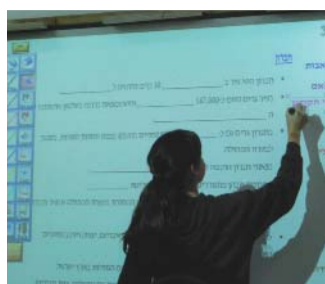


WORLD ORT TIMES



Get Smart

World ORT helps to launch 1,000 Smart classes in Israel.

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Creche course

How ORT South Africa is building bridges between rich and poor.

Page 4



Fine start

Major international prize for ORT Uruguay film student.

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Giving ORT students a tiny advantage

Once a kingdom could be lost for want of a nail; soon a country could collapse for the lack of something infinitesimal thanks to the mind boggling breakthroughs associated with nanotechnology, the new field of research which deals with structures more than 250 times smaller than the width of a human hair. So, true to its tradition of assimilating the latest scientific and technological developments into its curricula, World ORT is taking steps to ensure that its students can exploit the potential career opportunities in this increasingly important sphere of inquiry and industry.

One such step was the bringing together of leading academics from the USA, Israel and United Kingdom to ORT House, London for the seventh annual World ORT Hatter Technology Seminar – Nanotechnology and Material Science: From Research to Classroom. They shared their formidable knowledge of the engineering of functional systems at the molecular level – where technology is now, how it is expected to develop, what coming generations will need to know to be able to ride the wave and how to teach it to them – with 18 science and technology teachers from Israel, Italy,

South Africa, Lithuania, Russia, the Czech Republic, Mexico, Argentina, USA, France and Ukraine, who in turn will share what they learned with peers and pupils.

World ORT Past President Sir Maurice Hatter told participants: "ORT prides itself on giving its students an education that will help them to achieve success in a constantly changing world. To accomplish this we have to constantly innovate, both in the subjects that we teach and the methods we use to teach them. The Hatter Seminars provide our leading teaching staff with the opportunity to look

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World ORT's leaders confident about future

World ORT is in good shape and well placed to negotiate the challenges ahead – and its mission is more important now than ever.

These positive and determined views were expressed by World ORT lay leaders as they emerged from the organisation's first Board of Representatives meeting under the governing structure adopted at last year's General Assembly.

After three days of intensive discussions, presentations and networking in Mexico City no-one was under any illusions about the challenges ahead. But there was a palpable sense of optimism.

"We have an organisation that's safe and sound both financially and programmatically," said World ORT President Dr Jean de Gunzburg. "We have lay leaders and professionals who know exactly what the situation is and what to do about it in a prudent way. We are looking forward to a stronger organisation that is more focused and that will be better able to serve its children with education."

An example of World ORT's responsible managerial approach is the organisation's decision to work on 75 per cent of its budget this year. The situation will be reviewed in June: depending on income, World ORT may then revert to operating on full budget.

The Board of Representatives, which is chaired by the President of World ORT, meets once a year and provides a forum for the discussion of major policy items; it approves the strategic plan and the Director General's annual programme and can change World ORT by-laws.

World ORT Treasurer, Judy Menikoff joined Dr de Gunzburg in appreciating the spirit of the meetings as well as the quality of the content in the Board of Representatives' sessions and in those of the Board of Trustees which preceded them.

"This experience has fulfilled the expectations we had when we restructured the constitution and by-laws," Mrs Menikoff said. "The discussions were on point and we have had more time for meaningful discussions, on

Continued on back page



Bright young things: Jodi Shapiro, Nestor Gonzalez, Courtney Skrdla, Whitney Willis, Kasey Kirby, Beau LeMire, Chris Sablan, Dianeh O'Farrill were among those enjoying the ORT America Next Generation launch party at a Beverly Hills mansion. Co-Chair of ORT California's Next Generation, Scott Schonfeld, told the ORT America Annual Meeting that with the lay leadership of Jewish charities

ageing "the growth and success of the next generation initiative is imperative to the survival of ORT America". His Co-Chair, Deena Eberly, urged delegates at the Annual Meeting "to reach out to your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, whomever you think could continue your passion for ORT into the next generation".

High hopes for expanding ORT Lipson programme

Giving ORT students a tiny advantage

Continued from page 1

The Lipson family, which underwrites the annual bringing of ORT students to America, hopes to see the highly successful programme expand into a multi-national project.

Dan Lipson, whose late father Nathan, a former American ORT National Vice President, founded the programme seven years ago, said he would like to see it replicated across the United States and in different countries.

"When my father came up with this idea, what he envisioned was a network; he wanted to have not only American cities hosting kids but cities across the world doing it, so you would have a hub system in which major cities would be connected to ORT programmes through the students," Mr Lipson said. "We would also really like to see other ORT America chapters do something similar. The idea is to take the existing model and expand it because it spreads the word of the organisation and all the good it stands for."

So far, the ORT Lipson International Studies Programme has focused mainly on bringing Israeli teenagers to Atlanta where they have attended local Jewish day schools. They are hosted by local families (many of whom go on to become ORT America lay leaders) and open a window onto Israeli life for their American peers while they themselves improve their English, enhance their leadership skills, and learn about American life. The Year 8 students also commit themselves to using their improved language skills to help schoolmates back in Israel with their English studies.

Earlier this year, a group of eight students from two schools in Kiryat Yam and Haifa which benefit from World ORT's Kadima Mada programme stirred up tremendous local interest during their month in Atlanta.

"Their presence here was a fantastic



ORT students from Kiryat Yam with Joan Lipson and, inset, Dan Lipson.

experience for everyone – students, families, schools and communities," Mr Lipson said. "The interactions and friendships which develop between local students and the Israelis are life changing."

Mr Lipson would also like to see those life-changing connections made with a wider range of young Jews to counter the growing rift between American Jewry and Israel.

"Kids in Jewish day schools have a



stronger affinity with Israel," Mr Lipson said. "The thing is to bring over ORT students to local high schools that are not Jewish, but which have many Jewish students. Then you can create an affinity which probably didn't exist."

Teaching values amid diversity

ORT's reputation as a force for good has received a further boost with ORT Mexico's second annual education conference, which this year attracted Nobel Prize winners Frederik de Klerk and Lech Walesa as keynote speakers.

More than 6,000 teachers from 300 schools – a 50 per cent increase on 2008 – attended the conference which offered workshops and lectures on the theme of Values, Equity and Diversity.

The Chair of World ORT's Board of Trustees, Mauricio Merikanskas, said he was very impressed by ORT Mexico's accomplishment.

"I was very encouraged in talking to teachers who attended the conference – they were very satisfied by the lectures and the guest speakers," said Mr Merikanskas, who lives in Mexico. "Thanks to initiatives like this conference, ORT is now considered one of the best organisations to capacitate the people of Mexico. We're now very well recognised throughout Latin America."

The conference was opened, like last year, by Mexico's First Lady, Margarita Zavala de Calderon, and attracted massive media interest. Mrs Zavala, a teacher by profession, attended the whole three days



Mauricio Merikanskas, Mexico's First Lady Margarita Zavala and Lech Walesa at the ORT Mexico conference.

of the conference, which offered unparalleled opportunities to tap into the latest pedagogical theories and techniques.

Mrs Zavala said she was happy to attend the conference "because this organisation is dedicated to elevating the human spirit and does it through education and technology as a human instrument in the service of human kind and for life".

In his keynote address, Mr de Klerk, who

was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 with Nelson Mandela for his role in dismantling apartheid, placed the ORT Mexico conference into a global context.

