

"What I did on my Summer Vacation"

Israel Through the Eyes of our Teens

Part I: Identification Information

Submission Identifier Code: 212

Torch Award Entry from Club Number 953

Entry Category: Israel

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Club No. & name: 953; East Brunswick Jewish Center

No. of Club members: 150

East Brunswick Jewish Center, East Brunswick N.J.

Club President: Eric Rabinowitz

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Part II: Summary

Summary:

Israel will be secure as long as American Jews have a strong bond to the land. Over the past 5 years, while there has been unrest in the State of Israel, this bond has shown signs of weakening. Finding ways to encourage our youth (and their parents) to visit and see the land, has always led to successful bonding for those who go.

On March 11, Men's Club and others in EBJC heard from several young adults who visited Israel tell their uplifting stories - "What I did on my Summer Vacation" -Israel Through the Eyes of Teens. A few of us have been there, and many would like to go, but to witness 4 EBJC High School students share their stories allowed all of those present to vicariously live the trip.

The 4 described their experiences on the various trips last summer. These trips included USY Poland/Israel, USY Spain/Israel and Sar El- Volunteers for Israel. Their talks were followed by questions and answers. Additionally, one parent who went on the USY Parent Pilgrimage, spoke briefly as well, describing the tracking and security arrangements Israel has in place to ensure that our kids in Israel for summer programs are safe.

Part III – Self Assessment

1. Assess program procedural completeness and achievement of goals: Each speaker came prepared to give a short talk. The attendees came away more comfortable with visiting Israel, and allowing their children to participate in the various programs.
2. Explain presentation and documentation completeness –They were kids but everyone was interested in what they had to say. Numerous pictures were taken, and published in the synagogue bulletin, along with an article on the program, which expanded the reach of the effort.
3. Achievements of program goal- Met or exceeded our expectations.
4. Enhance image of FJMC, region, and/or club –Program was great advertisement for Israel and USY as well as truly enjoyable cross-generational event. Men’s Club highlighted that the From Darkness into Light Scholarship Program exists to help those who go on the Poland/Israel Trip as well, and that this scholarship is an FJMC program.
5. Did you include other information so other clubs can use this program? Yes.
6. Value in Club Building- Continuation of a history of interesting and informative Breakfast Programs.
7. N/A
8. Program idea came from parent, Steve Harkavy, who after attending, became more comfortable with allowing his own child to go to Israel this coming summer.
9. N/A
10. Mens Club coordinated the planning of the program, marketing and advertising, and sponsored the breakfast.

Part IV - Entry Documentations



The connection between American Jews and Israel has always been strong. One reason for this strength is the frequency that our youth visit Israel while in High School or College. Over the past few years, while the Intifada has been occurring, visits to Israel are down, and this has many negative effects – It hurts the Israel economy, who is so dependant on American tourism; It reduces the connection that we have, for while it has been shown that once we visit Israel, we are forever changed and connected, the opposite is likely true as well. If we don't visit Israel, our connection to the land is lower.

The East Brunswick Jewish Center Mens Club has between six and eight Sunday Breakfast programs each year. They are scheduled to follow morning minyan. Our program on Sunday, March 11, was titled: "What I did on my Summer Vacation – Israel through the Eyes of our Teens"

At this program, we heard from 4 of our youth - Elyse Foladare, Mimi Oshinsky, Oren Pollak, and Jordana Schubert, who shared their experiences from this past summer through sights and sounds!! A few of us have been there, and many more would like to go, but to witness 4 EBJC High School students share their stories allowed all of those present to vicariously live the trip.

The 4 students described their experiences on the various trips last summer. Elyse and Mimi went on USY Poland/Israel, Jordana went on USY Spain/Israel and Oren volunteered in Sar El- Volunteers for Israel. Their talks were followed by questions and answers. Judi Oshinsky, a parent who went on the Parent Pilgrimage, spoke briefly as well, describing the tracking and security arrangements Israel has in place to ensure that our kids in Israel for summer programs are safe. Hebrew High School students and Hei Class students joined adults.

We were able to tie FJMC into this program, but discussing the "From Darkness into Light" Scholarship Program.

Any club can have a program such as this. If you don't have your own youth who have gone on such trips, Most clubs are in Regions that have USY chapters/regions nearby, and that is a great source to use.

For breakfast, we serve eggs, bagels (cream cheese, butter), coffee, orange juice, and frequently some donuts for dessert.

To encourage attendance, we invited the Daled and Hei Classes from our Hebrew School, the Hebrew High School, and publicized this in the weekly email, Shabbos Sheet, and Synagogue Recorder.

Following the event, we published pictures (such as the one shown above) in the Synagogue Recorder and on the web site.

It is very important to encourage our youth to go to Israel, because this will strengthen their ties to Israel. With such strong ties, we will have an American Jewish Community that will continue to strongly support the State of Israel.