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Welcome to ic.news – pages written by, for, and about Cleveland's Jewish teens!

In the section titled "ic.news" israel.cleveland.next (icnext) participants reflect on their 10-day Mission to Israel in June, 2016, and comment on current issues of interest to Cleveland's teens. They are creating an ongoing source of news about the community, Jewish teens and Israel, inspired by knowledge gained from the icnext program. They will talk about Jewish identity, changing political, social, and

cultural perspectives of Jews and Israelis, the realities of the Israeli conflict, and more. There will be photos that document their 10-day Mission during the summer of 2016, and those that document current events, whether in Jewish Cleveland or Israel. icnext is a two-year program that educates Cleveland's Jewish high school students from all denominations in the core issues of Israeli society and the geopolitical situation in Israel today. icnext is a project of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, administered through @akiva. For information about or to apply for icnext, contact Tina Keller at tkeller@

akivacleveland.org.

In "more.teen.news" @akiva presents different teen programs in the community. From preparing students for the challenges that will face them on their future college campus, to learning Hebrew and how to advocate for Israel; from theater (testimony.theater.cleveland) to music (HaZamir Cleveland), there are so many opportunities for our teens to form a special community. Most importantly, this programming fosters an incredibly strong connection to Israel, and trains teens to be Jewish leaders.



Reflections on Creating Partnership

Personal connection allows us to better understand the politics, culture, food, and society of Israel. Through our friendships with the Israeli teens who came to Cleveland and whom we visited in Beit Shean, we enriched our Judaism. We were able to learn about Israeli culture and teen life. We were able to teach Israelis about American society. We were able to experience and grow Judaism in its truest form. We found that Israeli identity is not just one food, one idea, or one tradition. Identity is made of a culturally diverse, unique, inspiring lifestyle. These blogs describe our amazing time with the Israelis, both in Beit Shean and Cleveland.

– Zachary Nosanchuk, Cleveland 2017

Israel, June 2016

Introductions...

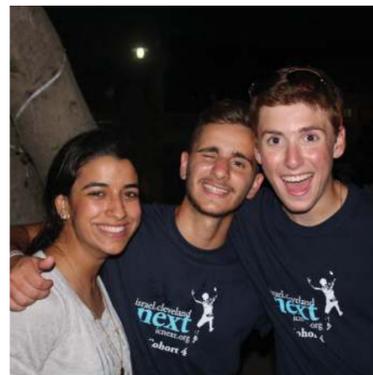
To say I wasn't nervous would be a lie. Would my limited Hebrew prevent me from connecting with the Israeli teens we were visiting? Fortunately I was wrong to be nervous. As we stepped off the bus in Beit Shean there was a huge uproar of laughter and shouting. Each and every Israeli teen welcomed me into their life instantaneously. Neta, my peer host, was a little late to arrive, but when she did she ran into my arms. After everyone had calmed down (slightly) we made our way inside the Youth Center. We made a massive pile of luggage, threw our hats and sunglasses in our backpacks and proceeded to make a circle—how else would a large group of teenagers start

an activity? We played a game I had never heard of, "Where the wind blows." Basically, someone says something and if it is true for yourself you walk across the circle. Lucky for us, we had plenty of time (because for once we were ahead of the schedule found in our every so handy Israel Mission Sourcebook) to make conversation and grow as English and Hebrew speakers. Nothing has made me want to learn Hebrew more than being here and nothing has made me love Israel more than the people. Everyone is willing to reach out their hand and do anything to make you feel at home. I have already hung out with many of Neta's friends and they have all invited me in their homes and conversations. We've shared countless laughs and stories. I feel like I've know them forever. The sense of community and family here is unbelievable. Neta's family has been exceptionally welcoming and will do anything to get me and Gabrielle to drink and eat. Everyone loves to teach us Hebrew and watch us grow as our skills develop. I'm looking forward to the next couple of days in Beit Shean, and I will be extremely sad knowing that I have to leave Neta, her family, and the rest of the Israelis.

– Leah Marek, Israel 2016

Staying in Beit Shean...

12 hours of sleep. On my Shabbat stay at Neta's house in Beit Shean, I got 12 hours of that sweet, REM sleep. What a special thing, on this day of rest. However, sleep wasn't the highlight of my Shabbat like many would expect of me, a tired teenage tourist. To me, community and camaraderie were most prominent. Before Shabbat even began, I met my spontaneous Israeli host



Neta's boyfriend Tal. He was so kind and inclusive, wanting to talk to me, get to know me, and make me feel at home. Neta's parents made me feel like a queen in a palace, with their hospitality and the endless food offered continuously. I couldn't have felt more at home. Moving on, as the sun crept down and Shabbat began, the community became alive. Children and dogs were outside playing while their parents prepared for the Sabbath. Two of Neta's friends, Ayaelit and Avishag welcomed us into their homes. They were some of the sweetest people I've ever met and I know Leah (who also stayed with Neta) would agree. We had conversations that seemed like I'd known them for many, many years. On Saturday, Neta had her friends over and again they acted like we were best friends for years. Even Neta's grandparents, who spoke no English welcomed us into their home with open arms and a table of food, where I dined on fresh Israeli salad, homemade lemonade and delectable kuba, a traditional Kurdish food of beef filled dumplings enveloped by a rich tomato flavored soup. The epitome of Israeli Shabbat is not food, sleep, or a break from technology. It is family and friends, making anyone- even an American tourist who only knows 10 words in Hebrew- feel like part of the family in the Jewish homeland. I know that when I leave Israel, yes I'll miss the cities, yes I'll miss the beautiful landscape, yes I'll miss the endless adventure. But most of all, I'll miss the connection and close friendship I built with my new bestie Neta and all the other Israelis the most.

