

Lisa Zach and Tomer Hoory join the Westchester and Connecticut team at Friends of the IDF (FIDF)

Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF) appointed Lisa Zach as the new Associate Director of Westchester and Tomer Hoory as the new Senior Development Associate for Westchester and Connecticut. Both with strong backgrounds in community engagement and Jewish leadership, they step into these roles with a shared goal: to educate and engage the Westchester community with the incredible humanitarian work FIDF does every day to support Israel's soldiers and their families.

"I am excited to welcome Lisa and Tomer to the FIDF family. They are

a great addition to our team," says Anat Chavkin, Executive Director of the Chapter.

FIDF provides essential support that ensures soldiers' wellbeing, educational advancement, mental health, and medical needs.

"My mission is to connect families with the impactful work FIDF does every day. By raising awareness of their mission, we create opportunities for meaningful com-



Lisa Zach

munity involvement that leads to lasting change," said Zach.

"I am honored to join FIDF in this capacity," added Hoory. "My focus is on strengthening expanding opportunities within the Westchester Jewish community so that more members of



Tomer Hoory

programs for families and teens. Together, they are building meaningful bridges between the IDF's frontline efforts and the Westchester community.

"FIDF is about humanity, healing, and helping people thrive," Zach noted. "I'm honored to share that story here."

"It's a privilege to join Lisa and our incredible

our community can stand behind Israel's soldiers in the meaningful ways that FIDF can offer."

Under their leadership, Zach and Hoory hope to deepen local involvement through intimate parlor events, synagogue partnerships, and educational

Westchester and Connecticut team," Hoory says. "Together, we hope to assist in the growth of our strong and engaged community in support of Israel's heroes."

For more information, visit www.fidf.org or email Zach at Lisa.Zach@fidf.org and Hoory at Tomer.Hoory@fidf.org.

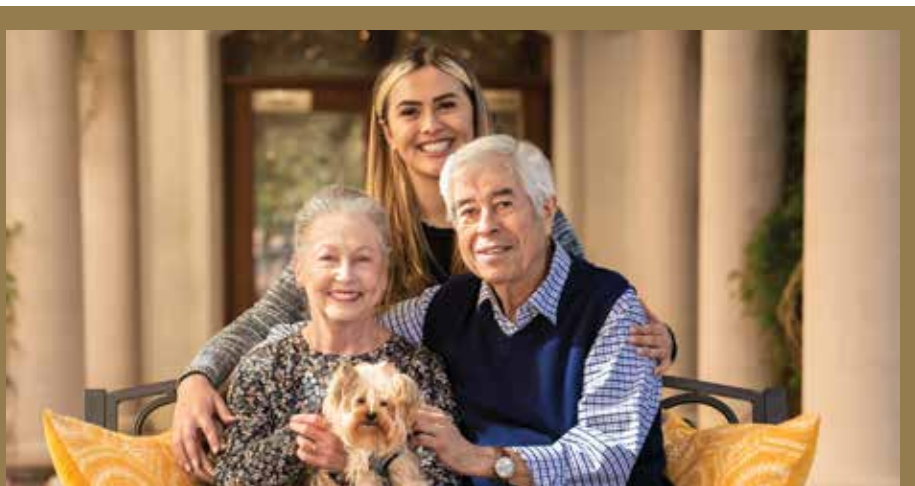
New Haredi Yeshivat Hesder Opens in Israel

Israel Sci-Tech Schools (ISTS) has inaugurated a new Haredi Yeshivat Hesder at its Hermelin College in Netanya, in collaboration with Rabbi Yonatan Reiss, Founder & Director of Chedvata.

The yeshiva was established in response to growing demand from local families seeking an educational path for their children that integrates religious commitment, academic excellence, and service to the State of Israel.

This innovative program offers a unique model: students will dedicate their mornings to Torah study and their afternoons to matriculation coursework and a practical engineering degree. Upon completion of their studies, graduates will enlist for full military service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

"We at Israel Sci-Tech Schools are proud to be part of this unique and groundbreaking program, which allows Haredi youngsters to continue their Torah learning while also contributing to Israel by pursuing higher education and later serving in the IDF," said Raz Frohlich, CEO of the Israel Sci-Tech Schools Network. "In this historic juncture that Israel is facing, we at ISTS are leading a change that will greatly impact the integration of the Haredi community and their contribution to Israeli society."



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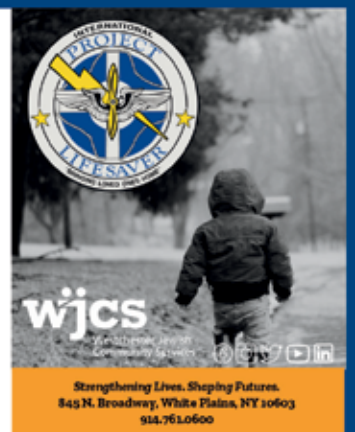


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Israel Sci-Tech Schools Open 2025-2026 School Year

Israel Sci-Tech Schools (ISTS), Israel's largest independent charter school network, officially opened the 2025-2026 school year in September, welcoming approximately 100,000 students across 264 educational institutions nationwide. More than 8,100 devoted staff members greeted students.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog and First Lady Michal Herzog joined Israel Sci-Tech Schools' Danciger High School in Kiryat Shmona to welcome students on their first day of school.

