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Partnership 2000 Hadera-Charlotte Teen Leadership Exchange Building Bridges, Changing Lives

The Partnership 2000 Hadera-Charlotte Teen Leadership Exchange is a four week program in both Charlotte and Israel with both Americans and Israelis. Together they explore cultures, enhance Jewish identity, participate in social action, and change lives. Below are five personal accounts from this summer's teen exchange. For more information and to participate in next summer's program, please contact the Jewish Federation at info@jewishcharlotte.org.

Ever since my older brother, Ethan, came back from his trip to Israel, I was dying to go to the Holy Land. My mom found out about this trip and told me about it. I thought, "To see Israel through the eyes of some that live there is a once in a lifetime opportunity being handed to me." And boy was I right about that because while I was there, I felt at home. Never before have I seen so many Jewish people and Judaism is the norm, whereas in America, it is looked at as a unique way of life. I met the most amazing group of Israelis there and was lucky enough to see them not only in Israel, but in Charlotte as well. This trip opened the world for me and how I look at things, especial-

ly the way the world views Israel. I highly recommend this trip to Jewish teens anywhere.

-Jeremy Samarel

There aren't enough words to describe this summer when I went to Israel with five Jewish kids and came back with 50 new family members and a new desire to go back as soon as possible. My first memory of Israel was something I will never forget. Our American group stopped in front of a school that had a lot of people waiting outside. With only a couple hours of sleep in the past 24 hours, seeing all these people really didn't faze me; that is until I got off the bus and a roar of cheering in Hebrew came from this group of 30-40 Israeli teens. At this moment, it finally hit me, we are in the Promised Land. On our first full day in Israel we all went to Jerusalem. This would turn out to be one of the best parts of this trip. No matter what religion you are, you will recognize a picture of the Jerusalem skyline; today was the day that I would get to see it in person. Our tour guide took us to an overlook and had the Americans cover their eyes, when I opened my eyes I thought that they were holding a picture in front of my face. It was the most

beautiful thing I have ever seen and probably ever will. That night at the Rabin guest house, we all shared different songs on guitar, games, celebrity crushes, jokes, and of course, food. I had an amazing time touring Israel, and North Carolina, but I will never forget bonding with my soul brothers, Robi Davidi, Gal Karblikov, and Max Malter that night at the Rabin Guest house.

-Caleb Seidler

Unforgettable. That is the first word that comes to mind when I think about the Partnership 2000 experience that I participated in this summer. I wouldn't trade it for the world. From climbing Masada at sunrise, to naming camels we rode at the Bedouin camp, I experienced so many new feelings and learned more about myself than I thought possible. Aside from visiting amazing historical landmarks and inspirational sights, what made the trip for me were the friends I met. Spending two weeks in the Holy Land with 30 incredible people led to the forging of incredible friendships and memories that I know I'll treasure for years and years to come. I fell in love with Israel, and its people. I value my Judaism more than ever now, and know that no matter where I go, the Jewish people there will make me feel like it's home. I look at the photos of the trip and re-live what my friends and I have come to call the "glory days." I crave Israeli food, music, and culture. It's an experience that I take with me wherever I go, and one that I think about almost too often. It comes up in conversations, no matter whom I am talking to. It is an experience that will make you open your eyes and your mind ... and above all, your heart.

-Debbie Rabinovich

There is nothing like waking up at 4 AM to watch the sun rise over Masada and, there are no words I can use to explain the friendships I made on this trip. I originally joined the Tikkun Olam Israel trip in order to see the country and experience the history of Israel. Tsfat was breath taking and Haifa wowed me with the Baha'i Gardens. Israel proved to be more than just a tourist site. The first time I met my host family I was nervous and jet-lagged. As I spent my first night in Anat's (my



host's) older sister's room I just couldn't believe where I was sleeping. Throughout the whole trip one thing really stuck out to me. The food is amazing. Almost everything is grown fresh in Israel and so everything tastes better. I tried it all. I also got to experience Hebrew which, in my opinion, is the most beautiful language in the world. I learned a lot. Now that I'm back in America, I still catch myself responding to my teachers questions with *ken* and *lo*. Last, but not at all least, I made best friends on this trip that I will never forget. When the Israelis came to

Charlotte I was thrilled to find out that I was hosting Rivi. We found, through getting to know each other that even though we live on two different ends of the earth, we are very much the same.

-Carly Ruda

After spending an entire month with a group of Israelis and Americans, I can honestly say that good friends are hard to find, harder to leave, and impossible to forget. When I was packing my bags, getting ready to come home to the states, I remember thinking

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