

'A3i - Accelerating Inclusion In Israel': Israel's first accelerator program dedicated to ventures that address the needs of people with disabilities

A3i is part of a network of 16 Presentense accelerator programs worldwide, and will launch 15 new hi-tech and social businesses focused on disabilities, in partnership with Beit Issie Shapiro and The Ruderman Family Foundation.

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(Ra'anana, 8 December 2013). Presentense Israel, Beit Issie Shapiro and The Ruderman Family Foundation have launched A3i – Accelerating Inclusion In Israel - and are calling for change-makers with ideas to fundamentally improve the quality of life for people with disabilities to apply for the program.

A3i is a groundbreaking program, as it is the first accelerator focused on solutions that address the needs of people with disabilities. The Presentense community-based accelerator model has been run 36 times and currently operates in 16 cities. The program combines intense training, mentorship, one-on-one consulting, and community engagement, to help entrepreneurs catalyze their ideas into fully-fledged ventures.

"Innovation has the capacity to transform lives," said Guy Spigelman, CEO of Presentense Israel. "If you have a dream to set up a new venture to impact the lives of people with disabilities, be it a new app or a socially inclusive education initiative, you can make it a reality at A3i."

A 15-person steering committee has been established to guide the program and a further 30 volunteer coaches and mentors are being recruited to support the ventures. At the end of the program, the fifteen ventures will be presented to the public.

The Ruderman Family Foundation, which advocates for and advances the inclusion of people with disabilities, is a partner in this venture. "The Ruderman Family Foundation believes that A3i will allow all of us to experiment, learn and broaden our capacity to become an inclusive society," said Shira Ruderman, Israel Director of the Ruderman Family Foundation "Through this partnership and the innovative projects we hope will result from it, developers can turn their ideas into reality and benefit people with disabilities."

Entrepreneurs can apply for the 5-month, Ra'anana based, program by December 28, 2013 online at www.a3i.org.il. Applicants must present a venture that addresses the needs of people

with disabilities. Ventures may be hi-tech, social businesses or social ventures, and may be at the early stage or pre-seed idea stage of development. An information evening will be held on the December 19, 2013 at 7 pm at Bet Issie Shapiro in Ra'anana.

Jean Judes, Executive Director of Beit Issie Shapiro, said: "We at Beit Issie Shapiro believe that people with disabilities and professionals in the field will succeed in fulfilling their dreams to make a difference if they receive the appropriate support. A3i is especially exciting as it gives entrepreneurs with innovative ideas a unique opportunity to turn their dreams into a reality through obtaining knowledge and tools, as well as guidance from professionals and volunteers who support these entrepreneurs throughout their process. We have no doubt that these ventures will significantly increase the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families."

Presentense Israel catalyzes community-based entrepreneurship to grow local economies, enrich community life and solve critical issues facing society. To date, Presentense has run 36 Venture Accelerator programs in 16 cities across 3 continents, launching over 450 new social, tech and business ventures. For more information see www.presentense.org.il.

The Ruderman Family Foundation believes that inclusion and understanding of each other is essential to a fair and flourishing community. Guided by our Jewish values, we support effective programs, innovative partnerships and a dynamic approach to philanthropy. Our core areas of interest: advocating for and advancing the inclusion of people with disabilities throughout the Jewish community; fostering a more nuanced understanding of the American Jewish community among Israeli leaders; and modeling the practice of strategic philanthropy worldwide. The Foundation provides funding, leadership and expertise in both the U.S. and Israel, with offices in both countries, while it engages a global dialogue on its blog at zehleze.wordpress.com. For more information about our programs, partners and grantees, please visit RudermanFoundation.org.

Beit Issie Shapiro is Israel's leading organization innovating therapies for children with disabilities and their families, impacting over 30,000 people annually. We share our knowledge throughout Israel and promote full inclusion of people with disabilities in society. **Beit Issie Shapiro** was given the inaugural award as the most effective non-for-profit in Israel and is a Special Consultant on Disabilities to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. To learn more see <http://en.beitissie.org.il>