This year's opening was marked by both excitement and profound sorrow, as the network mourns the loss of 158 alumni who fell in the ongoing Iron Swords War. In addition, three graduates — Itay



Emma Barrebi, ISTS, and Mark Leventus, Chairman of Friends of Israel Sci-Tech Schools. Photo Credit: Courtesy of ISTS

Hen z"l, Nimrod Cohen, and Matan Angrest — remain in captivity.

Standing Strong, Proud, and Pro-Israel: A Jewish Future of Possibility



BY MYRA CLARK-SIEGEL,
AJC WESTCHESTER/FAIRFIELD
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

This is a moment that demands clarity, courage, and pride. As Jews in America, and as part of the global Jewish community, we are living through turbulent times. Antisemitism has grown more visible and more aggressive, both in our political town squares and social media. Israel continues to face profound security challenges, even as it remains a vibrant democracy and the homeland of the Jewish people. And yet—this is also a moment filled with extraordinary possibility.

At American Jewish Committee (AJC), we see both sides of this reality every day. On one hand, Jewish students in K-12 schools and on college campuses have experienced intimidation, exclusion, and, at times, outright hostility. On the other hand, those same students are standing taller, speaking louder, and claiming their Jewish identity with strength, dignity, and Jewish joy. Through AJC programs like Leaders for Tomorrow (LFT) for high school students and Campus Global Board for college students, our

younger leaders are equipped with knowledge and confidence to advocate for Israel, stand against antisemitism, and lead their peers with resilience and pride.

Globally, there are reasons for optimism. The Abraham Accords have already reshaped the Middle East by fostering historic peace and cooperation between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco. Today, we are on the threshold of new possibilities: expanded agreements that could bring even more countries into a regional framework of coexistence, prosperity, and mutual respect. AJC has been at the forefront of this work, building relationships, opening channels for dialogue, and helping lay the groundwork for a more secure and integrated future.

Here in Westchester, our Jewish community has a vital role to play. We must make our voices heard—not only in moments of crisis, but every day, modeling what it means to stand proudly as Jews and as Zionists. Each of us has a part in this story: getting involved with advocacy, showing up for one another, supporting Israel, and building bridges across communities.

This is a deeply challenging time. But it is also an inspiring one. Together, we can ensure that the Jewish future is not defined by fear, but by strength, leadership, and the boundless possibilities of what we can achieve—here in Westchester, across America, and around the world.

AJC (American Jewish Committee) is the global advocacy organization of the Jewish people. To learn more or learn how to be a strong Jewish advocate, email westchester@ajc.org or go to ajc.org.

Nationwide, about 2.6 million Israeli students returned to classrooms amid the war and an ongoing shortage of teaching staff. Of these, 149,000 entered 12th grade, their final year in the education system. The 2025-2026 school year began against the backdrop of the Iron Swords War, now entering its third year.

Joining the network's back-to-school events across Israel was Mark Leventus of Scarsdale, Chairman of Friends of Israel Sci-Tech Schools. Among the highlights was a gathering of all 400 ISTS principals for a special conference held ahead of the school year.

"The education of students in Israel — especially in STEM — is the most important investment in the country's future and the only way to ensure it will thrive moving forward," said Mark Leventus. "Our world is moving faster than ever in terms of technology and AI, and I had the honor of meeting 400 principals from Israel Sci-Tech Schools who are deeply dedicated to this mission. While Israeli society is facing enormous challenges — perhaps the greatest since

the establishment of the state — the way to overcome them begins with the best teachers and principals who care profoundly about their students."

As the year kicks off, ISTS is launching Israel's first Code of Ethics for the responsible use of AI tools in the education system. This year, the network's youth movement division will lead more than 40 community engagement programs initiated and led by the network's students. The division will expand its activity particularly in peripheral areas and focus on initiatives fostering resilience, a sense of belonging, and unity among students.

"We are opening the school year with a profound sense of mission," said Raz Frohlich, CEO of the Israel Sci-Tech Schools Network. "Our educational teams bring both commitment and a deep belief in the power of education to shape Israeli society and strengthen its resilience from within. As a leading educational organization with a broad and diverse nationwide presence, bridging sectors, religions, and communities, we are placing special emphasis this year on fostering communal resilience and unity. In addition, out of our commitment to relevant education in a changing world, we developed the first Code of Ethics in the Israeli education system for integrating AI into education."

Birthright Israel Onward Storytellers Completes First Program

Birthright Israel Onward announced the successful completion of the inaugural cohort of its new Storytellers program, a pioneering fellowship designed to empower Jewish creatives and digital changemakers to share authentic narratives about Judaism and Israel worldwide.

Launched earlier this year, the program brought together its first group this summer: 43 participants from the United States, Canada, Argentina, Costa Rica, Australia, Mexico, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Over several weeks in Israel, participants engaged in workshops, mentorship, and content creation experiences, building a foundation for authentic storytelling in the digital age.

"This initiative was born out of the need to break out of the echo chamber of traditional pro-Israel content and to give a platform to diverse, original voices with real influence online," said Gidi Mark, CEO of Birthright Israel. "It is a



program with a long-term vision to build a community of creators and changemakers who shape the digital and cultural discourse long after the program ends. After 25 years of activity, Birthright not only connects young people to Israel but also enables them to become partners in shaping the Jewish story of our generation."

Storytellers is designed as a skill-building incubator and creative community for Jewish influencers, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders between the ages of 18-35. The program combines high-level workshops, field trips, TED-

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