– Gabrielle Sudilovsky, Israel 2016



Cleveland, March 2017 - icnext Cohort 5 Mifgash

Personal connection between icnext Cohort 5's Cleveland and Beit Shean teens began on March 27, 2017, as 20 Israeli teens arrived for the Cleveland Mifgash – a week-long encounter between both teen groups. It began with introductions, continued with learning about culture, food, the society of Jewish Cleveland, and each other, and ended with strong friendships. Both groups will meet again this coming June - this time in Israel.

We always knew about the Beit Shean-Cleveland partnership. It was something we had learned about from the adults around us. But this past week we learned the true meaning of what a partnership is from each other. Throughout this past week, we spent our time together learning, volunteering and having the time of our lives as we - the Cleveland icnext Cohort 5 participants - hosted a delegation of 20 Israeli teens from our sister city Beit Shean for 7 days.

On Monday night when we met for the



more.teen.news

AIPAC Policy Conference 2017 – "Many Voices, One Mission"

On March 26, twenty seven community high school seniors, led by @akiva, joined over 18,000 participants at AIPAC Policy Conference 2017, the largest gathering of America's pro-Israel community. Participants included more than two-thirds of Congress, students from more than 490 campuses, synagogue delegations and AIPAC members from across the country. For 2 full days, students experienced keynote speeches by American and Israeli leaders, educational sessions, and inspiring moments on stage. On the third day, students joined adult delegations as they went to Capitol Hill to lobby their Congressional represen-



first time, we all had pictures in our heads of what this exchange would look like....

Tal and Eden's first night perspective (teens from Beit Shean):

We were so excited to meet everyone but we also had many stereotypes in our heads of what Americans were like. But after just an hour together all those stereotypes washed away. We got to know everyone as individual people and not the stereotypes that built up in our heads.

Noa's first night Perspective (teen from Cleveland):

I was so excited to meet all the Israelis and had been preparing for them all day long. But when I first saw them I got very nervous. Most of our Cleveland Cohort was away on spring break so the first night there was only 5 or 6 Clevelanders and 20 Israelis! I wanted to interact with them, but also felt a little outnumbered. Soon I learned it didn't matter that there were fewer of us because in the end it didn't matter who was Israeli and who was American. We all became one group.

Sometimes the only way to truly learn is through a personal experience. This is what icnext allowed us to do. Two groups of teenagers who may look and seem like they have nothing in common, came together to form what really is a partnership.

–Noa Marcus, Eden Zinger and Tal Azuelos, Cleveland 2017

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tatives on issues related to Israel – keeping the American-Israeli partnership strong.

This trip was made possible by generous support from The William and Anita Heller Family Jewish Continuity Fund and the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.

I'd say I am a pretty worldly person. During the Presidential campaign season, I would watch the news often and I could not avoid seeing all the commercials for congressional races. However, before I went on the trip to AIPAC Policy Conference if you asked me who my district representative was, I probably would not be able to tell you. I did know my senators because Sherrod Brown lived in my hometown of Avon for a while, and Rob Portman has been in the news recently regarding his Anti-BDS proposal. Now, following a three day expedition to AIPAC's 2017 Policy Conference, I can tell you that the state of Ohio has great legislators in place to ensure America's continued positive relationship with Israel. After listening to District 7 Representative Bob Gibbs, Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown, I know that our state congressmen will stand up to Iran when they slip up on their end of the Nuclear Deal, vote in favor of any Anti-BDS legislation including the anti-Israel propaganda legisla-tion at the United Nations, and continue to fund the defense agreement that the United States approved during the Obama Administration. After my experience at this conference, I can enthusiastically say Ohio will continue to protect Israel.

– Eli Atzenhoffer, Cleveland 2017

Thank you AIPAC for ensuring that the special bond between the United States and Israel will never be broken, for inspiring me, and giving me tools to exercise my 1st Amendment right. I'm proud that all of the representatives of Ohio see eye to eye why it is so important to stand with Israel. We don't speak as Democrats or Republicans but as one powerful, united voice.

– Jessica Schwartz, Cleveland 2017

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Although Policy Conference only lasted a short 3 days, I learned more in those 3 days about foreign policies and how the American government views the U.S.-Israel relationship than I would have in any classroom. 18,000 pro-Israel advocates from different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs came together to celebrate the one thing we all have in common: our love for the Jewish state. The main thing I learned from AIPAC was that government officials need to continue working across the aisle to ensure that we keep our closest ally in good hands. AIPAC truly helped me strengthen my pro-Israel belief and understand details I can now go in depth about when speaking in support of the Jewish state.

– Samantha Rich, Cleveland 2017

From Israel advocacy, leadership training and college prep for Jewish students to HaZamir Cleveland Choir and original Jewish theatre, @akiva offers Hebrew and so much more!
@akiva is a beneficiary agency of the Jewish

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icnext is a 2-year program that educates students in the core issues of Israel today and prepares them for Israel related/anti-Semitic challenges on college campuses. Included is a 10-day Israel Mission. **Applications are now being accepted from current freshmen and sophomores for Cohort 6 which begins Fall 2017.**

For more information contact
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icnext is a project of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, administered through @akiva