



A teenager tends crops at Kaima Farm, whose educational model promotes free choice and is based on individual motivation. (Elad Brami)

Kaima Farm catches teens before they fall out of the educational framework

• By SHARON AHARONI

The community-supported agriculture model of farming has gained popularity around the world in the last two centuries. Although the phenomenon exists on a smaller scale in Israel, it has started to pick up speed, and more than 20 CSA farms now operate throughout the country.

The Kaima farm in Moshav Beit Zayit was founded in early 2013, and like other CSA farms, provides fresh organic produce to the public. Yet unlike most CSA farms, it serves an additional and unique purpose in society: Kaima, which means sustainability in Aramaic, employs young people who have dropped out of the conventional educational system or are on the verge of doing so.

The program aims at providing the youngsters with life skills through work experience, teamwork, leadership, personal accountability and a sense of community.

Founder Yoni Yefet-Reich told *In Jerusalem* that the youngsters assume responsibility right from the start.

"When a teen first arrives at the farm, he or she undergoes an interview; a standard interview one undergoes when seek-

ing a job. The teen is interviewed on their own, without the presence of a social worker. The interview is very business-oriented and does not deal with the youngster's personal background, but rather questions about his or her ability to work and meet the expectations of the job."

Following the interview, the teens are asked to think it through and decide if they are interested in accepting the position. If they choose to undertake the endeavor, they sign a work contract and receive a salary, higher than minimum wage.

Yefet-Reich added that the workday starts at 7:30 a.m. The teens arrive independently, regardless of where they are traveling from, and they are expected to be punctual. One lives in Petah Tikva, at least an hour and a half by bus each direction, another in Beit Shemesh, a 45-minute commute.

"One of the first battles we [the founders] had with other partners in the initiative was whether or not the program should provide transportation. The financial cost was not the issue, but rather the message it sends to these teens about their personal responsibilities. Providing transportation would

actually defeat the educational purpose of the program," he added.

Kaima's educational model promotes free choice and is based on the individual's motivation. A teen who is not taking his or her job seriously is not chastised by one of the adult staff members, but rather addressed in a calm conversation.

"Pushing the teens and telling them off leaves them feeling small and insignificant," Yefet-Reich explained, adding that when asked if there are any discipline issues, he is always surprised and says there really aren't any. "We have the best, most amazing kids working at the farm, who understand the situation and take responsibility.

"We do not treat them with conventional and known types of treatment, but rather are highly invested in creating an ideal environment for enabling growth," Yefet-Reich noted. This environment is achieved through accountability, an emphasis on responsibility, a sense of belonging and authentic relationships between the youth and the adult staff.

"The staff is instructed to always be themselves. In this way, we sustain authentic relationships between the adults and

the children," Yefet-Reich said.

Kaima serves as an example for educational models that can be effective for youngsters who have not been removed from their homes by the welfare services, yet are not well suited for the conventional education system. As Yefet-Reich stated, "Farming is not the only model for this educational philosophy, but it's not right for everyone."

He believes the education system is lacking additional models of this type. In his view, the emphasis in schools should be put on curiosity, free choice and dialogue and not on grades.

Achieving an environment that enables personal growth

for the teens is key to the farm's success. The occupational factor is the basis for achieving this environment in Kaima.

"The teens have duties, assist in planning, take part in brainstorming sessions. We spend a lot of time thinking together about what to do, where to plant and so on," Yefet-Reich said.

The teens in the program come to the farm at different stages. Some have been out of the school system for many years, others are enrolled in school but do not attend. "We receive youngsters either through social workers, welfare services or directly contacted by the child's parents." The staff maintain relationships with the youngsters and their parents beyond work hours.

"Some parents start the process with worries and doubts, but those fade away quickly. It's an amazing thing to see that your child who was not functioning is now blossoming and motivated," Yefet-Reich said.

A 17-year-old who has been working at the farm for the past five months told *IJ*, "I found a great place for me." Asked why Kaima worked for him, he replied, "They help you learn about what life is really like and also teach you how to be a professional worker.

"If you want to talk about something that is going on in your personal life, you have a great team to turn to," the teen said, adding that he sees himself working in agriculture in the future, and dreams of having a farm of his own.

