

Youth Visions

The Summer Journey What Every High School Student Should Do Next Summer

By Brenden Carol

Let me see, what did I do this summer? I hung with friends, played video games, chased girls. Oh yeah ... I also went to 15 cities, stayed in hotels for 22 days, argued with officials from the NRA, Kaiser Permanent Healthcare systems, Focus on the Family, met Martin Luther King Jr.'s right hand man, learned about every social justice issue under the sun, plus made 45 new friends, all while riding a bus from sea to shining sea and having the time of my life.



Having fun with Etgar 36 during the summer of 2009. Brenden Carol is in the middle at the back.

I went on Etgar 36, a Jewish Journey focused on social justice issues. For me it was a Journey of a lifetime. I traveled with the group for three weeks, but some were lucky enough to travel for six weeks. My trip began in Atlanta, and went all the way to San Francisco. The trip focuses on important social issues ranging from gay marriage to gun control to health care and much more. On all of these issues, we had speakers from both side. For example on gun control, we met with Tom Mauser, a pro-gun control advocate whose son died at the Columbine shooting. But we also met with the anti-gun control advocates from the NRA. Visiting the Columbine High School memorial was incredibly moving.

Even though I was only four when the shootings took place, I now feel like I better understand what happened and how seriously it impacted individual families and the Nation.

I also learned a lot about my Jewish identity during the trip. After all, I was traveling with Jewish kids from around the country, plus I spent each of my Shabbats observing a different type of Jewish service. Reform, Reconstruction and Renewal. We spent one Shabbat with a Reform gay temple in Dallas, and another at an outdoor service in Zion National Park. Surprisingly, the most interesting was with a Renewal Temple in San Francisco.

If I am making this trip sound

too serious, it wasn't. Every day we had free time, where got to choose any restaurant to eat, or an hour or two to shop and explore. What could be better than spending time at Venice beach in L.A. after meeting with the movie producers of Food, Inc. and having time to explore Castro and Berkeley in San Francisco after learning about literacy in America? We also got to go to see some fun museums like the Rock 'n Soul and visit some awesome outdoor sites like the Garden of the Gods, Zion National Park and my favorite the Grand Canyon. We also saw shows like the Blue Man group (in Las Vegas) and movies, bowled, and went to an old fashion amusement park in Denver. The best party inevitably was in our bus as we traveled across American – great conversations, eating, dancing in the aisle and of course sleeping half the time.

Etgar 36 really was one of the

best times of my life. How many other 14-year-olds can say they traveled the country in a coach bus meeting movie directors, civil right leaders, and politicians, all while making great friends and watching roaming buffalo in Nevada. Etgar 36 is a life changing experience.

I guess I should end this article by telling you what my favorite experience was, but I cannot think of just one. There are too many. Please check out the Journal we wrote at Etgar36.org. You can get more information on their website. ✧

Congressman Eric Cantor Addresses Teens in Eastern Region BBYO

The newly elected youth leaders of Eastern Region BBYO attended their first convention of the year in late August. This convention focused on leadership training, goals setting, chapter assessment and setting priorities for the upcoming programming year. Sixty teens from VA and NC attended the weekend which included eighteen youth leaders from Charlotte. The keynote speaker for the weekend was Congressman Eric Cantor from Virginia. Eric Cantor is a fifth-term congressman representing the seventh district of Virginia and currently holds the highly esteemed position of Minority Whip. Congressman Cantor spoke to the teens about his personal journey from being one of very few Jews in his community to becoming the elected official of his district. He spoke about the importance of connecting Judaism with your personal strengths when leading others.



Eric Cantor (R-VA) spoke with BBYO's teen leaders from VA and NC.

chapters, Chai Chaverim BBG, Ohavim BBG, Hank Greenberg AZA and Mickey Barak Aberman AZA have already begun programming on Tuesday nights and welcomed the more than forty new members to Charlotte BBYO. Our new members are looking forward to their first BBYO convention which will be held the weekend of October 16-18. It's not too late to join BBYO which is open to all Jewish teens in 9th-12th grade. For more information, please contact the BBYO office at 704-944-6734 or email eastern@bbyo.org. ✧



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Warmest Regards,

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