"One of the inescapable implications of globalisation is an enormous increase in the interaction between people from different backgrounds, cultures, languages and religions. The management of the resulting cultural, language and religious diversity will be one of this century's greatest challenges - for the international community, for countries and for organisations like ORT," he said.

In introducing Mr de Klerk, World ORT Director General Robert Singer noted that while ORT was a Jewish organisation it was "totally committed to equality and diversity, and the services that we provide reach individuals, families and communities irrespective of their race, religion or nationality".

Mr Walesa, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 for his role in overturning Communism as leader of Poland's Solidarity movement, spoke about the need for governments to bring democracy to everyone in their countries and not just pay lip service to democratic ideals.

closely at important emerging topics and to begin the process of absorbing them into our curriculum."

Among the invited experts was Dr Boris Berenfeld, Director of the International Centre at the Concord Consortium. For nearly 20 years, Dr Berenfeld has focused on the use of technology to enhance students' learning in collaborative science projects and on the development of new generations of learning materials in physics, chemistry and biology that utilise atomic and molecular computational models.

"It is my deep conviction that in the same way in the 1980s we were talking about Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy now it's high time to talk about molecular and atomic literacy to prepare new generations of students in nanoscience," Dr Berenfeld said. "By 2020 we will need a large number of 'nanoworkers'."

It is estimated that more than 800 nanotech products are already publicly available. And nanotechnology has the potential to create many new materials and devices with applications in medicine, electronics, energy production, textiles, defence and even computing.

Dr Berenfeld, who was one of several top academics involved in re-establishing ORT in Russia in the late 1980s, said ORT was well placed to spearhead knowledge of nanotechnology in high schools.

"ORT has experience in bringing cutting edge technologies to different places since the 1900s whether it was electricity and later electronics and high tech. So it's natural for ORT to enter the nanotechnology field," he said.

Among the challenges of teaching nanotechnology is the need to attract the brightest students and the need to develop a new curriculum which is able to incorporate the diversity of disciplines which feed into this field of research, which generally deals with structures smaller than 100 nanometres, where a nanometre is one-billionth of a metre – approximately the width of three atoms.

"Why should students choose to study nanotechnology? Telling them it's important won't suffice; you have to engage them through involving them in hands-on exploration, you have to give them tools to answer their own questions, you have to motivate them," Dr Berenfeld said. "My research and development group has spent years working to develop very powerful, yet very friendly, software to make students into young researchers in molecular science."

In Dr Berenfeld's session at the Hatter Seminar participants explored hands-on ways to integrate highly interactive dynamic molecular models with traditional educational methods so that students can experience the 'nanoworld' without getting bogged down in difficult theoretical descriptions.

"There is a need to develop a whole new approach because nanoscience is so interdisciplinary, taking in chemistry, biology, physics and engineering," Dr Berenfeld said. "With enough resources, ORT can bridge the gap between research and development and high schools. People usually underestimate how costly teacher development and curriculum development is. It can cost millions. Maybe some philanthropists will read this and they can change the future through engaging students in this field."

Message from the Director General



The news these days is grim: once sturdy finance houses require bailing out, the economic growth of the past decade has shuddered into reverse, and antisemitism is at its worst level in a generation.

One could be forgiven for being pessimistic. But a benefit of being involved with an organisation which is entering its 130th year is the consciousness it gives you of the long view. There is a silver lining to every cloudy page of doom laden headlines and it is that we have been through tough times before and survived. We will do so again. National ORT organisations are reducing their operational budgets, a component of which is, unfortunately, cutting staff. This painful process has, however, allowed us to maintain our educational programmes and services to students.

And, despite the economic crisis, our devoted lay leadership is once again showing its commitment to the ORT mission by maintaining its level of pledges. Some donors are waiting for their investments to rally before re-investing in our work and that has created some cash flow issues. But, knowing that our work can not wait, our most senior lay leaders are accelerating their payments. I have no doubt that the rest of our supporters will follow their lead. They know, as I do, that ORT's relevance has grown in these lean times; our adult training programmes are increasingly sought after by people who, having lost their jobs, are using the time to upgrade and modernise their professional skills.

In addition, my visits to ORT operations around the world in recent months have made me appreciate the need to prepare our younger students for the breathtaking pace of technological change and scientific advance. Where 10 years ago a teenager could express the desire to be a lawyer or engineer, today's high school students do not know what professions may exist by the time they leave university. World ORT's global view makes us well aware of these changes and the need to meet the challenges that arise from them. To that end the World ORT Hatter Technology Seminar this year introduced 18 of our teachers from 11 countries to the burgeoning field of nanotechnology (see page 1) and the next Seminar will focus on education using mobile devices. More than ever, World ORT is striving to ensure that its educators are on top of the latest developments because the job markets that will exist after this recession will not only be different but also more competitive than the current ones.

So with the international economic crisis come opportunities, not only to sharpen our educational edge but also to review those elements of our organisational structure which make our mission possible. Spurred on by necessity we are reviewing how we raise funds in North America and other parts of the world. But this is also an opportunity to reach out and support each other like, as I mentioned earlier, our lay leader who are making personal sacrifices to maintain their level of giving.

The world economy may be shrinking but World ORT is not; we are rallying our material, mental and professional resources to identify and overcome the challenges ahead as we have done so many times in the past.

Robert Singer

Israel gets smart

World ORT has joined the Israeli Government in an ambitious project to convert 1,000 classrooms into high-tech smart classes featuring Interactive White Boards (IWBs).

Over the past year, World ORT has trebled the number of smart classes in the Jewish State under Phase 5 of its Kadima Mada (Science Journey) programme by equipping 60 classes with IWBs, Internet connectivity and other technological aids - and providing the teacher training necessary to ensure the most effective use of the 21st Century tools.

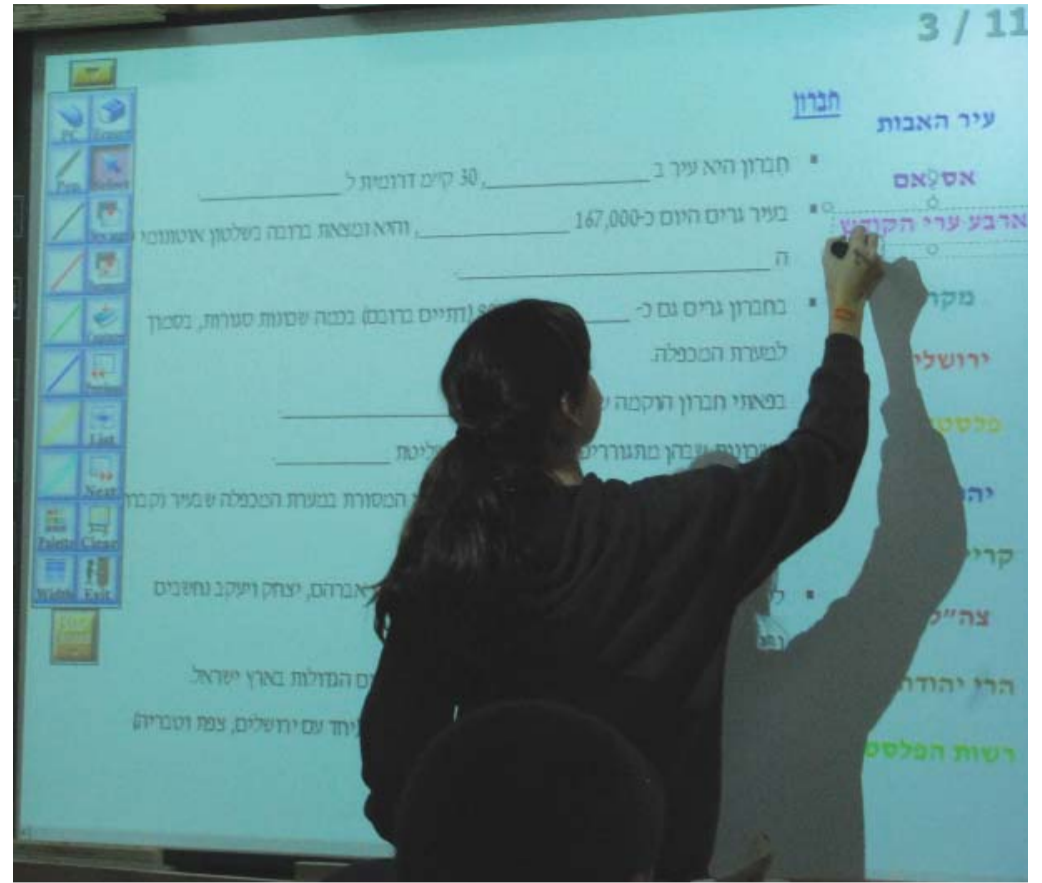
The NIS 70 million partnership between the Ministry for Development of the Negev and the Galilee, the Ministry of Education and World ORT will see smart classes built in primary and secondary schools in the north and south of the country. In addition, the Ministry of Education is committed to fully funding teacher training associated with the project for the next four years.