He comments that Kaima is better a fit for him than school: "I prefer doing something I enjoy, and acquiring a profession while doing so, rather than doing something I don't enjoy."

KAIMA MAKES some 50 percent of its earnings by selling produce to 250 clients weekly. Clients receive a box with 11 or 12 types of vegetables. During the summer, 70% of the offering is



Planting kohlrabi. (Kaima Farm)

comprised of produce grown at the farm, and the other 30% comes from neighboring organic farms. Yefet-Reich stated that the clients are viewed as partners in the farm and many of them come to visit and even volunteer.

It was apparent how thankful the founders of Kaima are to the community who helped them build the farm and continue to support them today. The land, which sits in a valley with beautiful views of Jerusalem was donated by Beit Zayit families.

Following a state of depression Yefet-Reich experienced in 2012, he decided it was time to go forward with this initiative that he had dreamed of since the age of 23.

"I always thought this was something I would do when I was older and well off, but depression is a matter of essence, and dealing with the meaning of life. I understood that there is no meaning to life – it is whatever you decide, there is no higher meaning."

He said the Beit Zayit families who agreed to donate their land to the project were the first partners in the project. Later, he found 10 additional people who wanted to be partners in the program.

"The educational model we thought of at that time is the same model operating today, but the agricultural plan we had was far from reality."

The team asked the public via Facebook to come help clear stones from the land every Friday and were amazed by the number of volunteers who came.

"I remember at the end of each day we were shocked by how many good people live in this country," Yefet-Reich said. "People did an amazing thing, they believed in our dream."

In a testament to its success, Kaima's educational model has recently expanded to other farms – in Moshav Be'erotayim, Kibbutz Hukok and Moshav

Nahalal.

The new farms are guided and supported by Kaima Beit Zayit and the Matanel Foundation, which has been supporting Kaima and encouraged them to duplicate this model.

"We did not want our NGO to be a parent NGO to other farms, because we know what happens to organizations that become large. We wanted to keep our organization small, but to mentor and provide all that we can."

Kaima came up with a plan to make that happen. They decided to offer a "social franchise," which entails a contract that mainly addresses the educational aspect and the treatment of the youngsters. Kaima works closely with the new farms. As part of the contract, the new farms must work at the Beit Zayit farm for five days. Later on, the Beit Zayit team visits the new farms every two weeks.

Funding is difficult, especially for the new farms. The Matanel Foundation and many other foundations help, but the lack of funding from the government is frustrating for the farms.

"I ask myself, where does the money for a child who has dropped out of school go? It should benefit the child in any new program he or she is taking part in," Yefet-Reich said.

It should be noted that there is no set period of time in which a youngster takes part on the program, and it is very much a matter of each teen's personal journey.

Yefet-Reich concluded, "From the beginning, the idea wasn't to measure our success in the conventional terms of how many kids return to school, go to the army and so on. However, with that being said, all of the youngsters do civilian service or enlist in the IDF, and 80% of youngsters return to some sort of conventional educational framework."

For more information: www.kaima.org.il



The farm, whose name means 'sustainability' in Aramaic, is nestled in a valley in Moshav Beit Zayit. (Kaima Farm)



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• By BARRY DAVIS

The Israel Museum is proving to be not only the country's most important repository of artworks and artifacts from across the millennia but also a prominent venue for holding major musical events.

Last December's inaugural Jerusalem Jazz Festival (albeit 10 years after the original bearer of that moniker was held) at the museum was a roaring success, and next Monday through Thursday, Jerusalemites and anyone else who makes it up the hill will be able to enjoy a raft of top-class musical entertainment.

The big guns lined up for the second edition of the now annual Live Festival include such glittering acts as Yehudit Ravitz, with Shalom Hanoch guesting, and a headlining double act by Eviatar Banai and Aviv Gefen, while veteran rocker Berry Sakharof will introduce the public to a slew of new numbers.

Live also takes in the wildly successful 7 *Grand Pianos, One Stage* show thought up by stellar pianist-conductor-composer Gil Shochat. Like last year, the ivory tickler team comprises artists from a range of disciplines, including veteran rock-pop performers Matti Caspi and Shlomo Gronich, mercurial jazz-oriented pianist Omri Mor and classical musicians such as Tal Samnon and Victor Stanislavsky. Some of the instrumental offering, which features solo slots and duets, will be augmented by vocal contributions by Caspi, Marina Maximilian and opera soprano Daniella Lugassy.

