

## Holon's 'Dialogue in the Dark' to exhibit in Jordan

Ruth Eglash , THE JERUSALEM POST

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The Holon Children Museum's Dialogue-in-the-Dark exhibition will be available to participants in the World Economic Forum on the Middle East, taking place in Jordan's Dead Sea resort this weekend.

"We will present our workshop under the headline: 'Putting Diversity to Work' and the session will be conducted in total darkness," Gil Omer, director of the museum, told *The Jerusalem Post* in an interview Wednesday. "The darkness forces people to let go of their inhibitions and confront their feelings."

Omer said he would be part of a team of three Dialogue-in-the-Dark guides from Israel heading to Jordan for the conference; the other two counselors are blind.

"We will set the participants a variety of challenges and games, and discuss their feelings following the session," he said.

Dialogue-in-the-Dark representatives in Europe ran a program at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, in January.

Participants in that session, who included journalists and business and community leaders, reported that it helped to "break the ice" and made for an extremely moving experience.

The workshop, which included assembling a Russian babushka doll in the pitch black, drew comments such as: "The touching and listening to each other meant more and I visualized what was happening better," and, "It was better because you don't see the others and then you listen with your heart and are not prejudiced with sight."

The group at Davos suggested bringing the Middle East leaders attending the forum to conduct peace talks in the dark.

"Following its success in Davos, the organizers of the Middle East Forum asked us to run a similar workshop at this regional conference," Omer said.

At the Dialogue in the Dark exhibit in Holon, small groups are led by blind guides through specially constructed darkened rooms in which scents, sounds, wind, temperatures and textures conveys the characteristics of daily environments, for example a park, a city or a bar.

Since opening in 2004, more than 200,000 people have gone through the experience.

Participants at the two-day World Economic Forum on the Middle East are set to include Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Jordanian King Abdullah II and his wife, Queen Rania, and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mamoud Abbas.