The huge expansion of this cutting edge, interactive technology, in which the teaching is done on-line with students' laptops connected to the IWB, has drawn considerable media attention. Before the Israel election the then Education Minister, Professor Yuli Tamir, told a journalist for Channel 2 television: "The goal [of this project] is to reinforce the same areas that need a better scientific and educational infrastructure. An educational infrastructure is essential in the State of Israel. I'm glad that we're able to perform this great move for students in Israel."

And Yaakov Edri, who was then the Minister of Development for the Negev and the Galilee, added: "I have no doubt that this project will bring the students of the Galilee and Negev forward and close the technological gap that currently exists between communities in the centre and the periphery."

Replacement of the traditional chalk and talk approach has captured the imaginations of students and teachers alike.

One student told Channel 2 television:



Thousands of Israeli children are set to benefit from the introduction of 'smart boards' like this one which World ORT installed at Sha'ar HaNegev High School last year.

"It's much easier because the teacher can show us all sorts of things instead of telling us to go to the Internet at home. And we can save things on a memory stick or by email."

And a teacher added: "Students can send their solutions directly on to the [IWB] and we can respond and send them the answers. Also, a student who doesn't follow a lesson and wants to keep up doesn't have to resort to written summaries - they can go over the recording of the sequence of the lesson at home."

World ORT and its partners are contributing NIS 5 million to the Negev programme and NIS 16 million to the Galilee component with other monies coming from the Ministry for the Development of the Negev and the

Galilee, the Ministry of Education and the Prime Minister's Office.

In addition to supplying hardware and software, the money will provide on-going logistical maintenance and training and guidance for the teachers in those schools where the classrooms will be built, hundreds of which are due to be completed by 2010.

Orli Yehezkel, CEO of the Ministry for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee, said: "This investment in exposing students to advanced technology and in improving students' study skills will lead to major improvements in their achievements, I have no doubt of that. The cooperation with Kadima Mada and the Ministry of Education has created a project whose fruits we will all enjoy in a short time."

Returning to routine after Gaza war

The communities of southern Israel are working towards achieving a sense of equilibrium after the Gaza War.

For some, the January ceasefire has brought freedom from Hamas rocket attacks; for others little more than a respite. But all of them are working to overcome the trauma of being targeted, in the case of teenagers near the Gaza border for half their lives.

"Every time we hear a bang we're scared," said Lihi Va'anunu, 17, a final year student at Sha'ar HaNegev, one of three schools - the others being Shikma High School at Hof Ashkelon and Makif Aleph in Be'er Sheva - supported by World ORT's Kadima Mada programmes which were closed for safety reasons during the war.

Compassionate teaching staff used ingenious methods to help defuse the tension of returning to school. At Be'er Sheva's Makif Aleph School, the first hour of lesson time was devoted to talking about experiences and feelings from the previous month.

Smadar Sharvit, the school's World ORT Innovation Leader, managed to turn Hamas's war crimes into a fun-filled physics lesson.

"As a physics teacher I have harnessed

the children's interest and anxiety into learning about the mechanics of rockets," Ms Sharvit said. "They want to know about the different types of missiles, their various capabilities and how they work. It reassured them to know the details of what missiles can do - and what they can't. Psychologically it helped because by understanding the physics of rockets these weapons lost some of their threatening mystery. And I used Looney Tunes cartoons of Wile E. Coyote using rockets to try to catch Road Runner to illustrate what I was teaching. It was a really good lesson."

World ORT also helped hundreds of younger children across the region get back into the routine of school by hiring buses to take classes to the safari park in Ramat Gan, near Tel Aviv. The trips enabled the young children to relax, to reform their group identities and bond again with staff.

Closing the schools during the war undoubtedly saved lives - a long-range Grad missile hit Makif Aleph early on in the war. Its warhead packed with ball bearings, the rocket pierced the concrete roof of a Grade 9 classroom which normally seats nearly 40 children, but no-one was hurt.

During the enforced closure teachers at all three schools kept in contact with their

pupils by telephone and email and even visited the homes of those who did not respond. At Sha'ar HaNegev, many teachers continued to work during the closure using laptops, provided by World ORT two years ago after their school was hit by Hamas rocket fire, to provide distance learning with housebound students.

Despite the rocket attacks and the war, Sha'ar HaNegev Principal Aharon Rothstein is confident that his school's project to develop a civic studies curriculum promoting peaceful co-existence and democratic principles, which has brought together educators from Gaza, Israel, Jordan and other countries, will resume in time.

"We will build something new; we don't have a choice," Mr Rothstein said. "I teach our students to be Zionists, to go into the army and to do their duty in the belief that one day peace will come. I also teach them not to think about the other side as 'enemies' - they are human beings. If we think like this we will be able to open new relationships. I know that there are a lot of civilians in Gaza who believe that there is no other way than to live together in peace. And to do that we have to know each other."

A crèche course in empathy

Jewish and non-Jewish primary schools in Johannesburg's affluent northern suburbs are twinning with tumbledown crèches in the Dikhatole township as part of a visionary new project devised by ORT South Africa.

Launched on Tu BeShvat, the Jewish 'new year' for trees, the Lend Hands by Giving Rands project plants seeds of cooperation and empathy among communities which are only a few kilometres apart but at polar opposites in terms of socio-economic prospects.

"We intend to keep raising money and raising awareness for as long we have the support to do so. So we would love to hear from ORT fundraising countries and South Africans abroad who would like to get involved," said ORT SA Fundraising Manager Carol Rod.

Ms Rod can be contacted at carol@ortsa.org.za.

The makeshift shacks of Dikhatole are home to some 60,000 people, 15 per cent of whom are children under the age of 15. The one primary school in the area, just east of Johannesburg, has 1,400 pupils meaning thousands more are left out of the

education system. The crèches which dot the area often offer barely enough to simply keep the children safe while in their care.

