

## **Videoconference With a Dog**

The Keshet-Konnections program, which connects the Memphis teens to Israel, launched another interesting program, which included a live videoconference with a dog!!!

This session was part of a videoconferences series so that Memphis students can meet "face-to-face" with Israeli citizens.

On November 22, 2009, one such video encounter took place between teenagers from all over the Memphis community, and two former IDF soldiers, new immigrants to Israel. Both Katie Freeman and Elior Brenner served in the Oketz canine unit, which works training dogs in the IDF. The Oketz unit specializes in training and handling dogs for military applications, fighting terrorists as well as protecting the soldiers during battle.

Freeman and Brenner shared their life stories with the students, and described their process of Aliyah and absorption in Israel. The Memphis teens showed great interest in the soldiers' personal stories, and asked a variety of questions about their lives and their military service.

*Elior Brenner (Left) and Katie Freeman with Bondo (dog), former IDF Soldiers who served in the Oketz canine unit, both shared their stories with Memphis teens.*



Freeman is a former "lone soldier" (soldier without family in Israel) who moved to Israel from Los Angeles. At one point during her military service in the Oketz combat unit she and her dog, Bondo, uncovered explosive materials that were intended to enter Israel, and thus saved the lives of untold numbers of Israeli civilians. The discovery of these materials earned her unit a special medal of honor from the IDF.

Brenner, also a former "lone soldier," immigrated to Israel from France. She later decided to move to Israel and enlist in the IDF. Although Brenner never thought about being a combat soldier, in the end she decided to try out for the Oketz unit.

Following this unique videoconference the students went through some army training with former IDF officer. The emphasis was on teamwork ideals and morals in the work of the IDF.

The next Session will take Place on January 10, 2010. The topic will be "The Ethiopian immigration to Israel". We will host an immigrant who is on a mission here in town videoconference with Almorak Marsha, an Ethiopian immigrant living in Israel who wrote and directed the movie "MULU" on the story of the Ethiopian immigration to the holy land.