

# Peace is Possible

## Winning International Day of Peace Essay

By Lucy Bierer

*Editor's Note: Each year, Mecklenburg Ministries sponsors a Peace Essay contest for high school students to coincide with the International Day of Peace. This year's winner, Lucy Bierer of Temple Beth El, presented the speech at an interfaith service on September 25.*

I am a proud Jew and every day I wear a beaded Palestinian flag bracelet made by Rana, my former Palestinian roommate. To most

people these facts seem contradictory.

How is it that a young woman who is a leader in her Jewish youth group, an active temple member and even an attendee at the recent national AIPAC (American-Israeli Lobby) conference can also be supportive of Palestinians? This summer I surprised myself as I discovered that I am all these things.

I was selected to participate in a program called "Building Bridges

mon ground. This summer Israelis, Palestinians and Americans met and began working with one another to create a safe, open and peaceful community. After three weeks together, the 34 of us have a mission to change our own communities just as this experience changed us.

I began the summer very comfortable with my set of beliefs. But I learned that all is not as it appeared to me. I was thrown into this situation where Israelis are angry about Palestinian terrorists and the Palestinians are furious about the inhumane treatment by Israeli soldiers. Who is right? I was convinced that no conflict can be solved if everyone is a victim. We cannot compare pain to determine who has suffered more. Everyone suffers and if all we do is try to judge whose pain is

worse, everyone will continue to get hurt.

The conflict in the Middle-East is no longer about religion, land or ideals. The people I met this summer were born into this war, and now the conflict is personal. The solutions must be personal, too. Now as a group of friends, we began moving past our fear and hatred because we got to know each other personally. We were no longer just Palestinians or Israelis



Lucy, center, with her parents, Lee and Jeff Bierer.



Also speaking on peace in the world were (top row, left to right) Tommy Yarborough, Srikanth Rajagopain (bottom row, left to right) community shlichah Hagar Shahak, Angel Liu, and Joanne Bellamy.

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for Peace" (BBfP), an intensive year-long program with Israelis, Palestinians and Americans that emphasizes dialogue and team building. Each year BBfP takes in groups of kids who have hearts full of hate and stories of pain and gives them the time and space to let go of their anger and seek com-

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**"We are all human. We are humans who fear the same things and feel the same emotions. We are humans with families, a past and stories to tell."**

— Lucy Bierer

BBfP changed me on the inside and gave me the tools to change the world around me. My task now is how to take this lesson and make a difference. Any change big or small comes from within one person and "small acts, when multiplied by millions, can transform the world." Now I'm inspired to bring what I have learned back to Charlotte. I am in the process of creating Charlotte's first Interfaith Youth Council.

I am busily beading an American and Israeli flag bracelet for Rana. I don't know if she'll wear it, but hopefully her daughter will. ☆

Lucy's participation in BBfP was made possible in part by the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte.

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