ORT staff members have given presentations at each of the 12 primary schools participating in Lend Hands by Giving Rands, showing the relatively well-off children there what the conditions are like in the crèche with which they are twinned.

"We wanted to bring home to these children how other children were living," Ms Rod said. "Rather than simply raise money to help an anonymous community the children in our project know the name of the crèche, the name of the person running it, will see pictures and presentations showing how it develops with their help. Ideally, we would like to take the children to visit their peers in Dikhatole but there are security issues which have to be addressed before that's possible."

The primary school children have thrown themselves into fundraising with tremendous enthusiasm. The money raised will allow the crèches, which together look after more than 1,000 children, to buy basics such as educational toys, picture books, musical instruments, educational posters, blankets and bedding,



Crush: making the best of the basic facilities at a Dikhatole crèche.

outdoor climbing equipment and plastic tables and chairs. However, with sufficient funds, the crèches can also be helped to make structural improvements.

"This is such a brilliant idea," said Ariellah Rosenberg, ORT SA Provincial Manager for Educator Empowerment, who

knows Dikhatole and other townships well because of the ORT projects on-going there. "It's so important to raise some funds for these places because any amount will go a long way. But this project is about so much more than raising money; it's about raising awareness, too."

New leadership at British ORT

British ORT has new leadership with ambitious plans to increase fundraising and lay participation by expanding the organisation's presence in Jewish communities across the United Kingdom.

Simon Alberga, a partner at private equity firm Young Associates, which was founded by former World ORT President Lord Young of Graffham, has succeeded Alan Goldman as Chairman and has a new, young line-up of fellow Trustees to support him: Danny Brower, Paul Bray, Leo Gestetner and Peter Plaut.

"We have a dynamic new team at British ORT," Mr Alberga said. "We're energised and enthusiastic. We all believe there's a big opportunity to expand what the organisation does here in the UK because there's an opportunity to significantly raise awareness of ORT and we have the team to do that."

The details of running the organisation lie with the new Director of Fundraising, Dr Noga Zivan, supported by her recently appointed Events Manager Muriel Stempel and Office Manager Lauren Derman. Dr Zivan fills the gap left by Ivor Levene OBE, who had to retire due to ill health last year.

Israel-born Dr Zivan said British ORT



British ORT's new line-up, from left: Lauren Derman, Dr Noga Zivan, Simon Alberga and Muriel Stempel.

planned to broaden its support base out from London and will launch a fundraising campaign to build a new, safer campus for students at Sha'ar HaNegev High School, near Gaza.

The campaign is part of a long term plan to reinvigorate the organisation which is due to be finalised in the summer.

"We're putting together a strategy that's

going to have some very concrete steps in terms of marketing, PR and fundraising," Mr Alberga said. "We're going to tackle this in a very methodical way. There's an opportunity to go out to a much broader base of donors, including trusts, and to significantly increase the amount of income we generate. It's not going to happen overnight; we have targets to build things up over the next three years."

Educators honour ORT Russia President

The President of ORT Russia, Professor Alexander Asmolov, has been elected to full membership of the Russian Academy of Education, one of the most prestigious professional institutions in the country.

As an Academician of this august body, World ORT Board of Trustees member Professor Asmolov's nationwide reputation as a leading expert on the psychology of personality – in particular the creation of a practical psychology of education in Russia and his contribution to the modernisation of the country's education system – has been confirmed by his peers.

Professor Asmolov said his election could only enhance his work for the organisation.

"This will definitely give an affirmative effect for me as President of ORT Russia," he said. "It will give me the possibility to create an even higher profile for the ORT vision at the Academy."

The honour bestowed upon him comes as Professor Asmolov enters his 15th year ORT Russia President.

"During this period, ORT has become my family; and I'm talking here not just in an educational sense but in a human sense," he said. "Many ORT leaders have become dear friends. And the values of human friendship and human love are the two highest values in this world."

ORT Russia National Director Dr Slava Leshchiner said Professor Asmolov was well known in Russia for his many television appearances discussing issues related to education and democracy.

"His election to the strictly limited membership of the Academy of Education is very important because it is the highest recognition by his peers of his contribution to educational science," Dr Leshchiner said.

Until now, Professor Asmolov had been a

Correspondent Member of the Academy together with Professor Alexander Kondakov, an ORT Russia delegate to the World ORT General Assembly in Warsaw last year. And ORT Russia's Vice-President, Professor Alexei Semenov, is a Correspondent Member of the internationally renowned Russian Academy of Science.

"That ORT can attract men of such high calibre says a lot about the value of its mission and the quality of its realisation," Dr Leshchiner said. "Their support is a huge vote of confidence in ORT. And Professor Asmolov's elevation to academician contributes enormously to ORT's prestige."



Professor Alexander Asmolov.

ORT France in good shape

ORT France is well placed to weather the storm of economic crisis that is sweeping the world thanks to the leadership of Marcel Benichou, who has stepped down as the organisation's president after 13 years.

"During his presidency ORT France became one of the best organised Jewish organisations in France," said Guy Seniak, the World ORT Representative in France, who worked with Mr Benichou as ORT France's National Director. "He insisted on balancing budgets in every field of operations; he didn't accept funding our work through debt."

He said that among Mr Benichou's achievements, three in particular could be highlighted: his establishment of ORT France's financial stability; his commitment to refurbish ORT France's schools; and the creation of a Jewish Studies curriculum focusing on Jewish history and culture.

Mr Benichou, an aeronautical engineer by training, said he had no advice to offer his successor, Dr Lucien Kalfon, in whom he said he had every confidence. But looking back over his long involvement in one of the ORT family's most successful operational organisations he revealed the premise on which all his work was based.

"The true goal of ORT is not education," he said. "It is the survival of Jewry. Education is one way among many to achieve this goal because the real danger facing Jews today is assimilation."

Dr Kalfon, boasts a clutch of decorations for his service to France and among his many accomplishments was representing France in international meetings as Director of the Commission in Charge of the Compensation of Victims of Spoliations Resulting from anti-Semitic Legislation in Force during the Occupation. He has also held senior administrative positions assisting the ministers of the environment, maritime affairs, foreign trade and foreign affairs.

"The high positions he has held in the State Administration will surely help ORT France face some difficult years as the economic and financial crisis takes hold," Mr Seniak said.

Major movie prize for ORT student

ORT Uruguay's Mateo Soler has been named the Latin America regional winner of the annual Kodak Filmschool Competition, which recognises outstanding achievements in cinematography by student film makers.

The film, *Fine*, which was written and directed by fellow ORT student Ana Laura Obispo, is a wordless, seven-minute examination of an exasperated man trying to escape the congestion of his environment.

Renowned Oscar-nominated cinematographer Don Burgess, ASC, who has worked on films such as *Forrest Gump* and *Spiderman*, judged the Kodak competition and praised Mateo's work for its "excellent use of lenses, framing, composition and lighting to tell the story. He made us feel the horror – a great job."

Winning such a prestigious contest as the Kodak Filmschool Competition was a huge surprise to the production team, which also included ORT students Nicolas Almada (composer and sound editor), Lucia Seja (art director), Vanessa Mila (director's assistant), and Gerardo Castelli (producer).

"None of us could imagine that we could be in this situation," Mateo said. "This feeling of being recognised in this way; it's incredible, amazing."

Mateo won an all expenses paid tip to the 2009 Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival in France where *Fine* was presented in the Kodak Short Film Showcase.

The Head of ORT Uruguay's Audiovisual

Department, Alvaro Buela, was delighted with the result.

