

## INNOVATIVE THERAPIST SAYS MAIMONIDES PROVIDED FOUNDATION

**Dr. Dvora (Kranz) Corn '78** and her husband, Dr. Benjamin Corn, have developed one of the world's most innovative and effective service networks supporting individuals and families facing end-of-life illnesses.

And when she has time to think about "why I'm doing what I'm doing," Dvora says, she realizes that the foundation for these skills and aspirations was nurtured and fortified during her eight years at Maimonides School.

The non-profit organization is called Life's Door-Tishkofet (LDT), with branches in Israel and the U.S. Dvora is executive director; her husband is chair. According to its website, LDT "has been transforming the experience of facing serious illness from one of anguish, confusion or denial to one that encourages collaboration, growth and healing for patients, families and professionals." The couple initiated the organization with its own funds and now is supported by thousands of donors, including Maimonides alumni.

"Through individual consultations, workshops, seminars and retreats, the organization has provided the opportunity for a sincere, dynamic and robust dialogue that addresses the value of openly exploring illness and end of life issues," the LDT website explains. "This approach instills purposefulness in the lives of its participants."

Dvora was better known by her English name Phyllis when she graduated from Maimonides in 1978. She met her future husband at Hillel while they were undergraduates at Boston University. They lived in Boston and Cherry Hill, NJ until making aliyah in 1997. While there, Dvora started a private group practice in occupational therapy specializing in geriatric and long-term care. In Jerusalem she served as a volunteer at Hadassah University Medical Center's hospice on the Mount Scopus campus and earned a master's degree in family therapy.

The Corns launched Life's Door-Tishkofet (the Hebrew word for perspective) eight years ago. Dvora's

website says the organization and its affiliated programs have reached more than 10,000 patients, family members and professionals.

"The work that I do has a couple of dimensions," Dvora explained -- "The organizational component, including chairing a network of 22 agencies that work in collaboration with our organization, and the dimension of understanding the spiritual components of dealing with chronic and life-threatening health issues."

She said her organizational skills developed within "a very ripe environment at Maimonides to become active and make a change."

Dvora recalled moving to Boston at age 10 from Flatbush, a very large community with many schools and subcultures. "All of a sudden I found myself in an intimate, more manageable environment. Even as a kid in fifth grade I felt a loss of the large community. But when I got into seventh grade, something about that intimacy enabled me to feel very confident and see opportunities to make a change."

Maimonides was a place "where you could connect to people very easily. A student in eighth or ninth grade could connect to seniors, like a mentorship built into student experience," she said. "You didn't get lost. I remember just knowing that within this environment there would be the ability to pull people together and make a difference."

There was a sense of support among the students, she recalled, a sense of "we, together, can do something. We are the voice. And if we don't make that voice, nobody will make that voice... There was an idea that we have not only a responsibility but we have an ability."

Her activism included arranging for buses to rallies in support of Soviet Jews. "I remember having this passion about social change, the impact I could have, and the ability to rally students to New York and DC," Dvora said. The opportunities also included raising money for causes, through which

students "learned simple things about finance and business management."

Dvora also emphasized the importance of "spirituality" in her work. "Religion and spirituality are not necessarily one and the same," she said. "A spiritual life brings meaning to every person, as I learned when I began to work with people who are very sick and dying."

The inspiration, she said, "came from Rabbi (Isaiah) Wohlgenuth's class in *Beurei Hatefillah*. That's what any gradu-



Dvora and Benjamin Corn display his 2011 President of Israel's Award for Outstanding Volunteerism

ates say when asked what happened that impacted us most as human beings and as Jews. That was my favorite class by my favorite teacher. He had deep insight into the meaning of prayer."

Over the past 30 years, first as an occupational therapist and now in her work as a family therapist, Dvora said, she has learned "how profound the need is to know that there's a Higher Power, and to understand how prayer was created so one can create one's own prayer."

LDT recently held its annual Partners for Life Couples Retreat, attended by 30 couples (religious and non-religious); one or both of each was suffering with a serious illness. "Our staff and volunteers work with these couples for two days near the Dead Sea for an entire process of workshops that awaken their spiritual side and deepen their relationships."

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"I cannot begin to tell you how much the sources of *Beurei HaTefillah* resonated with me," she declared, as participants "connected to the idea that everyone has the merit to offer a personal prayer, that prayer is meaningful. My ability to appreciate this concept is grounded in *Beurei HaTefillah*. My sense of prayer had its roots in that kind of study."

Rabbi Wohlgemuth's class, she said, taught her to "really understand that prayer is a door that's open to everybody when you talk about the intent and not just the words on the page."

The Corns, who reside in Jerusalem, have four grown daughters; their oldest is director of social services for Nefesh B'Nefesh. Three of the girls served in *Sherut Leumi* and one in the IDF. Dvora's parents, Sandra and Sol Kranz, still live in Newton, although the Corns continue to encourage them to join the family in Israel.

"One has a sense that when confronting the end of life, that door is closing," Dvora said. "But a new perspective actually opens doors to relationships and much more meaningful existence. What is most remarkable is that when one allows the dialogue around illness and end of life to open up, not only sick people get to benefit from that growth experience, but everyone around is strengthened and inspired to live life more fully." 🌱