

NC Hillel: NC Students Travel to Israel on Taglit-Birthright Israel

By Lisa Salzman

Each December, a fortunate group of NC Hillel students enjoy the incredible experience of Taglit-Birthright Israel. After months of detailed planning, on December 18, Ari Shapiro (NC Hillel Statewide Coordinator) and Hilla Paz (NC Hillel Israel Fellow) led forty students from ten North Carolina campuses on what many students called "the trip of a lifetime." This 10-day trip took students across the country, from the Golan Heights to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem (and more), enabled them to learn about modern Israel and connect with Israeli peers, develop friendships with Jewish students from other North Carolina schools and explore their Jewish identities. Ben Todys, a December 2011 UNC-Charlotte graduate in Criminal Justice and Spanish, recorded this trip in photos and in his blog at <http://btodys-il-2011.blogspot.com>. He graciously allowed us to print this excerpt, which highlights just one experience of the trip. For the full flavor, please read Ben's blog in its entirety or watch the YouTube video made by another student on the trip, David Port, a student at Appalachian State University. www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=0vswG0KxyNU#

Blog excerpt (adapted) from Day 4 - Words Cannot Describe
"...After dinner, Ari told us we were going to be leaving the lights of the village and walking into the desert. We walked about ¾ miles,



Students having fun with IDF Soldiers, from L-R: Ori Schneebaum, Asaf Zaga, David August (UNC-Chapel Hill '14), Adi Shlisselberg, Carly Wolberg (UNC-Chapel Hill '15), Aaron Kaye (UNC-Wilmington '14), Becca Cook (NCSU '15), Emily Strickman (UNC-Chapel Hill '14), Emily Linett (UNC-Chapel Hill '13) and Aaron Sugar (NCSU '15)

so that we could see the village but the light did not affect our view of the stars. When we got to a good stopping place, we gathered in complete darkness, unable to see the person standing next to us. Ari talked about how it was the same desert where Judaism started. How our ancestors most likely took the same walk we were taking and looked at the same stars in the night sky. Next, he told us to head out on our own path and take twenty minutes to reflect on our life and our faith and to listen to the sounds. I could not help but look up at the amazing view of the sky. I was wondering how long I'd been walking when I saw a star shooting across the night sky. It was like a tap on the shoulder, and I began to head back. Ari began to sing the melodic line of a song, leaving out the words so we could learn it and join in. I noticed people coming in, not guided by light but by song. When the final person returned, the song drew to a close and silence fell. We were no longer forty individuals on a trip to Israel. We were a family on a

voyage."

From David August: "Meeting Israeli soldiers was the most powerful part of the trip. Eight soldiers were given time off of army service to travel with us for five days. They were just like us but at the same time profoundly different. They were our age, easy to talk to and liked to have fun, but their army service forced them to experience things none of us had experienced. I realized this when we visited a soldier cemetery where Danielle's friend had been recently buried. The strength she showed was

unbelievable. I will always remember the intense connection we felt to people from across the world whom we had known for only a few days."

Taglit-Birthright Israel provides generous funding for Jews ages 18-26 to take all-expense paid peer trips to Israel; NC Hillel coordinates with Taglit-Birthright Israel to recruit students, provide trip leaders, plan the itinerary, care for students while in Israel and support them on their Jewish journeys after they've returned. NC Hillel pays for staff time and transportation, as well as costs associated with recruiting and follow-up. Our next Taglit-Birthright Israel trip will be summer 2012, and we are excited to again be taking forty students.

Registration for this trip will begin February 15 at www.israeloutdoors.com; for more information, please contact Ari Gauss at agauss@nchillel.org or visit our website at www.nchillel.org. NC Hillel appreciates your support. ☆



Emily Linett (UNC-Chapel Hill '15) and Becca Goldstein (UNC-Chapel Hill '15) at Masada.

Ohavim BBG Update

By Mimi Brown

Despite the break to celebrate Hanukkah, December was an extraordinary month for Ohavim BBG. The annual Sweetheart Beau Dance was held on December 10 at the JCC, and was co-planned by our chapter Sweetheart Beau Chair, Madison Salem. Karla Jagodinski was chosen as our brother chapter's, Hank Greenberg AZA's, Sweetheart and Rebecca Lewis was chosen as MIT Sweetheart. On December 26 through 28, Ohavim BBG sent ten girls to our Eastern Regional Convention, which was coordinated by our very own



The girls of Ohavim BBG get ready for Winter Cultural.

