

Turning Tanks into Pine Cones

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KKL-JNF activities for children at Kibbutz Alumim

Rocket fire from Gaza continues as of this morning (August 10). Residents close to the southern Gaza border still live close to their bomb shelters. KKL-JNF continues to provide respite activities for residents of the south both in bomb shelters and with trips to the north. KKL-JNF, with the support of its friends in Finland, held environmental arts and crafts activities in Kibbutz Alumim near the Gaza Border. For the Kibbutz, this activity held following the declaration of a 72 hour ceasefire between Israel and Gaza on August 5th, was the first community activity in a proper communal area ever since the start of Operation Protective Edge a month ago.



Kibbutz Alumim children display their arts & crafts for KKL-JNF Finland. Photo: Courtesy of Hadas Lev



Making arts & crafts from recyclable materials. Photo: Courtesy of Hadas Lev

"Since the ceasefire was declared on Tuesday, this was the first time we were able to do something as a community in a proper area, in the kibbutz dining room. The families were so happy to get out of their houses and do something together, it was such a feeling of relief and so therapeutic." **Esther Marcun**, cultural activities co-ordinator at Kibbutz Alumim, was referring to the activities for children organized by KKL-JNF at the kibbutz, with the support of its friends in [Finland](#). The activities, which took place on Wednesday, August 6, included building models out of recycled materials, mainly pine cones, twigs and corncobs.

"Although the activities were aimed at the children," Esther continued, "the parents also had a wonderful time and asked us to arrange similar events in the future. Parents and children worked together, it was a creative process and an opportunity to talk about what's been going on. People asked me who organized this, and when I told them it was KKL-JNF, they were very grateful. A number of organizations helped us during the war, but the feeling about KKL-JNF is that they're not just there for us at times of emergency, but [whatever the situation might be](#). We would like to invite KKL-JNF's friends in Finland to visit us when they're in Israel, in order to thank them personally for their support."

Alumim is a kibbutz located in the northwestern Negev, very close to the Gaza Strip, with a population of about 80 families. It was founded in 1966 by members of the Bnei Akiva religious Zionist youth movement. About 20% of the members are immigrants from the United Kingdom. Unlike a number of the other communities in the region, almost none of the families left the kibbutz to go up north during Operation Protective Edge.

Hadas Lev, cultural activities co-coordinator together with Esther, said that over the last month, "the kibbutz pretty much looked like a battle field. There's endless noise,

whether from the IDF tanks and artillery or the rockets being shot at us from Gaza. As cultural activities coordinators, we try to organize as many outside-of-the-house activities for our children as possible. This sort of activity is extremely important for our ability to continue our daily life, and we're extremely grateful for it."

Idit lives in the kibbutz with her husband and five children aged 4 1/2, 7, 11, 13 and a baby. "My children were born into this situation; they don't know any other reality. The younger children are afraid to go to the bathroom or take showers in case a Color Red alert should suddenly sound, but for us, that seems normal. The hardest thing for them is staying at home and not being able to go out, which is why activities like these are so important for us. As for the future, we rely on the Israeli army and government to do whatever is necessary to protect us."



Idit with 3 of her children. Photo: Courtesy Hadas Lev

"Today's activities were really amazing, it gave everyone a chance to express themselves. Almost all of the boys wanted to build models of tanks. I want to thank KKL-JNF for organizing this, it really makes a difference."

Mati arranged a babysitter for Ariel (3 1/2) and Efrat, who is 1 1/2 years old, and went with 6 year-old Shira to participate in the activities. "It was amazing to see what can be made out of recycled materials and it was very special for me to work together with Shira, it really brought us closer. It's been quiet here since



Mati with her daughter Shira. Photo: Courtesy Hadas Lev

Tuesday, when the ceasefire started, but little Efrat has grown so used to the sound of bombing that she misses it. She claps her hands, bangs on the wall and keeps saying 'boom boom'. This is part of the reality of living in Israel."

Hannah Bechar, KKL-JNF Southern Region Director of the Community and Forest Department said that the activities in Alumim were part of KKL-JNF's commitment to southern Israel during Operation Protective Edge and in general. "In the future, we are planning to create a [community forest](#) for Alumim, Kfar Maimon and Shokedah. As for now, we wanted show our support at this difficult time, and the contribution we received from our friends in Finland made it possible."