



קבוצת בניי לגו ישראל ISRAEL LEGO USERS GROUP

by Reuven Kawesch

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IsraelLUG is one of the newest Recognized Lego Users Groups worldwide, and the first ever in Israel! We would like to introduce ourselves to you: Hispabrick Magazine readers.

We first met almost two years ago, following some discussions on a Hebrew-language facebook group for AFOLs. We knew we wanted to facilitate some physical AFOL interactions, but we weren't sure what else we wanted to do with the LUG. However, pretty quickly we had set up a show for the general public, we were having monthly meetups, and more.

Our members come from across Israel. Most live in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area (which parallels the country's population spread), but we have members from northern and southern Israel too. Our members speak Hebrew, although English is widely spoken among us, in addition to Arabic, French and Spanish. We mostly use our English name since every Hebrew translation we've come up with doesn't have the same rhyme as "IsraelLUG."

Lego requires every Recognized Lego Users

Group (RLUG) to nominate an ambassador, who is the point of contact between the RLUG and The Lego Group. Our ambassador is Reuven Kawesch, who was one of the founders of the LUG. Other than ambassador, we don't have any assigned jobs, but that might change in the future. We are a very democratic group, where every member plays a role. IsraelLUG members have taken on different roles: finding venues for events, maintaining our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages, marketing our shows, charity outreach and more. We are also looking for new members and everyone is encouraged to help as much or as little as they can.

Our first public show took place on the Passover holiday in April 2019. We really weren't sure what to expect—but it turned out to be great! Ten of

our members displayed MOCs and sets from their collections, and hundreds of people came to see our displays (luckily the venue that hosted us had done some effective advertising).

Since that first show we have continued to grow. We are finding new members in all sorts of ways: on existing facebook groups, through rebrickable and bricklink, and even by chance. One member even googled "Israel Lego" and found us. Activity wise, we had monthly in person meetups, which we have been able to continue online since COVID-19 hit Israel in March. Our original plan was to have two big annual shows, but last year we ended up having four (a good problem to have): Passover, Sukkot, Hanukkah, and Israel Space Week. Each show was larger





COVID-19 has hampered many of our LUG's activities. We haven't had any in-person activities since March, we have already cancelled two planned public shows, and don't know when we will be able to next have one. That said, Zoom and Google Meet have helped us stay in touch with each other. If there's one upside to this pandemic it's that everyone is used to online meetings now, which is good for us since we're physically separated from other LUGs and AFOLs. According to Lego's community finder, the closest RLUG to us is over 1100 kilometers away. Using digital platforms, our members have been able to participate in Lego conventions, have lectures from prominent AFOLs (including HispaBrick Magazine's own Jetro de Château), and even virtually tour the Lego House! Additionally, Corona has definitely made our members' WhatsApp much more active—even our ambassador admits that he has our group on mute.

Our hope for the future is that one day IsraelLUG is a household name—that AFOLs and the community alike look forward to attending our events, and that we are able to be a home for all fans of Lego in Israel. So far we're on the right track—we just need to keep growing and be active!



than the previous one, with more LUG members displaying and more members of the public attending. Almost all who visit our shows are impressed and inspired to go home and build something themselves! We also have some play brick for kids to play with at our shows.

Despite our successes so far, we want to find bigger venues that are more geographically diverse, and also join other events: last year our collaboration with Israel Space Week was a great success, we're looking into other possible collaborations including with a local Maker-Faire, the National Parks Service, local childrens' hospitals and more.

Speaking of local childrens' hospitals: we were privileged this year to participate in Fairy Bricks' International Program. For those who don't know, Fairy Bricks is a UK charity that provides free Lego sets to hospitalized children. They were generous enough to ship us three huge cartons full of new

Lego sets, which we distributed at two hospitals: one in Tel Aviv, and the other in Afula (a small city in northern Israel). This was a particularly rewarding activity for our LUG members who were able to participate.

