

# JEWISH FEDERATION NEWS

## Birthright December 2010

By Mor Green, community shlichah

*"Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father's household to the land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1-2).*

*In December 2010, I took a group of 39 Jewish students from ages 18-22 to an NC Hillel Birthright trip to Israel. Unlike other trips that I have ever taken as a native Israeli, I got to experience Israel through my students' eyes. I want to thank the Jewish Federation and The Leon Levine Foundation for giving the students and me the gift of the ten-day trip. I have asked two students to share their experience with you:*

My name is Amy Fine. I'm 21 years old, from Charlotte, and a junior at Appalachian State University. Taglit-Birthright Israel was the trip of a lifetime. It was filled with beautiful sights, amazing food, fun activities and lots of learning. In just ten days I got to see more than I could've imagined, all the while, learning about Israel's rich history, culture, and government. We hiked up mountains and tasted wine in the Golan Heights, floated in the Dead Sea, rode camels in the desert, shopped in Tel Aviv, and prayed at the Kotel in Jerusalem, and those are just a few of the activities we participated in. Of course, this trip wasn't just about seeing all the tourist sites, it was also about becoming closer with Judaism. I've always known that Israel is a holy place for the Jews, but I didn't get to feel the true connection until I took this trip.

Sitting in the very room where Israel became an independent nation and a Jewish state was mind-blowing and leaning my head against the Western Wall to pray, like so many of my ancestors had done before me, provided a feeling I can't even begin to explain. Looking out over the old city of Jerusalem, walking through the National Cemetery on Mt. Herzl, and feeling the wind blow against my face as Ohad, our amazing tour guide, told a story about the strength of the Jewish people on Masada were just a few of the moments that led me to find my place in our homeland. Perhaps my favorite part of the whole trip was getting to share in the celebration of the B'nai Mitzvah of six of my new friends. Watching them being called to the Torah as young adults made me prouder to be Jewish than ever before. However, I didn't just make new friends on this trip, I expanded my family. Between the great staff and my fellow "Birthrighters" I am thrilled to say that I now have 42 new family members who will always be close to my heart. Ten days just wasn't long enough.

My name is Drew Daniller-Varghese and I was born and raised in Austin, Texas. I am a junior at Davidson College — the reason I was eligible for this

trip. I was raised in a relatively traditional Jewish home, Shabbat dinner at the grandparents every Friday, summer camps at the JCC, had my Bar Mitzvah, and just recently ended my second and final term as President of Davidson's Hillel. My point is I was not lacking in my Jewish identification or exposure. It was important, yes, but not necessarily any greater than my identity as an athlete or a student.

My trip to Israel changed that.

I have never felt so closely connected to any people as I did to my Taglit-Birthright group, including our eight Israeli soldiers and our trip leaders. The best analogy I can make was that it felt similar to being a member of a successful athletic team. I felt a powerful trust and bond with my group as a whole. I know part of the connection was discovering Israel together. Yet, it is difficult to translate into words this feeling of mutual discovery. Maybe it was the group's first Kabbalat Shabbat together on top of a cliff on Kibbutz Manara, where I felt a wave of emotion that I could not hope to explain. Maybe it was listening to the faltering voice of Ellay while she bravely told us the story of her friend who lost his life in the line of duty. Or when I felt the reassuring hands placed on my back when I could not keep my composure in Yad Vashem, watching video footage taken by the American soldiers who liberated Auschwitz. It was all of these moments and more. It was the power of touching history at the Kotel, or laughing our way through another lunch



The December 2010 Taglit-Birthright group from Charlotte.

of shwarma, or acting like a proud parent while snapping pictures of our group's six members who decided to become B'nai Mitzvah. And many of the six who decided to become bar/bat mitzvah repeated the same refrain — that they could not have imagined any other group of people to share their day and moment with them. By the end of our trip, our group had become one family.

And so I return to my first

thought: Thank You. Thank you for allowing me to explore an amazing country with a superb and unique blend of people. Thank you to The Leon Levine Foundation for introducing me to a new branch of my family tree. ☆

**JEWISH FEDERATION**  
OF GREATER CHARLOTTE  
*Local, Global, Eternal*

**Special thanks to The Leon Levine Foundation**

## Attention All Charlotte Teens This Will Change Your Life

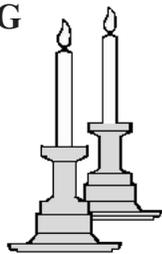
This 2011 summer, join teens from all over the Southeastern US for an incredible trip to Israel through Federation's Partnership 2000 program. For two weeks, travel to Israel and meet peers from our sister city, Hadera-Eiron. During that trip you will stay in their homes, travel the whole country, volunteer, go sightseeing, and learn about the history and leadership and culture that make our homeland such an incredible place. Then, bring your Israeli

friends back to Charlotte to stay in your home for two weeks while the party continues. While in Charlotte you will volunteer all over the city, tour parts of Charlotte and the Southeast, and participate in leadership training programs. The experience not only looks terrific on your college resume, but will truly change your life.

For more information, please contact Mor Green or Sarah Ferrin at the Jewish Federation (704-944-6757). ☆

### SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING FOR FEBRUARY 2011

Friday, February 4, 5:36 PM  
Friday, February 11, 5:43 PM  
Friday, February 18, 5:50 PM  
Friday, February 25, 5:56 PM



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