or English classes, and as the Center continues to develop its capacities, we aim to see this number grow.

The Eritrean Forum on Healthy Families

Beginning in January 2013, a group was formed at the Eritrean Women's Community

Center to address the rising levels of domestic abuse within the Eritrean Community.

This group composed of both men and women, aim to produce and replicate the system of community support that used to be readily available to families and individuals back in Eritrea. Due to this separation, the Forum on Healthy Families aims to establish themselves as a local beacon of guidance and support.

In March, the group collectively wrote and produced a booklet in Tigrinya that discusses domestic abuse and also addresses Israeli policy on domestic abuse within the context of refugees in Israel. This booklet will be replicated and distributed amongst various community locations, with the goal of reaching the widespread Eritrean community in Israel.

Women's Health Initiative

The Family Planning program was launched on April 2nd 2013 at the Eritrean Women's Community Center and this

program has continued to work with couples in the community, doctors and experts in Tel Aviv to offer Eritrean women information, guidance and access to family planning measures. Coordinated efforts between men, women, NGO's (such as Open Door, the Israeli AIDS taskforce, African Refugee Development Center and the Refugee Clinic) and private doctors, the program aims to ensure that women have the information and the access to safe and appropriate family planning services.

Since the beginning of April, we have been developing a pregnancy program which will take place at the center in the coming month. Refugee women in Israel face real struggles when they are pregnant as they have no access to follow up and health care.

On April 10th, a group of Eritreans and Israelis established the Pregnancy Forum. Through this forum, the collaboration designed a course framework that will deal with the stages pre, during and post pregnancy.

From general health and women's nutrition before pregnancy, to the necessary tests, checkups and nutrition measures to be taken during pregnancy to the stages of early child development the upcoming Pregnancy program aims at addressing the gaps in the system.

Nursery

An integral aspect of the Women's Center continues to be the children's nursery. This nursery maintains a very high standard of care for the children enrolled that is unavailable elsewhere for refugees. For the 18 children enrolled, parents continue to pay subsidized prices for the nursery, however women and couples that are in need are also able to use the nursery for limited amounts of time for little to no money.

As the programs and activities at the center continue to grow and develop, so does the nursery. Alongside the full time caregiver staff, the Center has begun utilizing volunteers from various backgrounds to come in and assist in different ways. From coming in for 3-4 hours to play with the children during the day and assisting the caregivers, to coming in during the evening programming to watch the children so the women can focus on the class, these volunteers help in making sure the Center is providing the best possible care and amenities to those who frequent the Center.

What We Need

Through the continued support of Release Eritrea in London, the Women's Center is able to keep its doors open and many of its programs and initiatives running. We thank and are incredibly grateful to Release Eritrea for this fundamental support.

As the Eritrean Women's Community Center continues to grow and develop, we aim to address the needs and issues at large.

The Center is always in need of **funding** to pay the Director and ensure that new programming can be developed.

Some other materials and items the Center needs are donations of **computers and/or laptops**. Basic computer skills and knowledge is a commodity in today's economy and the Center hopes to become a venue that has the materials and the knowledge to begin providing computer skills classes. Through donations of computers, the center can become a place able to offer individuals computer training classes.

The Center is also always in need of practical items for the children's nursery. As the children grow and develop, we aim to continue to provide a safe and educational nursery for all. We are looking into the feasibility of obtaining a **partition** for inside the nursery, to separate the older larger children from the younger ones. We are also looking for a **fence/gate**, this way we can keep the nursery doors open, but keep the children cordoned off into the grassy areas and keep them from wandering into the busy streets.

Donations of educational materials are also always welcomed. Books, movies, CD's and toys to help the children learn how to read write and speak in both Hebrew and English are always valued.

Donations of funds and inkind materials are always appreciated. If you have any further questions of how to make these donations please email eritreanwomenscenter@gmail.com.



Zebib Sultan

Zebib runs the women's center and acts as one of the nursery staff. Due to lack of other options, Zebib still spends many hours working in the nursery in order to supplement her own income from the subsidized payments of the mothers in the nursery. This means that Zebib is unable to focus all of her energies on the women's center as she is tired from working in the nursery during the day. We do have funding for a few hours of work each week, and the activities presented here are a result of these efforts.

"The Women's Center gives me a place to come to learn, relax and meet with other women. I am very thankful for this place!"- Merhawit

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