

Teen P2G Summer Exchange Program

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after spending time in the Holy Land.

"This past summer I had the opportunity to visit Israel on an exchange program called Tikkun Olam and it was the highlight of my summer. When I first got to Israel, I was instantly amazed by the differences in their society compared to ours. The first thing I noticed is the language; every sign, every paper, and every voice speaking loud Hebrew, Arabic, and occasionally English. It is both beautiful and challenging. When we finally met our Israeli friends, hugs were exchanged and we immediately began to connect. People may say that the best part of Israel is the history, or the religion, or the beauty of the land. All of that is great and helps you really connect to Israel. However, nothing connects you more to the land than friends and families that you know you'll have forever, who try new things with you, and who immediately invite you to their homes whenever you return.

"Israel is all the more endearing to me knowing that I have now a personal connection to it. I know that I will always have friends there and I know more about the places and history of Jews and Israel. It is my belief that, given the opportunity, all Jews should visit Israel on programs like this one so that they can experience the beauty of Israel's land and people.

"The second part of the trip was when the Israelis came to Charlotte. They were so awed by how big everything was in particular by the free refills that you could get at restaurants. Also we had more time to know each other better. It was an amazing experience in which we all learned more about Charlotte, the South, and in our case we had the chance to go to Washington, DC with my family. It was difficult to say bye, but I am pretty sure Orr will consider this as his family and his house, in the same way, I think I have now a family in Israel."

-David Rabinovich

"My experience in Israel started the moment I met my new friends at Ben Gurion Airport. At first it was a little awkward but as we began to bond at the Bedouin tents, we grew more comfortable with each

other. We started the bonding experience with camel rides. They were bumpy and wild but fun at the same time. That night we all slept in the same tent,

nights we went to the beach. One day we even saw the sun set from the beach, it was breathtaking. Overall this trip to Israel was a blast, we saw so



which was awesome, we all got to know each other better, I even found out more about the Americans I was with. After only a few hours of sleep we woke up to climb Masada. The sunrise on top of Masada was like nothing I had ever seen before.

"By the time we went to Jerusalem we were all joking and laughing together. In the hotel all the guys formed a close group called the "Bad Boys" and we were so close and had so much fun together. In Jerusalem, we went to places like the Kotel and Mt. Herzl. Serious places like these were very interesting to visit and learn about because we have nothing like these places in America.

"After Jerusalem we finally went to our host homes. I think that my experience was more unique than others since I stayed in a kibbutz. The kibbutz was awesome. My host Alon knew everybody which shows that everybody knew everybody in the kibbutz. The sense of community was very cool. It was also interesting because there was a dairy farm on the kibbutz, which was like nothing you could see in Charlotte. While staying in the kibbutz we went to places like the Dead Sea, Tel Aviv, and many other places. Each place was as unique and as interesting as the next. Each night though we would meet up at somebody's home and hang out, other

Jordan River, the Whitewater Center was so much cooler because it was faster and it was actual whitewater. My family went to Washington, DC for two days: it was such a cool experience for the Israelis that stayed with us. They got to see all the monuments, the Capitol, the White House, and some of the museums.

"This exchange program has changed my vision of Israel and Judaism because I am now really connected to our Homeland, to the people there. We are very different, but at the same time we are so alike; it is cool

to discover that."

-Ari Rabinovich

"I had such an amazing experience. I loved experiencing the culture of the Israeli teens and seeing how they live their lives and showing them how we live ours."

-Jessica Soto

For more information and/or to participate in the 2015 P2G Teen Leadership Exchange, please contact Tal Stein, Director of Community Relations and Israel Affairs at 704-944-6751 or tal.stein@jewishcharlotte.org. ✪

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