Lugassy was also on board for last year's piano septet bash as the sole vocalist, and says she had a good time. There isn't going to be too much in the way of operatic fare at the Israel Museum on July 13 (9 p.m.), but that doesn't bother the 33-year-old soprano. A while ago she even recorded some pretty convincing renditions of hit pop numbers, such as Sting's "Field of Gold" and "Fix You" by Coldplay.

Lugassy is clearly up for her Israel Museum date, and says her musical moonlighting departure came about with a change of personal circumstances. "I sang opera for years – all classical, authentic opera singing. I was living in Berlin at the time when I became pregnant, and I took some time out." She was happy about the impending arrival, but was left at a bit of a loose musical end. "I didn't really know what to do. I had three months' vacation, from the eighth month until a month after the baby. So I thought, why not just do something I fancy, without thinking too much about it, about my career – just something I like."

The drawing-board stages of the project-in-waiting went through several guises until Lugassy finally hit on her plan of action. "At first I thought of doing some lullabies for kids, then I thought of doing covers of some pop songs, and that's how it worked out in the end. I recorded a few numbers, but I didn't really think of taking that any further."

But she liked what she heard and felt comfortable with the commercial stuff. "It took me off into a new direction, which enabled me to combine different things."

The populace at large may consider pop music as light fare compared with operatic



Opera soprano Daniella Lugassy: Up for her Israel Museum date. (Courtesy)

Lugassy's pop time



(Fourth from left) Lugassy with other show participants. (Inbal Marmari)

work, but Lugassy addressed the venture with the utmost seriousness. "I took a coach to help me get everything right," she says, noting other professional considerations. "I worried whether people in the classical world might look at me differently. They might think I'd gone off the rails."

Thankfully, her fears proved to be unfounded. "At the end of the day, people who like opera generally don't only like opera," she posits. "People can like a number of things. Liking pop music, for example, is not something that is taboo."

She also hedged her bets somewhat by aiming her new output at what she hoped was the right market sector. "It really depends what audience you go for. An operatic audience really enjoys this pop stuff."

Lugassy says she breaks her listeners in gently. "I always start off with an aria. At the end of the day I am an opera singer, not a jazz singer or a pop singer. I present myself to the audience as I really am, Daniella. But there are other sides to me. I am not just one thing. I don't belong in a particular box. I just sing what I like to sing and I feel it. I don't think about singing something in a classical or nonclassical way."

Still, there was a learning curve to be navigated. "At the beginning I wondered whether I was doing the music too operatically. Then I thought: Wait, this is Daniella. This is who I am."

In fact she had plenty of formative years of listening to fall back on. "My mother is American, so when I was a kid I heard a lot of Beatles and American folk songs." The familial mix thickens. "My father is French but has Moroccan roots. But we heard a lot of French music, and mainly opera music from my father's side. As I grew up, like any Israeli kid, I liked to listen to the stuff we got on MTV, and also Israeli songs."

Lugassy started flexing her vocal chords outside the home, too, which also helped to widen her musical education. "I sang in a children's choir in Ashkelon, where we lived, and we did all kinds of Israeli songs. And at school we all heard stuff by Shlomo Artzi and Arik Einstein and that sort of thing."

So when did it finally click with Lugassy that she was destined to sing works by Verdi, Mozart, Puccini et al.? "I am still not sure if I am a real opera singer," she laughs. In fact, if it hadn't been for the mass aliya from the former USSR in the early '90s, Lugassy might have earned her crust in a different line of work. "There were Russian music teachers who came to Ashkelon," she recalls. "They changed everything for me."

Even so, the teachers were not taken with Lugassy's gifts from the start. "They never gave me arias to sing, but one day I got to sing a Brahms lullaby and my voice really came through. My vocal range was really suited to that." And that was that.

Today, Lugassy maintains a packed performing schedule, up and down the country and abroad, with the Israel Opera and all sorts of projects, including material from beyond the operatic pale. Her rendition of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" in last year's 7 *Grand Pianos, One Stage* show went down very well with the audiences, and the Israel Museum crowd should be prepared to be duly wowed.

For tickets and more information:
(02) 677-1300 and www.imjnet.org.il