



This month in Etzba HaGalil

*A review of the news for our partners from Coast-to-Coast Canada
November-December 2007*

Government and Politics

- Aharon Valency, mayor of the Upper Galilee Regional Council, received 67.5% of the vote and thus, will continue in his capacity as mayor for the next five years. This is the first time in the past 15 years that there has been true competition for the seat.
- Benny Ben-Muvchar took 80% of the vote in Mevoot Hermon, securing a second term as mayor.
- Arkadi Guydamak, Israel's multimillionaire, is establishing a branch of his new political party "Social Justice" in Kiryat Shmona, and endorsing his own candidate for mayor of the city. This is part of his political strategy of establishing a political presence in the periphery prior to his own candidacy for mayor of Jerusalem.
- The Interior Ministry has decided it will no longer allow its branch in Kiryat Shmona to issue passports or identity cards and, as a result, residents requiring those services will have to travel to their offices in Tzfat in order to do so, a trip of at least 45 minutes plus travel expenses and issuing fees. This is not the first time over the last several years that the ministry has intervened, closed the offices and cut its staff. Despite appeals from the municipality, the ministry insists that the decision will not be reversed.

Education

- Despite the current high school teachers strike in Israel, the Danziger School is offering a number of new educational programs. This week, the school held an evening for honors students and their families in the Migal research labs. The program included lectures from three researchers and hands-on experiments. The program was part of a new joint initiative that expands educational opportunities through enrichment programs at Migal, the Mara Theater, the Tennis Center, the "Volume" music center and the Canada Center. The school is also offering programs to develop young local leadership.
- The Danziger School canceled its transportation program, and students will no longer benefit from free and/or subsidized rides home from school. This decision resulted from inappropriate behavior from students while on the buses last year.
- Despite the on-going strike of high school teachers throughout Israel, educators in Kiryat Shmona remain calm and collected, but are preparing to offer informal educational activities to benefit youth without damaging the teachers' cause.
- The mayors and leaders of the Eastern Galilee municipalities are putting pressure on the Council for Higher Education to follow through on the government's promise to establish a medical school in the Galilee. Chaim Barbivai and Aharon Valency worked together to emphasize that the school and an accompanying university will contribute to the development of the region and increase opportunities for residents of the Galilee.

Environment

- The national roads authority approved a plan to expand the road connecting Kiryat Shmona and Yesod Hamaala, making it wider and more driver-friendly. Improvements will include new traffic lights and road lights, safety measures and landscaping. Total project cost is 350 million shekel and work is expected to be complete in December 2009.
- Drilling has begun to test the feasibility of a project to develop electricity in the Hula Valley through alternative, earth-friendly processes. The project is being sponsored by the Association for the Development of the Galilee and the company "Electra," at a cost of NIS 250 million. Aharon Valency attended the first drilling and explains that this project is an important step in the region's progress towards becoming a "green region."

- 30 volunteers were certified this week in a course that trains civilians to enforce environmental laws in the Upper Galilee. The course was operated by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and certified participants to give fines and to enforce laws regarding littering, sound pollution, and the protection of wildlife.

Partnership news

The Steering Committee of Partnership 2000 visited Israel last week and traveled to various partnership and Israel and Overseas projects and programs. They visited the 13 Coast-to-Coast partnership priority projects, visited the new computer room made possible by Coast-to-Coast donors and met with the mayor of Yesod Hamaala to learn about current progress and future challenges to the region.

IEC updates

- The **Oran Foundation** has announced that they will match Coast-to-Coast IEC allocations to Young Communities.
- **School renovations** and equipping: most of the work and purchases will be completed by the end of January 2008.
- **JDC projects:**
 - **Supportive community** – the program has expanded and now includes many more participants from the rural region in the north.
 - **Computer room** – will be completed by the end of February 2008 and will operate in partnership with the learning disabilities unit of Tel Hai Academic College.
 - **Supportive community for disabled** - the project will be launched within a couple of months and will serve disabled individuals living in the region (70 individuals) and Hazor (30 individuals). CTC will be funding the program for two rather than three years.
- **Other communities' investments:**
 - **Youth Futures - Kiryat Shmona** has been launched with seed investment from Montreal FederationCJA
 - **Renovations of daycare centers** in Kibbutzim of Etzba HaGalil: most of the work will be completed with a couple of months
- **National Projects:**
 - Canada Center – \$1.5 million towards renovations
 - Tel Hai Academic College – \$2.5 million (UJA Federation of Greater Toronto allocated \$1.25 million of non-IEC funds) for residential student dormitories and multi-purpose campus building.