



## Small World





# Living Peace

BY SARAH ZOBEL '84

Deborah Housen-Couriel '77 remembers a schoolwide activity, World Food Day, from her first year at NMH. Its lessons stayed with her.

Every student was assigned a country and given a list of foods produced there. Some were wealthy countries with an abundance of food; others represented poorer nations that could not feed their people. A point system allowed student countries that needed to increase their food supplies to make deals with those that had plenty. Through collaboration, students ensured that everyone had enough to eat.

"The point of the day was to make us understand at a young age how important global cooperation and interaction are," Housen-Couriel says. "It was a real success in bringing to the fore that diversity and cooperation are so essential within the NMH context, and also on a much larger scale."

Housen-Couriel has brought that lesson with her to the Wexner Foundation, where she is director of the Wexner

Israel Fellowship. The fellowship is offered annually to up to 10 hand-picked Israeli public leaders, who then pursue a master's in public administration at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and participate in foundation-leadership institutes there. Upon returning to Israel, fellows commit to a minimum of an additional three years of public service. Housen-Couriel was a fellow herself 10 years ago, and now helps select program participants.

"We identify the people who have a proven record—the people who work with them will be able to say, 'This person has made a difference. This person is a leader.'" She seeks out those who have "the vision and the capacity to take whatever they've been contributing professionally in the public sector" even further. "We expect a higher career

trajectory from them in terms of their public impact, once they have completed the Wexner fellowship."

A native of Erving, Massachusetts, Housen-Couriel spent a gap year in Israel studying Hebrew, Jewish history, and modern Israeli life, as well as working on a moshav settled by Yemenite Jews and a kibbutz that produces sophisticated irrigation systems. In 1982, after graduating summa cum laude from Wellesley College, where she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, she moved permanently to Israel, completing an LLB and an LLM cum laude at Hebrew University's Law Faculty. She married Lior Amir Couriel and is now mother to four children, ages 13 to 20.

Prior to directing the Wexner Foundation, Housen-Couriel served as an analyst team leader for Middle East regional issues at the Reut Institute, a public policy think tank in Tel Aviv. She also spent a dozen years as senior

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director of the Department of Regulation and International Treaties in the Israeli Ministry of Communications, where she was a legal advisor to delegations to the World Trade Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the negotiations leading to the Oslo Accords, and talks for the 1994 Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty. It was in these capacities that Housen-Couriel deeply appreciated the influence of Dwight L. Moody.

"NMH really teaches about honoring opinions and viewpoints that are different from our own," Housen-Couriel says. "I learned the value of the other, the importance of having the person in the room that you can never agree with—that's the person you have to keep in the room, because that's the voice you most need to hear."

