

Bezeq's 20th anniversary donation for December:

To the only computer learning center in Israel for the blind and deaf

The donation this month goes to Beit David – Center for the Deaf and Blind

Bezeq is encouraged by the success of its 20th anniversary campaign, and noted that in the 10 months of the campaign so far, it has donated about NIS 2.4 million to ten welfare organizations and associations. The recipient organizations represent various populations in need of support, both children and adults, such as the disabled, cancer patients, as well as the victims of cultural problems such as sexual violence.

The Center for the Deaf and Blind was established by the Beit David Association about fifteen years ago, and is the only body in Israel that supports and treats the deaf-blind population. The center runs a range of programs for its unique clientele, including social services, a social club, an *ulpan* for new immigrants, a psychodrama group, a Jewish identity group, a young mothers group, activities for children and youth, a theater workshop and the "Personal Example" project for young people.

The center caters for people who are doubly handicapped. Most blind-deaf persons suffer from a genetic defect known as "Asher syndrome", in which children are born with hearing problems and when they are teenagers they start to suffer from limitation in their field of vision and eventually become blind to a greater or lesser extent. It is a population in need of double support – a special sign language for conversing with each other by touching the hands of the other person, and the acquisition of Braille reading and writing skills.

The money from Bezeq's donation will allow Beit David to operate a learning center in which computer skills will be taught, using a Braille screen that gives them access to computer applications. The center will also enable those who come there to use a magnification program that will enable those with residual vision to read texts.

Miki Mazar, Chairperson of Bezeq, said that in the past ten months she has been following the activities of the various volunteer organizations that provide so much help for various populations, and is particularly impressed with those who frequent the Center for the Deaf and Blind, and who, despite their double disability, are eager to learn to overcome their disadvantages and stand on their own two feet.

Haim Fuchs, manager of the Center for the Deaf and Blind, said that by its donation, Bezeq is giving deaf-blind persons access to all kinds of computer applications, the use of word processors, sending and receiving e-mail messages and surfing the Internet. These skills open new options for the deaf and blind, and will enable them to integrate into the community and society.