"We were all happily surprised because the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival is considered one of the top three in the world and so the Kodak competition attracts the very best film and audiovisual production of schools in Latin America," Professor Buela said. "The whole academic community of ORT Uruguay is proud of his achievement."

Accolades have often followed students and graduates of his department. In recent years, for example, Ari Carretero won a First Prize in Documentaries at the Trè Court Festival, France; Guillermo Carbonell, a graduate of the Bachelor program in Audiovisual Communications and currently an assistant professor in the same study program, was the single Uruguayan admitted to the Berlinale Talent Campus of the Berlin International film Festival, in February 2006; and Martin Wozniak was invited to participate in the same programme in 2007.

The Audiovisual Department has been enrolling about 80 students a year since ORT Uruguay's School of Communication and Design was founded in 1994. Almost all the students are working in their chosen field by the time they graduate, a record which represents the very essence of ORT's mission.

Mateo, who has now graduated, is



The sky's the limit for cinematographer Mateo Soler.

looking forward to pursuing further cinematographic studies abroad, perhaps in England or India. Wherever his career takes him, he is appreciative of where it all started – ORT Uruguay.

"The best part of my education at ORT was my professors," he said. "The equipment and facilities are really good, we have all the technology we need and it's constantly modernised. But the professors are very inspiring; they transmit to us not only the techniques of film making but also the love they have for the subject."

• ORT Uruguay university has once again been listed among the top 400 of the world's 25,000 tertiary institutions by the Times Higher Education magazine. The annual survey of tertiary institutions performed by Quacquarelli Symonds ranks ORT Uruguay at 387 where it is rubbing shoulders with Washington State and Yeshiva Universities in the USA and Goldsmiths, University of London. ORT Uruguay's ranking means that it also makes the top 10 tertiary institutions in Latin America.

Hope glimmers for Heftsiba

World ORT's schools network in the Former Soviet Union faces an uncertain future following the withdrawal of a major funder but hope has been rekindled by an emergency grant from the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ).

Matching funds pledged by the State of Israel had not materialised at time of going to press but the IFCJ's willingness to help had prompted a collective sigh of relief among World ORT's staff and affiliates, said World ORT's Representative in Russia, Avi Ganon, who has been leading the frantic search for funding to fill the vacuum left by the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI).

"[The IFCJ] are the 'Mashiach' in this case," Mr Ganon said. "Without their initiative this funding deal would not have come about. Once all the \$600,000 comes through, the schools will be able to function properly until the end of the year providing Jewish education and covering all necessary expenses. What's important is the Israeli government's recognition of its obligation to Heftsiba, to be committed to the project and not let it collapse."

The 16 ORT schools in the region face being absorbed into the public education system and losing their Jewish character because of JAFI's decision to stop funding Heftsiba, the programme which provides for Jewish Studies, supplementing teachers' wages and security. Heftsiba also provides hot lunches and school buses - critical services for schools serving Jewish communities scattered across large urban sprawls and teaching a curriculum that demands long days.

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, Founder and President of the IFCJ, warned that the Jewish community needed to find a way to secure the long term future of Jewish education in the Former Soviet Union.

"The Fellowship feels privileged to be able to help World ORT; but this is only a band-aid and there's no solution yet to the

fundamental issue," Rabbi Eckstein said. "The fundamental issue is that there is no Jewish organisation that is willing or capable of assuming responsibility for the welfare of Jewish children and their future in the Former Soviet Union."

The State of Israel's financial support for Heftsiba has been cut by two-thirds over the past few years, and it was feared that the withdrawal of JAFI's funding would be the final nail in the coffin.

The Director of ORT Russia, Dr Slava Leshchiner, was deeply appreciative of the IFCJ's financial lifeline.

"This grant is very, very important," Dr Leshchiner said. "I feel relieved for this year. And for principals this is a very, very important emergency measure because this amount of money will allow them to pay teachers and to continue transportation of children and social programme such as hot lunches. This money will allow them to continue normal work. But I am worried about next year."

Just how worrying the situation is has been described in letters sent by ORT school principals to JAFI senior management.

The Principal of ORT Geshet School in Samara, Svetlana Kosareva, for example, wrote that the effect of the funding cut was "devastating". Jewish Studies and Jewish extra-curricular activities would have to be cancelled and the bus service withdrawn – effectively killing it as a Jewish school.

"During all these difficult years, the school has been successfully developing creative traditions, attractive creative and talented staff," Ms Kosareva wrote. "Through years and hardship we have earned experience and prestige among Jewish organisations in Samara and local education authorities. It is unbearable to think that our Jewish school, created by the efforts of many talented people will turn into ruins."

And it would not just be the local Jewish communities which would suffer the closure of the ORT schools. Svetlana Manchenko, Principal of ORT Odessa, noted that many graduates of her school had made aliyah and served in the Israel Defence Forces.

"We have waited a long time to build something as beautiful as this school," Ms Manchenko wrote. "To destroy it only takes a moment and once destroyed it can't be rebuilt."

ORT school shines in Odessa

ORT's school in Odessa has emerged from the shadow of budget cuts with a glittering recognition of its educational achievements.

A committee of parliamentarians, academics and educational experts has named the school a Flagship of Contemporary Science and Education in Ukraine, placing it among the top one per cent of the country's education sector.

The ORT school had been nominated by the Odessa Department of Education because of its impressive performance over the past year, including its winning of a local competition focusing on modern technologies in education and its recognition at a national education exhibition.

In addition to the Heftsiba funding crisis, Ukraine's struggling economy means there is relatively little public money to maintain the school's fabric and amenities, said World ORT Coordination Department Head Vladimir Dribinskiy.

"The school has suffered a lot from budget cuts yet despite these problems it manages to maintain a very good standard of education - the result of the combination of dedicated, skilled staff and 13 years' input from World ORT," Mr Dribinskiy said.

The ORT Odessa school is one of only 126 institutions designated an educational flagship by the committee, which was a joint venture by the Parliamentary Committee on Science

and Education, the Ministry of Science and Education, the National Academy of Science and the Academy of Pedagogical Science of Ukraine.

President of the Academy of Pedagogical Science of Ukraine, Professor Vasily Kremen, said the ORT school had contributed to "finding new ways of modernising education and science" in the country.

The school, which is situated a block away from ORT's original vocational school in the port city founded in 1882, provides high quality Jewish and general education for 400 students aged between six and 17. The school offers a wide variety of technology and vocational courses, in particular ICT and robotics. It is one of six schools and 10 vocational training centres affiliated to ORT in the country.

School Principal Svetlana Manchenko said: "Thanks to our close cooperation with World ORT we have modern computer classes and a media library. We're able to maintain up-to-date educational equipment, including the 'Archimedes' digital laboratory which allows students to prepare high level practical work and presentations in chemistry, physics and biology."

In addition, the widespread use of ICT in the school allowed the expansion of inter-subject connections, which in turn developed students' educational skills and motivation, Mrs Manchenko said.

ORT Argentina's virtual campus a real winner

ORT Argentina's pioneering development of a virtual campus serving its two existing campuses in Buenos Aires was presented recently at London's Online Information Conference by Virtual Campus CEO Guillermo Lutzky. Here, the expert who chaired the session gives his assessment.

How can schools use the internet to get better interaction between students, teachers, administration and parents? writes *Peter Godwin, Academic Liaison Librarian at the University of Bedfordshire.*

Guillermo Lutzky treated delegates to an impressive presentation demonstrating how ORT Argentina decided its structure must become more open and flexible in order to help their students cope with current trends.

