



RA'ANANA, ISRAEL

ATLANTA'S SISTER CITY

COMMUNICATING THROUGH DIFFERENT PLATFORMS: RA'ANANA TEACHES US HOW TO CONNECT WITH CITIZENS IN THE COVID-19 ERA

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ATLANTA – Connection is at the heart of Ra'anana's strategy to combat the spread of COVID-19. Ra'anana — a city located in the heart of the Southern Sharon Plain of the Central District of Israel — communicates with its inhabitants through different channels to ensure essential resources are being distributed. The city implemented multiple initiatives to stay in touch with its locals using traditional platforms and social media communication.

Ra'anana established a formalized relationship with Atlanta in 2001. Since then, this partnership has resulted in several events sponsored by the Atlanta Jewish Community and the Ra'anana municipality, such as Holocaust Remembrance Day, Daffodil Dash Run & Walk, and a ceremony in Ra'anana.



More recently, and in order to share its experience during these challenging circumstances, Ra'anana participated in the virtual summit "Sister City Diplomacy & COVID-19: Looking Ahead to the New Normal" in May, organized by the City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of International Affairs, with representatives of over ten cities in attendance.

According to Mrs. Sivan Barshi Bahat, the spokesperson of the municipality, the city's communication team has been creating video and audio content to provide guidelines on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as well as how to start the recovery process. This material is aired weekly on their local TV and radio stations. The same content is posted on the official city accounts on YouTube, Facebook, Telegram, and Instagram. Mayor Chaim Broyde also provides personalized weekly updates on his social media page on the current status of the city's fight against the pandemic.

Ra'anana also uses its most popular social networking service, WhatsApp, in order to connect with its citizens: Not only do younger generations use WhatsApp to stay informed about the city's latest news, but seniors are familiar and active with this platform as well.

As explained by Mrs. Barshi Bahat, the municipality created several broadcast lists in the app—since each one accounts for only a small number of residents—to communicate with its inhabitants. "We must be proactive to provide them the most accurate information where they are. The idea is to show we are here to help whenever it is needed", she states.

In response to connecting with residents who are not on social media, Ra'anana created a network of young volunteers to assist with community outreach. The volunteers made over 7,000 phone calls to connect with the members of their community to ensure their needs were being met, from grocery runs to healthcare needs. "That is the most inspirational fact that comes from our city. It is so great to see there are so many good people among us who are willing to help others", the spokesperson adds.

She highlights that this new reality demands creative solutions to be provided to every population group's needs in the city. "Thanks to the vision of the Mayor of Ra'anana, Mr. Chaim Broyde and the Municipal executive leadership, the dedicated Municipal employees as well as Ra'anana residents, we have managed to create those solutions", Mrs. Bahat states. "I am sure that thanks to the great work that is being done, we will emerge stronger from it as a city and community". ♦

