

## **JDC Honors The Asper Foundation for Pioneering Role in Green Learning in Israel**

*Ceremony Showcases Innovative Edible Garden Program's Critical Impact on Country's Educational Landscape*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Kiryat Gat, Israel, June 7, 2018** — The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee today honored The Asper Foundation, the esteemed Winnipeg-based philanthropy, for their leading role in advancing green learning in Israel. The event at the Asper Edible Gardens at the Efraim Ben David Elementary School in Kiryat Gat, which included a plaque unveiling and tree-planting ceremony, was attended by Gail Asper, President and trustee of The Asper Foundation, Moe Levy, Executive Director of The Asper Foundation, senior representatives from the Israeli Ministry of Education, Kiryat Gat Municipality, and JDC's Ashalim partnership for at-risk Israeli children, youth, and young adults. Participants marked the significant strides made by the Asper Edible Gardens initiative and its expansion, the Green Learning program, in Israeli schools through a partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Education. The program, which is based on a California-developed learning model, uses gardens and innovative curricula to develop crucial life skills and advance academic learning beyond the classroom. It now operates throughout Israel, reaching more than 4,000 Israeli schoolchildren.

Gail Asper commented, "The Asper Foundation could not ask for better partners than the Israeli Ministry of Education and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in the Edible Garden program. Its incredible growth demonstrates a real need being filled and we appreciate being recognized for initiating this program. I also want to acknowledge and thank the Kiryat Gat Municipality, Efraim Ben David Elementary School and JDC's Ashalim initiative for their support."

"It's fitting that as we celebrate Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we also thank and praise The Asper Foundation for its pioneering role in enriching the lives of thousands of Israeli children and further strengthening the Israeli education system. Their passionate dedication to Israel has found heartening expression in our partnership, and the successful expansion of this unique green learning program with the Israeli Government demonstrates the power of knowledge-sharing and close bonds between Jews around the world and in Israel," said X of JDC.

Starting in 2013, The Asper Foundation partnered with JDC to create the Edible Gardens Program, the first outdoor learning initiative of its kind in Israel. Launched with a pilot program at three elementary schools in Israel's periphery, four years later, the program was further expanded, and today it is operating in 17 schools around the country in collaboration with the Israeli Ministry of Education. In the coming years, the expanded program – "Green Learning" – is set to run in over 50 schools, shaping the teaching of core subjects, expanding the range of garden-based activities, and enhancing Israeli children's sense of responsibility for their education and communities. Additionally, The Asper Educators Training for teachers and principals provides theoretical learning, hands-on workshops, visits to the field and educational lectures on innovative teaching practices.

### **About JDC**

Operating in the land of Israel since 1914, JDC has worked for more than a century to provide opportunity and empower the neediest here through more than \$2 billion in social services and aid. Today, JDC develops innovative social services in conjunction with the Israeli government, local authorities, nonprofits, and other partners for the benefit of Israel's most vulnerable populations: children at risk, the elderly, the unemployed and people with disabilities.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is the world's leading Jewish humanitarian assistance organization. JDC works in more than 70 countries and in Israel to alleviate hunger and hardship, rescue Jews in danger, create lasting connections to Jewish life, and provide immediate relief and long-term development support for victims of natural and man-made disasters. For more information, visit [www.JDC.org](http://www.JDC.org).