Blogs – on-line diaries which allow comments from others – were the chosen instrument to start off the project. At first these were done in a subject framework but spread more widely because of their ease of

After only a year they have detected a significant growth in teaching innovation and productivity

operation, reliability and cheapness. By June 2008 there were more than 600 blogs, which is amazing. They have been aggregated at <http://redblogs.ort.edu.ar/>. Teachers and students have become akin to researchers and producers of knowledge.

Among other things these have helped the creation of teaching and learning communities based on projects, and encouraged course redesign incorporating

audiovisual formats and using mobile devices.

After only a year they have detected a significant growth in teaching innovation and productivity. Final year students are using blogs for reflection in their Graduation Projects. The blogs are also proving useful to market their achievements and can assist students as online CVs.

Other Web 2.0 tools have been employed including *delicious* (social book-marking), for sharing favourite resources and as a taxonomy tool to organise the blogs. An institutional YouTube channel has been launched with more than 200 videos being uploaded and can be seen at <http://uk.youtube.com/user/CampusVirtualORT>. Some wikis have also been created by joint teams of students and teachers at <http://introductiontotechnology.wikispaces.com/>.

Students and teachers have reacted well to incorporating the new technologies into learning, as is shown by content reaching higher standards than expected.

It was exciting to hear about an institution that reminded me of the Web 2.0 "evangelist" Will Richardson's important book *Blogs, wikis and podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms.*

Delegates at the conference were particularly interested in how institutional change was fostered through use of Web 2.0 tools. In the discussion which followed the

Showcasing ORT to the world

For Guillermo Lutzky it was an amazing experience to be invited to travel half-way around the world to show his organisation's achievements to a gathering of 900 information professionals and knowledge managers from more than 40 countries.

"This is proof of the opportunities that the ORT system gives to its teachers and its students, that in a third world country we can develop a top-of-the-line educational project of interest to people in the richest countries. This really shows what ORT is all about," Mr Lutzky said.

The Virtual Campus is designed to expose its more than 6,000 students and 1,000 staff to new technologies, especially to collaborative tools – known as Web 2.0 applications – and to achieve a richer and stronger interaction between students, teachers, administrators.

"The aim is to make the processes that take place within the organisation, the school and the classroom public,

presentation they found it hard to accept the general enthusiasm that seemed to have been aroused.

It was an inspiring presentation which showed how Web 2.0 tools can create greater collaboration between teachers, students

transparent, flat, ubiquitous and adaptable," Mr Lutzky said. "I'm not aware of anyone else in Latin America doing something as extensive as this. This is a pioneering project to empower teachers and students to produce and to publish."

The resulting network of weblogs, which can be seen at <http://campus.ort.edu.ar>, has raised ORT Argentina's profile on the Internet and strengthened classroom productivity.

"Patterns have emerged: when quality work is published there is a need to make contributions following the same high standards," Mr Lutzky said. "Teachers assess homework and projects, read weblogs from other departments and publish relevant information for students and colleagues. Furthermore, other teachers from non-technological subjects have also made use of weblogs. The institution has begun to open new spaces for dialogue and action."

and parents and achieve a flatter, more open structure which inspires more creative and exciting ways of learning.

Peter Godwin is co-editor of the book "Information Literacy meets Library 2.0" published by Facet, 2008.

Prestigious Konex Award for ORT Argentina

One of Argentina's leading cultural organisations, the Konex Foundation, has recognised ORT Argentina's educational excellence by awarding it the 2008 Merit Diploma.

The Konex Foundation's Grand Jury chose ORT Argentina, which last year graduated a record 802 students, to receive this honour in recognition of its outstanding performance over the past 10 years.

"From its origins in 1936, ORT Argentina has offered an education of excellence in changing contexts and has assumed with honour, commitment and passion the responsibility of providing its services to every child, regardless of his or her socio-economic situation, even during the most critical moments that our country has undergone in the last decade," the Konex Foundation said.

The Executive Director of ORT Argentina, Adrian Moscovich, said everyone at ORT Argentina was filled with



A winning team: collecting the Konex Award from Argentine Vice President Julio Cobos (far right) and the President of the Konex Foundation Grand Jury are, from left, ORT Argentina's Executive Director Dr Adrián Moscovich, General Secretary Darío Jaraj, and Honorary President Norma de Werthein.

pride and enthusiasm by the award, which was an "important distinction in recognition of our everyday work".

"As on many other occasions, our

schools and institutes set an example in the field of education," Mr Moscovich said. "These achievements are the result of the work carried out by teachers on the one

hand and the confidence parents have in us on the other. Our teachers are deeply committed to their work, highly professional and have a profound respect for knowledge; parents encourage us to constantly strive for excellence. We would like to share this award with all our students and graduates."

On its website, the Konex Foundation says: "The diversity of educational projects – designed and developed in the schools – reveal ORT's fundamental and distinguishing principles, which account for its long-standing tradition. ORT has always provided state-of-the-art solutions to meet the education and training needs of the community. The principles are oriented towards achieving personal integrity, respect for values that enable integration into society in an effective and constructive way, and the acknowledgement of the humanistic foundations of an inheritance to be preserved."

Excellence? GET-IT with ORT

The excellence with which ORT has implemented Hewlett-Packard's GET-IT concept into its training programmes in the Former Soviet Union has won it a \$10,000 prize at the HP GET-IT (Graduate Entrepreneurship Training through IT) Annual Conference in Brussels.

The prize winners were chosen by a poll of the GET-IT partners from 25 countries who were attending the conference, increasing the significance of the award.

"This is fantastic recognition from completely independent people," said Dr Sergey Gorinskiy, Deputy Director of the World ORT Representative Office for the CIS and Baltic States. "That we were placed second to a Belgian agency specialising in

entrepreneurship training serves to highlight just how impressive our community-based model is. It's wonderful that Hewlett-Packard and its partners around the world appreciate that our approach is very good."

Dr Gorinskiy presented ORT's prize-winning project – Breaking the Digital Divide: Business and IT skills for Underserved Population Groups – at the conference.

"Of the several population groups which face particular problems in the Russian economy today, two became the target groups for our project: deaf and hard-of-hearing students and women, specifically in the technological sphere," he said. "The

project mission is to create new opportunities in the modern, knowledge-based economy for our trainees – not all of whom are deaf or women – by providing them with the skills necessary to pursue a career in IT-based business."

The GET-IT programme focuses on the need to encourage job creation and entrepreneurship among people below the age of 25. Its training courses deal with practical IT solutions for daily business challenges faced in areas such as finance, human resources, marketing, communications and technology management.

As HP's principal partner in the implementation of social investment



Recognition factor: Dr Sergey Gorinskiy presents ORT Russia's approach.

programmes in the Former Soviet Union, ORT currently manages six GET-IT centres in Moscow, Ekaterinburg, Tambov, Volgograd and Tula, and the recently opened St Petersburg centre.

Teenager's breakthrough cancer research

An Israeli teenager whose research into how cells become cancerous has resulted in a potentially life-saving discovery has won the top prize in the annual World ORT-Weizmann Institute Excellence Award.

Dina Listov, 18, received a university scholarship worth \$5,000 for her project, "A Study of Polyamine Homeostasis in the Cell: The Influence of Oncogenes on Transcription of Antizyme Inhibitor".

