

## Community News

# Annual AIPAC Conference Inspires, Educates

By Lucy Bierer

"Israel: For a little country, they produce a lot of news." Judging by the attendance and stories generated at the 2008 AIPAC Policy Conference, lecturer David Makovsky was right. Among the 7,500 participants at the three-day June conference in Washington, DC, were 175 Student Government Presidents and 1,000 student delegates.



Lucy Bierer with Tal Becker

this conference and more. I learned the importance of empowering moderates and taking away power from extremists such as the Hezbollah and Hamas. I also learned what a feat it is for a cause to enjoy such strong bi-partisan support from America. Israel is one of the very few issues where both Republicans and Democrats are eager to show their support. I found it both interesting and uplifting to see so many different types of people come together for one common cause. As a young Jew it was an inspiring experience that opened my eyes to many ways that I can make a difference and do my part to aid Israel in its efforts to find peace. ✪



David Makovsky and Lucy Bierer

Lucy Bierer is a rising senior at Myers Park High School, active in her BGG chapter, and a member of Temple Beth El.



Being in the nation's capital to support Israel, a cause I care so much about, was exciting and a novel experience for me. Being surrounded by so many Jews and non-Jews supportive of Israel was exhilarating. Hillary Clinton, Barak Obama, John McCain and Condoleezza Rice competed for our attention and national headlines too. During the rest of the time, attendees selected several "break-out sessions" where we heard various speakers address topics ranging from the presidential election to solutions to the conflicts in Israel.

Among my favorite sessions was one led by Dr. Tal Becker, Policy Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel, David Makovsky, Director, Project on the Middle East Peace Process, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and Professor Kenneth Stein, Director, Institute for the Study of Modern Israel, Emory University, entitled: "Prospects for Peace: Can the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict be Resolved?" The three speakers espoused opinions on a variety of options for peace. I began to understand that the problems in Israel are no longer simply territorial, but rather that they stem from the ideological and religious differences between Israel and the surrounding Arab countries. Negotiation, which Dr. Becker sees as the only solution, can only be accomplished if all parties involved are reaching for the same goal which is Israelis and the Palestinians at peace. In Dr. Becker's words, "You don't get to recognize your rights until you recognize the rights of others."

I attended this conference because I have always known that I had a passion for Judaism and I am eager to utilize this passion in the political arena. I knew that attending the AIPAC Policy Conference would allow me to learn more about issues in Israel that are important to me and help me form more educated opinions on several controversial topics. I gained everything I expected from

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