

Seventy U.S. Educators Visit Israel to Explore Leadership, Education System

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Sends Third Grade Teacher from Montclair Elementary School

Jerusalem –This past July, 70 U.S. educators visited Israel as part of a leadership development program designed to deepen their commitment to education reform and service. They explored alternative models of education and methods of approaching complex societal challenges, including how Israeli schools address issues of co-existence, religion and minority populations.

As part of their 12-day experience, they met with leading Israeli educators and social entrepreneurs, including Einat Wilf, Member of Knesset (Parliament) and Chair of its Education, Sports and Culture Committee, as well as Nir Tzuk, Managing Director of Ashoka Israel. They were introduced to trailblazing Israeli initiatives such as The Center for Educational Technology.

The educators participated in the REALITY Israel program, supported by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and the Samberg Family Foundation, in partnership with Teach For America. They are all part of Teach For America, the national nonprofit that recruits and trains outstanding individuals of all academic disciplines to commit two years to teach in high-need schools and become lifelong leaders in the movement to end educational inequity. While in Israel,

they met with their counterparts in Teach First Israel, a similar program that launched in 2010 and now has 143 teachers working in 33 schools across Israel.

“These inspiring young leaders are among those powering the education reform movement that is sweeping our country and our world,” said Lynn Schusterman, Chair of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Philanthropic Network, which includes the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. “REALITY enables them to learn from each other while challenging them to build their leadership skills and examine the values that drive their commitment to creating change in their communities, in the Jewish world and beyond.”

Now in its fourth year, REALITY Israel has brought more than 200 Teach For America educators to Israel. As part of this unique program, corps members explore Israel through a service and education lens, as well as engage in self-reflection and learning that connects their secular service work as teachers to Jewish values and ideas. Among those participating in the 2012 REALITY Israel experience was Carolyn Sarkozi, who is teaching third grade at Montclair Elementary School in Charlotte. “In Jerusalem, we met with Israeli social entrepreneurs,



The teachers on their trip to Jerusalem.

including a girl who created a program in Israel that was called the Sky is the Limit,” Carolyn relates. “The program raises self activism among teenagers, helping them create and run their own projects within their communities. Once they succeed in establishing their project on their own they will see that the ‘sky is the limit.’”

For most participants in the REALITY program, it is their first visit to Israel, and the impact of the experience has proven to be profound. According to the REALITY Israel Experience: An Impact Study, the program strengthens the link between participants’ Jewish identity, values, and passion for public service while deepening their commitment to education reform and the Teach For America movement.

“Israel is a classroom for people who want to learn about leadership in the face of extreme challenges,” said Andrew Mandel, Teach For America’s Vice President of Special Projects. “Many of the social justice challenges Israel faces mirror those in the U.S., and our participants get the opportunity to grapple with how best to address those complex issues.”

According to Mandel, what began with REALITY is spreading to the entire Teach For America network. “It’s an incubator for new ideas and has opened the door for us to do more reflective programming with our corps members, professional staff, and students,” he said.

Several REALITY participants have already begun implementing programming for their students that allows them to reflect upon what it means to be a leader and to live by their values. “Now that I’m back,” says Carolyn, “I hope to center my classroom around leadership - helping help my students learn about great leaders like we did on the trip, helping the students determine what type of



leader they are, and giving them the opportunity to use their leadership skills to fulfill their educational goals.”

The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and the REALITY suite of programs are part of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Philanthropic Network, a global network of philanthropic initiatives focused on igniting the power in young people to create change for themselves, in the Jewish community and across the broader world. CLSPN also includes the Schusterman Foundation-Israel and ROI Community.

“The REALITY Israel program was an eye opening experience. Besides learning about education in Israel, various religions, and cultures, the program really pushed me to think about my role as a leader in my community,” concludes Carolyn.

For more information about REALITY Israel, please visit www.realityexperience.org. ✪

Three Charlotte Organizations Receive Funding to Support Senior Programming

BJH Foundation for Senior Services, based in Greensboro, NC, recently awarded grants to 19 different programs focusing on improving the lives of Jewish seniors throughout North and South Carolina.

Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte will use their funding for “Family Connections,” a program designed to provide support, education, guidance, and service coordination to dispersed and local family members. The program goal is to ensure proper support services are in place to help keep their older adult relatives as independent as possible.

“Family Connections” was partially funded by the Jerome Madans Fund. Each year the BJH Foundation for Senior Services designates one grant from the Charlotte area to be awarded from a special endowment fund created by the Madans family after the passing of long standing board member Jerome Madans.

Sandra and Leon Levine Jewish Community Center Oasis program will use their funding for physical

and mental health enrichment for Jewish seniors. The program is part of an on-going effort to consistently monitor seniors’ physical health and mental well-being. It is the only senior enrichment program in the area that provides two essential needs for seniors, a kosher meal and transportation. The Oasis program collaborates with the JFS Geriatric Care Management team.

Sandra and Leon Levine Jewish Community Center also sponsors a “Healthy Aging” curriculum which educates Jewish seniors on the natural aging process. This added knowledge empowers them to make necessary lifestyle changes and promote healthy aging.

Temple Beth El will continue to grow their “SPICE” program which provides nine different programs to Jewish seniors in North and South Carolina. The programs are designed to reinforce and enhance the quality of life of seniors and keep them mentally alert, involved in community and Jewish life. ✪

“Bent,” Martin Sherman’s Holocaust Drama at Queen City Theatre Company

In a time of war. They found themselves. In the most dangerous place of all. In love.

Queen City Theatre Company Presents the Holocaust drama *Bent* by Martin Sherman

“Powerful and provocative” - *New York Times*

Queen City Theatre Company (2010 Theatre Company of the Year) is honored and proud to present the Holocaust drama *Bent* by Martin Sherman. The acclaimed theatrical masterpiece will be presented at the Duke Energy Theatre at Spirit Square (345 N. College St.) from November 1-17 and tickets are on sale now at www.carolinatix.org or by phone at 704-372-1000 or at the box office of the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

Martin Sherman’s worldwide hit play *Bent* took London by storm in 1979 when it was first performed by the Royal Court Theatre, with Ian McKellen in the role of Max. The play moved to Broadway in 1980 with Richard Gere in the lead role and produced ever since throughout the world with great success. The award winning *Bent* has been produced in 35 countries and was adapted in 1997 for a major motion picture.

This powerful drama is set in Germany at the time when homosexuals were sent to concentration camps. The touching and inspirational story takes place before and after the “Night of the Long



Knives.” This is a powerful and compelling drama about love, hope, and dreams in the face of persecution and terror. The play itself caused an uproar after it was first produced at the Royal Court Theatre in London. “It educated the world,” Sherman says.

Queen City Theatre Company’s production of *Bent* will be directed by Artistic Director Glenn T. Griffin (2010 Director of the Year by Creative Loafing), internationally recognized actor and director. The production counts with an award winning cast of local and regional actors.

Tickets prices for the show range from \$22 to \$24 and students and senior discounts are

available. The show is recommended for mature audiences only due to the adult content.

Performances will be November 1-17; 8 PM on weekends, 7:30 PM on weekdays and 3 PM matinees.

Tickets are \$22 to \$24 - Student and senior discounts available.

Group discounts: Call 704-379-1380 for special rates for your group of 10 or more.

Online ticket sales at www.queencitytheatre.com or www.carolinatix.org.

Phone sales at 704-372-1000.

The box office is at Spirit Square (345 N College St.) or Blumenthal Performing Arts Center (Belk Theatre). ✪

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 **Queen City Theatre Company**
Off-Broadway quality in the heart of Charlotte