The adjudicating panel of experts declared Dina's to be "an impressive work; it could make a scientific contribution to the study of cancer". In its citation the panel continued: "The project presents a clear research question systematically studied by advanced methods of research... The student showed deep understanding of complex scientific ideas in a very detailed work. We were very impressed by her planning, implementation and analysis of findings."

Dina, who conducted research at the Weizmann Institute of Science as part of her high school matriculation, admitted that her discovery of "a pathway by which



Young Einsteins: World ORT-Weizmann Institute Excellence Award finalists Monica Forman, Peter Teishev, Dina Listov, Ravid Ben Abu and Raz Balin.

cancer develops" could have life-saving ramifications.

"Theoretically, this could lead to a new cancer treatment," she said. But it was her love of biology that motivated her. "Doing the work was pretty exciting. I didn't think of prizes or discovering anything, I was just caring about the work. I sat up for hours and hours at night doing it. I'm happy that I found something but even if I hadn't it would've been great because I

enjoyed the work."

Cultivating such enthusiasm for science is a prime goal of the World ORT-Weizmann Institute Excellence Award project, the prizes for which are funded by the UK-based Kennedy Leigh Charitable Trust and World ORT.

"The finalists were only at high school and they have reached a level of which any undergraduate student would not be ashamed," said Professor Shimon Vega, the

Head of the Weizmann's Chemical Physics Department and chairman of the World ORT Excellence Award's adjudicating committee.

More than 70 high school students from across Israel submitted works for the Excellence Award. As part of the selection process, all entrants were required to make a presentation of their work in English and five were selected to go through to the final.

Dina's study looked at the regulation of levels of polyamines in cells, polyamines being naturally occurring substances which are associated with cell growth and division. A likely sign of cancer is when cells have too many polyamines. Using cloning and other advanced techniques, Dina found that the more of a protein called Ras, which is associated with carcinogenesis, is present in a cell the higher the level of Antizyme Inhibitor, a DNA region which regulates the transcription of a gene.

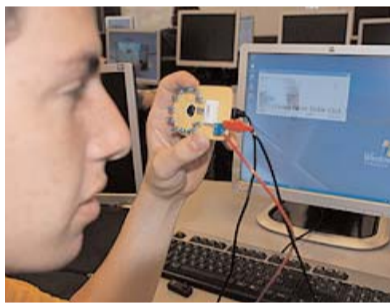
"The results obtained in this work show a connection between Ras oncogenesis and polyamine regulation," said Dina, whose mother is a chemist at a nuclear research centre and whose father is a journalist.

The mouse that roars

The Argentinean media have been abuzz with news of a cheap and simple mouse, designed by students and teachers at ORT Argentina, which allows disabled people to use their computers easily and comfortably.

The development team at the ORT Technical School (Belgrano campus) in Buenos Aires has applied for a patent but plans to make the technology freely available in order to help disadvantaged members of society. To help future users, students plan to create a technical help desk accessible via Internet.

"The idea is to give away free software and the connection plans of the infrared transmitter and the webcam so that anyone with any hand disability can use it," Dario Mischener, the Director of the school's Information and Communication Technology track, told *La Nacion* newspaper. "We don't want anybody to depend on a commercial supplier. For us, we want to help by transferring knowledge; in this case by providing a solution to a challenge faced by one sector of the population."



The mouse uses easily available components, such as a webcam, light bulb and cellophane for its system.

The webcam is fastened to a headband, cap or helmet worn by the user. This webcam interacts with an infrared transmitter placed on the computer screen and, thanks to the use of simple software, transforms the user's head movements into a click, double click or movement of the mouse.

So that the webcam and the infrared transmitter could communicate, the young innovators simply stuck two pieces of blue and red cellophane together and placed them over the webcam's lens. An ordinary light bulb with the same cellophane combination can be used as the transmitter.

"This is an innovative project," said Luis Perez, Studies Director at the ORT Almagro campus in Buenos Aires. "It's the first time that such a project has been produced at high school level. We feel very proud of our students and their entrepreneurial spirit."

Details of the project can be viewed at ORT Argentina's website: <http://campus.belgrano.ort.edu.ar/tic>.

A helping hand for students in need

World ORT has distributed more than \$300,000-worth of aid to high school students from some of the poorest backgrounds in Israel – aid that is not only keeping some students in education, it is also fostering ties of friendship with Israel's non-Jewish communities.

The aid was in the form of vouchers for spectacles, uniforms, sports shoes, stationery and text books which were distributed to 18 schools, most of them Jewish.

The companies from which World ORT bought the vouchers – Optika Halperin, H&O, Kravitz and Tsomet Sefarim – each contributed money or additional vouchers to significantly boost the amount of aid given.

"One of the recipients at my school is a 10th grade boy, an orphan who lives with his uncle," said Jalal Hamdi, principal at the Arab Shfaram High School in the Galilee. "Unfortunately the uncle doesn't support him. The student worked last summer in order to buy text books, pens, paper and other necessities but couldn't make enough money to cover all his needs and was thinking of leaving school. When I gave him the vouchers from World ORT he started

crying and threw his arms around me in gratitude. He has now decided to stay in school."

Rajach Gadban, high school principal in the Druze town of Horfesh, said the benefits extended beyond the classroom.

"One of my 11th grade pupils was arguing with his parents because they didn't buy him the text books he needed," Mr Gadban said. "The vouchers provided the means by which he could get the books and so restored peace in his home; and now that the student has returned to a proper relationship with his parents he is better able to understand their difficulty in helping him."

Not only that, the fact that such help was coming from a Jewish organisation was a sign of friendship between communities.

"These vouchers are a sign of the sincerity of a Jewish organisation which wants to help the Druze and strengthen their belonging to the State of Israel," Mr Gadban said.

Mr Hamdi added: "We feel great to have received this help, we feel supported and heard. The fact that World ORT is Jewish gives us the feeling that we are not only cousins but brothers."

World ORT gives hope wings

World ORT is helping disadvantaged students from peripheral parts of Israel to attain the qualifications they need to be technicians in the Israeli air force.

With the financial backing of the UJA-Federation of New York, World ORT is helping to pay for 70 youths – many of them of Ethiopian origin – to go through a two-year practical electronic engineering diploma course in the Golan.

The joint programme with the IDF not only gives young Israelis the chance to embark on a strong career path, it helps to meet the lack of trained technicians in the Israeli military, particularly the air force.

Collectively known as the Kadima Mada Class, boys have enrolled on the programme from high schools throughout the country, including those benefiting from World ORT's Kadima Mada (Science Journey) programme.

"All of them have an aptitude for the subject matter that will serve them well and allow them to serve their country well," said the Head of World ORT's Representative Office in Israel, Rony Kalinsky. "They don't have the maths and physics qualifications normally required to enrol on this course because they may be new immigrants without the necessary language skills or because they were unable to access the additional help needed while at school to realise their potential. But we're giving them the chance to prove themselves. The IDF benefits by getting trained personnel and the students benefit by getting an interesting job during national service that will train them and give them several years of superb experience that will ensure that they are highly sought after in civilian life."

During the two years the youths are at



Emek HaYarden College, they will live at a residential centre called Adir BeMarom, in Katzrin, part of the Midreshet HaGolan Hesder Yeshiva. The centre is run along religious lines under the Directorship of Rabbi Itzik Laslo.

As well as catch-up courses in maths and physics and extra tuition to help them cope with lectures, the boys undergo a cultural enrichment programme that will give them a deeper understanding of, and appreciation for, the Land of Israel as well as

study trips, Torah study and pastoral care.

