

Schools

Shabbaton with Levin Middle School

The Middle School Shabbaton in Chapel Hill, January 11-13, was an inspiring and fun-filled experience. The students checked into dorms on Friday afternoon, got ready for Shabbat, and walked over to the Chabad House where they were hosted by Rabbi Zalman and Yehudis Bluming. Stories, davening, singing, dancing, and a scrumptious dinner – this was the beginning of an unforgettable Shabbat. In a letter thanking the Blumings, Dillon Rusgo wrote: "I

...never experienced anything like your Chabad House and the singing, dancing and chanting. You made everyone feel important and welcome ... in your home and truly gave us a terrific experience. Your kindness, generosity, and great enthusiasm for Torah and mitzvot has truly inspired me to better myself and always strive for answers to my questions." Mia Cremisi and Rachael Hall were especially touched by a story Rabbi Bluming told about some

soldiers and their dog tags. They wrote: "We loved that story because ... the soldiers were so proud of their Judaism ... We should never be afraid to be Jewish no matter what the situation is; we always need to be proud to be Jewish and always remember who we are."

The college students at the Chabad House were sincerely impressed with the D'var Torah delivered by Dillon Rusgo. And the BJLJMS students were inspired by the talks some of the college students gave about finding "a home" at the Chabad House, at Hillel, and in the Jewish community in general at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. They listened intently as the college students talked about how important Shabbat services and Jewish connections were to them even though they were away from home and not being told what to do by their parents.

On Saturday, after Shabbat services, everyone enjoyed a most delicious lunch, listened to Frannie Cohen and Brianna Shporer deliver D'vrei Torah, and were engaged by Rebbetzin Bluming's wonderful story. In the afternoon, Rabbi Bluming led a competitive session of "Stump the Rabbi." The middle schoolers asked questions, tried to answer questions, and had a great deal of fun. A most special and emotional time came later when darkness fell and everyone went outside for the Havdallah service. Rabbi Bluming made it extra special for the students. Shannon Applegate said she was "amazed by the blue fire and the spices." She went on: "I have never seen anything like it before although I have been to many Havdallahs ... The fire warmed up the freezing air, and when the fire went out I knew I would never forget the warmth I felt as we put our arms around each other and sang. Thank you so much for this inspiring memory."

Saturday night was bowling

night; lots of excess energy was expended. When the students got back to the dorm, they snacked on delicious Italian ices and listened to Morah Rochel Vorst tell a spell-binding story with many twists and turns.

Sunday morning, the middle schoolers went over to Hillel House to hear Rabbi Aaron Herman of Cary, NC, talk about ancient history and civilization, and science and Torah. He helped us to understand that history, science, and the Torah all work together to enlarge our understanding of the world. Everyone became scriptwriters and movie directors as Rabbi Herman helped us to think about physics, Torah, creation, and so on. The BJLJMS students rose to the occasion, asking perceptive questions and taking part in the discussion. Rabbi Herman is truly a master teacher.

On the way back to Charlotte, we stopped in Greensboro for lunch and a tour of the American Hebrew Academy. Every single one of the middle schoolers was impressed by the awesome campus and the very special tour guides, Alexander and Zachary, Brianna Shporer's brothers.

By all accounts, the Shabbaton in Chapel Hill was a huge success that broadened our experience and our knowledge. And it was fun, too.

If you have any questions about the Barbara and Jerry Levin Jewish Middle School, please contact Sandy Hirschman at 704-366-4558 or shirschman@cjsd.school.org. ☆

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"It seems like just yesterday we were attending BBYO's Sweetheart Beau Dance. Now a few years later (well, maybe more than a few!), we are proud to be joining together once again to co-chair the Federation's Super Sunday. It feels so good to be able to give back to the organization that supports the agencies that helped form our Jewish identity."

Stephanie Brodsky, Amy Brown and Elaine Moody,
2008 Super Sunday Co-chairs

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