

Push Foundation

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A few years ago, I saw a TV news piece about a woman – Odelia Shpitalni – who founded PUSH Foundation - a non-profit organization, based on volunteers who give a “push” to less advantaged children by tutoring them. I found the idea brilliant in its simplicity and Odelia, fetching in her enthusiasm for the cause. Still, it took another year until I looked up the information on the internet and called the local PUSH coordinator. You know, life is hectic; we are always busy; we will have time to volunteer when we retire... but the thought nagged me until I did it. And I am very happy that I did.

I was put in touch with one of the schools' counselors who introduced me to an amazing pupil whom I have been teaching for three years already. I enjoy the activity very much and it fills me with pleasure and satisfaction. I witness my pupil's progress at school, enjoy her successes, and see the light in her eyes when new concepts become clear to her. I know that I am giving her an opportunity that might change her life and open doors for her that otherwise would have been shut.

We have come to know each other more than in a simple teacher-student relationship. We discuss things outside the school material during the lessons; I have met her family and she has met mine; I attended dance performances in which she participated and we celebrated together a few times in restaurants. All this extra activity is definitely not part of the role description of a tutor at PUSH, but, in my opinion, it is as important, if not more, as teaching another tense in English. It gives her an opportunity to show her true personality, expose her strengths (she is a great dancer!) and not only the learning difficulties, and to open her eyes to things outside her immediate world. This also constitutes a "push".

PUSH was established about 10 years ago and today there are already more than 1,300 volunteers from all over the country who tutor pupils through this organization. About 50 regional coordinators, all volunteers as well, help Odelia Shpitalni run the operation smoothly.

The volunteers work with the students on a regular weekly basis during the school year, helping them with the basic skills of Hebrew, English, Mathematics and Sciences. These extracurricular activities take place, individually or in small groups, on school

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premises and are highly coordinated with the school staff. As a result, the tutoring is very focused and develops the students' basic learning skills.

The ultimate goal of PUSH is to increase the students' opportunities for matriculation, higher education and the skills needed to join the workforce in today's competitive climate.

If you are a student at Beit Berl, and chose a teaching career, you already know how important education is for the future of the pupils and the country. I encourage you to join us at PUSH and help make a difference for the less privileged children. All it takes is an hour and a half a week.

You are welcome to contact me for further information: galia.reisman@gmail.com or to look up PUSH at http://www.pushedu.org/web/8888/nsf/sbs.py?&_id=15182&did=8020&title=english