Rabbi Laslo recognised the significance of the deepening cooperation between World ORT and Midreshet HaGolan.

"We have a joint objective," he said, "to nurture and promote technological excellence among all populations in order to strengthen Israel's army, security, economy and society with a deep understanding that the focal point is on national values, excellence in education and sharing the burden."

Major donations set the pace

The example of two American families who gave donations worth a combined total of \$6 million is motivating ORT America's supporters to dig deeper in their own pockets despite the recession.

The extraordinary generosity and vision of long time ORT supporters Claire and Robert Mazer, who gave \$1 million, and the Schoenbaum family who gave \$5 million, boosted World ORT's Kadima Mada programme in Israel.

But their investments came, as ORT America National Executive Committee Chair Shelley Fagel put it at the ORT America Annual Meeting in California, during the 'good' part of 2008 – before the year turned 'bad' and finally 'ugly'.

However, in setting out the organisation's fundraising strategy, Vice President and National Campaign Leadership Chair, Linda Kirschbaum, urged the more than 200 people at the Annual Meeting to rise to the challenge of fundraising in a cold economic climate.

"Let's be energised by the investment in ORT recently made by two devoted ORT families – the Schoenbaums and the Mazers," Ms Kirschbaum said. "We might not all be able to give million-dollar contributions but, trust me, every single donation is important and vital to the

organisation. All of our donations add up! As much as we each do for ORT, you and I must consider our own annual gifts – we are among the most devoted to this organisation and we need to do our best to set an example."

And that also meant asking donors who are closest to ORT to give even more than they have previously.

"It might be hard to get up the nerve to ask for an increased gift but just as families and true friends step up in times of need, we must step up today for our students around the world," Ms Kirschbaum said.

Despite what are the most challenging times for fundraising in most people's living memory, Ms Kirschbaum was confident that ORT America would succeed in its mission.

"We are part of an incredible chain that began in 1880 - and not only will we keep that chain whole, we will strengthen and polish it for the future. It is our responsibility because our students are counting on us. As President Obama said in his address last Tuesday, for which both sides of the aisle gave a standing ovation, 'In a global economy, where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity, it is a pre-requisite.'"



Actor Ed Asner, right, best known for his Emmy Award-winning role as the campaigning newspaper editor Lou Grant, presents Holocaust Survivor and former Director of ORT programmes in a post-war Displaced Persons camp Dr Sam Goetz with ORT America's highest honour, the Tikkun Olam Award at the organisation's Annual Meeting in California. Mr Asner, himself a past recipient of the award, said Dr Goetz – who set up the first Holocaust Studies programme at a public American university and was a founding member of the US Holocaust Museum – was receiving the award for his commitment to and achievements in tzedakah, the mitzvah of giving, and tikkun olam, repairing the world.

Extra security for ORT India

Armed guards, high walls, locked doors and windows, and closed-circuit television cameras are set to become part of ORT India's daily reality in the wake of November's Mumbai terrorist attack which left more than 100 people dead, including a young rabbi and his wife.

After centuries of peaceful co-existence with Muslim neighbours, the Jewish community in India was left feeling deeply vulnerable following the targeting of the Chabad Jewish outreach centre in Mumbai by Islamist terrorists – the first such targeting of Jews in the country.

With World ORT's support and the full cooperation of the city's authorities, ORT India is seeking ways of installing hitherto unnecessary security features on its premises.

The main ORT India centre is in a relatively safe part of Mumbai. But its male dormitory, which is being refurbished to house Bnei Menashe from north-east India while they undergo ORT

pre-aliah training programmes, is situated in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood close to the Magen David Synagogue.

Sharon Galsurkar, the Head of ORT India's Jewish Education Resource Centre, which conducts Hebrew-language training programmes, said: "The threat always existed because we knew that there were elements here that could be dangerous. But [the Jewish community] has never had an attack like this; Mumbai has never had an attack like this. We have to be extra careful now – all the organisations, all the synagogues will have to improve security."

Mr Galsurkar was a friend of the slain rabbi, Gavriel Holtzberg, and shared his detailed knowledge of the Chabad House with Indian special forces to help them prepare their eventual assault on the building where the terrorists were holed up. He later provided shelter for the rabbi's young son, who had escaped.

After the massacre, Mr Galsurkar and his friends helped members of Israel's Zaka rescue organisation to find accommodation, provided them with kosher food, volunteered to help them clean the Chabad House and retrieve body parts for burial, and joined those who recited tehillim (Psalms) as the bodies were taken to the El Al plane to Israel.

"He is too modest to acknowledge the extent of his contribution," ORT India National Director Benjamin Isaac said. "But he was on the front line from the beginning to the end, personifying the ideal of a Jewish response to such a tragedy. He gave of himself to the point of exhaustion and sought nothing in return. His spirit of solidarity was one that made us all at ORT India very proud and, as an organisation, we were happy to support him in his efforts."

World ORT's leaders confident about future

Continued from page 1

matters that will impact the organisation for many years to come. There's also a feeling of collegiality here with everyone pulling in the same direction. This was Jean's vision, a vision we share, and I think what he foresaw is coming about."

The Board of Representatives focused its deliberations on the economic crisis, its impact on fundraising and the financial health of the organisation. In spite of the challenges, members discussed how to increase revenue rather than merely maintain pre-recession income streams. The Board also examined educational challenges in the Former Soviet Union, where the ORT school network faces a funding crisis, the expanding Kadima Mada (Science Journey) programme in Israel, and increasing antisemitism, particularly in Europe.

"The discussions we've had here made us realise that education is more important now than ever before," ORT America President Doreen Hermelin said. "In turbulent times such as these you help people by giving them the skills they need for employment. They need to be trained better than ever before and ORT can meet that need better than any other organisation, so we have to buckle down and tell people how important the work is that ORT's doing. It's not going to be easy, but it's doable."

ORT colleges fashion closer ties

ORT Strasbourg and the Moscow ORT Technology College have agreed to collaborate in the teaching of fashion design – a demonstration of the benefits of belonging to an international organisation in a period of globalisation.

Under the agreement, Moscow ORT Technology College will share its considerable expertise in teaching fashion design with ORT Strasbourg, which has just started a BTS diploma course in the subject that allows graduates to continue their studies at a Masters level in university. The diploma builds on the success of the one-year foundation course in design launched by ORT Strasbourg two years ago.

ORT Strasbourg Principal Claude Sabbah was impressed when he visited the Moscow college and noted that the

teaching, classes, workshops and equipment were the same as in Strasbourg – a compatibility which should facilitate the development of closer ties.

"The new design courses at Strasbourg are expected to double their enrolment over the next year or so and linking with Moscow will further enhance their attractiveness to potential students," Mr Sabbah said.

To start with, the two colleges are looking at short term student and staff exchanges and the cultivation of professional contacts in areas such as curriculum design and training programmes.

"I am delighted with this development," ORT Russia Director Dr Slava Leschiner said. "The Moscow ORT

Technology College is at the stage in its development where it has a lot of experience that it can share with the whole ORT network throughout the world. And in return, the direct contacts which the College makes with other ORT institutions enrich it very much."

Dr Leschiner said that ORT Strasbourg's dormitory facilities meant that Russian students will have the opportunity of staying there for a semester or even a year.

"We have also discussed the possibility of undertaking joint projects using distance learning technology because the Moscow college hosts the ORT Lawson Vocational Training Centre, which has a lot of experience in setting up distance learning projects," Dr Leschiner said.

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