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Giving their whole hearts: A special project for International Volunteer Day

They were all her sons | Irit Bachar works with at-risk youth

“I love these young men. I also learned to be less judgmental.”

Irit Bachar has three kids of her own, but she’s a living proof that if there’s will, there’s time: Even though her daily schedule is packed, she also works with at-risk youth as part of her volunteer work for ELEM. “I joined the organization a decade ago,” Bachar, 46, says. “I volunteered at a program called “A Real Home” for young women who have experienced continuous sexual abuse at home. Once my own kids were a little older, I transferred and started volunteering with the night outreach van in Nataniya, which helps youths who roam the streets.”

Once a week, Irit and additional volunteers arrive at their meeting spot with the at-risk youth, who spend hours on the street. “Throughout the evening, all the way to the early AMs, we give the youths snacks and a hot cup of tea, we talk to them, play with them, and just be there for them.”

“This job makes me encounter some rough stories,” she shares, “and I try to help as much as I can, outside of the program, too. For example, there was one young woman who was about to join the army within three days, and said she didn’t have enough money and didn’t know what she needed to get. I managed to get

the list of required items, and along with my colleagues we were able to put things together for her. I arrived at her home, and we went out to buy what was still missing, and I helped her pack her suitcase.”

Irit tells us that through her volunteer work she created some meaningful relationships with the youths, and that she meets some of them outside of her regular volunteer hours.

“I love these young men,” she concludes with a smile. “Volunteering gives me a different perspective about reality, and teaches me how to react in different situations. I learned how to accept others and be less judgmental, and it made me learn more about myself, as a person and as a mother.”