We are all so thankful to have Jessie to guide us in Ohavim. She is a truly wonderful leader and advisor, as well as a great friend and role model. Ohavim is looking forward to an amazing year in 2012 as we prepare for Winter Cultural Convention which is being held in Charlotte the weekend of February 3. Ohavim wishes you a happy and healthy new year full of sisterhood and love. ☆

Abby Ehrlich. At the Regional Convention, our amazing chapter advisor, Jessie Sachs, was nominated and chosen to be the Eastern Region BBG Advisor of the Year.



2011 Sweetheart-Beau Dance

Charlotte BBYO Sweetheart Beau Dance took place on December 10, 2011 at the Levine Jewish Community Center in Lerner Hall. The theme was "A Night in Paris." Over 160 teens from Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, and Southern Virginia showed up dressed to the "nines" and ready to dance and have a great time with their friends. Four teens from Charlotte BBYO, Madison Salem, Sammie Pagnatta, Daniel Willenzik, and Jeremy Denenberg were in charge of coordinating the evening and worked tirelessly to plan a great

event. The evening consisted of a dance that was out of this world, a senior ceremony honoring Charlotte BBYOs seniors and our annual Sweetheart Beau court. Two Sweethearts and two Beaus were elected, one from each chapter - Judith Cohen of Chai Chaverim BBG, Jacob Levinson of MBA AZA, Jacob Meyer of Hank Greenberg AZA, and Karla Jagodinsky of Ohavim BBG. Special thanks to all the parents that came to the Sweetheart Beau ceremony. A great time was had by all. ☆



Jacob Meyer, Karla Jagodinsky, Judith Cohen, and Jacob Levinson.

JCC Tributes

AUGUST FAMILY FUND

In memory of Sue Coben and the father of Beth Lishaus from Judy and Stan August

BUTTERFLY PROJECT FUND

In honor of Brenda and Floyd Patten's anniversary from Wilma and Gerson Asrael

In honor of Danielle Kapustin's Bat Mitzvah from Suly and Richard Chenkin

In memory of Allen Orland from Susan and Eric Kent and Robin and Michael Stier

MACCABI GAMES FUND

In memory of Allen Orland from Elaine and Michael Denenberg

OASIS SENIOR ADULT MEMORIAL FUND

In memory of Shirley Kramer from Valerie and Alan Bagan and



Cheryl and David Alley
In honor of Anita and Marvin Shapiro from Carol Welch ☆

Levine JCC Cares about ...

Helping our community. During these difficult economic times, Levine JCC Cares is looking for ways our members can give the Charlotte community a helping hand. Several service projects have been completed including two shelter birthday parties through Bright Blessings, gleaning at a farm in Midland (with members as young as two), serving lunch at the Men's Shelter on Christmas Day, collecting gently used athletic equipment for the Police Athletic League and making dinner for Ronald McDonald House families.

The coming month offers lots of opportunities for you and your children to participate. Contact Marni Eisner 704-944-6730/marni.eisner@charlottejcc.org

if you're interested in:

Learning about Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency (CRRA) - CRRA's mission is to help those who are escaping violence, persecution, and repression to become self-sufficient, contributing members of American society. Come to an informational session Thursday, February 23 at 10 AM to learn more about how you can help this organization.

Got Mitzvah? - Teenagers interested in community service - Volunteer opportunities are available during Spring Break for Independent schools. More information to follow.

March 12, 10 AM-12:30 PM: Ronald McDonald House Cleaning Crews - Help keep the house clean and sanitized for

immune compromised children staying at the house during their treatments. Sign up limited to 20 people.

March 14, 10 AM-12:30 PM: Ronald McDonald House Cookie Crew - Come in and help our house smell like a home. Prepare home-baked cookies, brownies, muffins, and healthy snacks for families to enjoy. Sign up limited to eight.

March 16, 10 AM-12:30 PM: Service Project with the Seniors to benefit homeless children - Come to Weinberg Center to help make knot blankets. ☆

