

# JEWISH FEDERATION NEWS

## Charlotteans Visit Homeland as Strangers; Return Mishpachah: A Birthright Story

By Garrett Cooperman

This summer, a large number of groups of forty or so Jewish young adults from various walks of life traveled together to their unifying home state, Israel. Many of the groups taking this Taglit-Birthright sponsored trip came from North America, and many of them began the trip as strangers to one another but came back as friends. The Charlotte Birthright trip – the very trip I went on – was one of these groups, but something set our group apart: we all had a connection to Charlotte and would be able to maintain the connections we made in Israel. This trip left as a group, became friends, learned about Israel, and returned to the U.S. as family.

Everyone met at JFK airport in New York, where we began our journey and started to bond right off the bat. The vast majority of us knew very little about Israel but we were extremely prepared to learn and have a good time.

The learning (and good times) kicked off in Tel Aviv, where we learned about the founding of the State

of Israel in the very building where it officially happened, Independence Hall. We strolled through the old port of Jaffa, learning about its history, and had a great time on the Mediterranean beach. We visited Hadera, Charlotte's sister city in Israel, and got to play in the park with the very children being helped by the Talpiot Community family social work program. This was a very special visit, and the children weren't the only people who benefitted from it; we trip-goers felt a chance to help in our sister city was a vital stop.

The learning continued (oh, and the good times really got started) in Jerusalem, where a visit through the Old City blew our minds entirely. We had a personal, spiritual moment at ha-Kotel, the Western Wall, and

experienced the economic culture-shock and excitement of the vastly popular market, Mahane Yehuda. Managing not to anger the British Birthright group also staying at our hotel was an additional high point. We didn't want to force a Paul Revere moment on our staff ("The British are coming!").

One of the most gratifying experiences of the entire trip was that of Shabbat in Jerusalem. It was amazing to see how closely and commonly it was observed, and how easy it is to match that observance when it is followed by the majority. We were able to walk (without vehicular interruption) from our hotel to the Knesset and sit in the beautiful park across the street for a small group discussion about Shabbat, about Judaism, and about the trip.

Visiting Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial and Museum, and Har Herzl, the Israeli military cemetery, was both difficult and important. Emotions ran high, but so did our acceptance of information and willingness to learn, as well as our respect for those who came before us and those currently giving their lives in service of our people at home and abroad.

The Negev desert was filled with heat, but also with camel-riding, canyon-hiking, (and World Cup Final watching – you know you're jealous) fun. We traveled from there to Arad, where we held a beautiful outdoors Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony for our trip-mates who had not experienced one before. They



The group from Charlotte in front of the Knesset.

each gave a wonderful, heartfelt speech and said the blessings, and our Israeli friends, who were with us for the whole trip, helped us with the Torah readings.

We hiked Masada and floated in the Dead Sea; we hiked through the Golan Heights and toured the winery there; we walked through mystical, historical Tzfat and metropolitan Haifa. We had an incredible, mind-blowing time in Israel, and we forty (fifty counting our Israeli friends and our staff) experienced it as a family. We saw and did a lot in ten days – there is no way to fit it all into this small article.

So if you're a Jewish young adult and curious about Israel and you happen to be reading this, I entreat you to take this trip. Taglit-Birthright Israel con-

nects you with your culture, your heritage, and your people like you never thought possible. For that, our group would like to thank the Jewish Federation and The Leon Levine Foundation for making our trip possible. This travel experience is once-in-a-lifetime for everyone, but we were able to build our memories and our friendships to last. We were able to find our connections not only in Israel, but in our Charlotte community, too. ☆

A special thank you to  
The Leon Levine  
Foundation for making  
this trip possible.



Riding camels in the Negev.

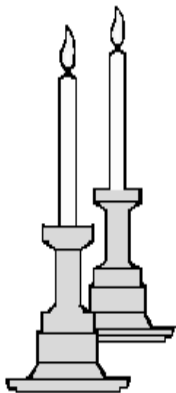


Laying tefillin at the Kotel.

**See page 38  
for details  
about the NC  
Hillel Campus  
Birthright  
Israel  
Experience -  
Winter 2010.**

### SHABBAT AND HOLIDAY CANDLE LIGHTING FOR SEPTEMBER 2010

- Friday, September 3, 7:30 PM
- Wednesday, September 8, 7:23 PM
- Thursday, September 9, after 8:18 PM
- Friday, September 10, 7:20 PM
- Friday, September 17, 7:10 PM
- Wednesday, September 22, 7:03 PM
- Thursday, September 23, after 7:57 PM
- Friday, September 24, 7:00 PM
- Wednesday, September 29, 6:53 PM
- Thursday, September 30, after 7:47 PM



### The Charlotte Jewish News

5007 Providence Road, Suite 112  
Charlotte, NC 28226

Phone  
(voice mail after office hours)  
Office 704-944-6765  
FAX 704-365-4507



email:  
amontoni@shalomcharlotte.org

An Affiliate of the  
Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte

Amy Krakovitz - Editor  
Advertising Sales Reps:

Jodi Valenstein, 704-841-4040 & Rita Mond, 704-366-6632

CJN Editorial Board  
Chair - Bob Davis

Members: Bob Abel, Evelyn Berger, Jeff Epstein,  
Ann Langman, Linda Levy

The CJN does not assume responsibility for the quality or kasruth of any product or service advertised. Publishing of a paid political advertisement does not constitute an endorsement of any candidate, political party or position by this newspaper, the Federation or any employees.

Published monthly except July

### CONTENTS

Federation News .....	pp. 2-8
Youth.....	p. 9
Synagogues and Congregations .....	pp. 11-16
Levine-Sklut Judaic Library.....	p. 16
Community News.....	pp. 17-22
Schools.....	pp. 22, 23

Jewish Family Services.....	pp. 24, 25
Women's Page.....	p.25
Mazel Tov .....	p. 26
High Holidays .....	pp. 27, 32-35, 38, 39
Dining Out .....	pp. 28, 29
Jewish Community Center .....	pp. 30, 31
Project Noah .....	pp. 36, 37

### I would like to make a contribution to demonstrate my support of *The Charlotte Jewish News*.

Name.....Phone (.....).....  
Address.....  
City.....State.....Zip.....

Enclosed in my check for \$.....

- ..... \$18.00 Basic Annual Subscription
- ..... \$25.00 Friend
- ..... \$50.00 Patron
- ..... \$100.00 Grand Patron
- ..... Other

Mail to:

The Charlotte Jewish News  
Voluntary Subscription Appeal  
5007 Providence Road  
Charlotte, Nc 28226