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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.



In the end it's all about connection, in Israel and Cleveland - reflections

I didn't expect this.

I didn't expect that each person on the icnext Israel trip would become a new friend and that we would find common interests that would bond us together. I didn't expect that I would develop new views on Israel advocacy, that this trip would teach me things truly aren't as they seem, and that I would change my views on the current conflict as a result of what happened within these 10 days. I didn't expect that I would eat delicious new flavors, while learning about Israeli teen and family society. I didn't expect that I would come back from this trip wanting even more. But I do.

This trip made our separate group into a cohesive whole that learns, educates, and leads together. I remember one particular moment in the trip. I was taking a bite of delicious freshly fried falafel in Sderot, smothered with tahini sauce, fries – or chips as Israelis call them - and spicy Harif. Others around me wanted to try. Without hesitation, I gave them my sandwich, and we passed it around, everyone eating some. In that moment, we were all together, trying this essential piece of Israeli food. We were one. Even those of us who had entirely opposing views, some left and some right, had found a way to connect.

In the end, that's what it's all about,

right? If we form positive memories that we connect to Israel, we connect with others and tell them about it, and this forms a positive and bright view of Israel and Judaism that we will hold onto throughout our adulthood.

With that, it all makes sense. The sometimes frustrating seminars...the crazy logistics...it's all about connection.

That's what makes icnext amazing. We were each so different. Some of us religious, some secular. Some of us love USY, while others love NFTY or BBYO. Some of us lean politically right when it comes to Israel, while others are more left. Yet, with the special odd magic created by icnext and, inherently, Israel, we can become one. And that really is what Israel is...an assembly, a connection of Jews, different but the same, ready to face the world.

icnext doesn't create a Cohort. It creates an Israel within itself.

- Zachary Nosanchuk, Israel

I never really got the opportunity on our trip to figure out what it was all about, what kind of trip we were on, what the single purpose of it all was. Were we another tourist group, moving from place to place to see the sites? Or was it all about the learning...the many lectures we had on advocacy, history and identity? Were we there to make connections with the people we met, friendships that will still be important years down the road? Or did we simply travel 5,000 miles just to get a taste of some delicious Israeli falafel?

Looking back, I think the only way to



describe the trip is as a gateway. It was an introduction to Israel, even for those of us who had been there before. We met new people, tasted new things, learned the history in a new way, and ultimately got multiple, different, new perspectives on the country and its citizens. These new connections opened up doors that would otherwise have remained closed. None of us can say that they don't want to go back after this trip, and there is so much more for us all to learn about everything.

Because after all, even when you sleep for 3 hours a night, there's only so much you can do in ten days.....

- David Gold, Israel

We sing together.....

Like many things on this trip, this moment was not originally on the itinerary. It was our last night in Israel and Amnon let us know earlier that day that he decided we are going to do the four-hour roundtrip ride from Tel Aviv to the Negev. Tucking my bag underneath my seat, I went onto the two hour bus ride knowing only the basics: that we were on our way to see air force pilots graduate from their three year training.

I step off the bus onto the Negev ground, and we are truly in the middle of nowhere. However, as we walk further onto the base, it becomes alive with people. Soldiers. Family of soldiers. Friends of soldiers. And then us. Being the only tourists make me feel more like an Israeli. We take our seats in what looks like half of an amphitheater with a long airplane runway and giant projector

in the center. A commander starts shouting, in Hebrew, "left right left" as soldiers begin to march, marking the start of the ceremony. The graduating pilots perform what they've learned for us. From hanging from a rope on a helicopter, to taking off in a large plane within only a few meters, I was amazed at their skill. I watch a plane travel 100km/h and then hear the terrifying *whoosh* two seconds later. The amplifying sound hits hard. It makes it clear how real and serious Israel's situation is. It makes it clear that these skills are strategies. It makes it clear how dangerous this is. Yet, I haven't met any Israeli who wasn't proud of or too scared to go to the IDF. The way Israelis talk about the army is casual, with the question, "what do you want to do in the army?" sounding equivalent to how casual "what do you want to study in college?" is in the states.

At the end of the graduation, everyone stands up, preparing to sing Israel's national anthem. It is quiet and all you can hear is the flag flapping in the wind and clashing against the flagpole as the sun begins to set. Once the music begins, all the voices become one. I feel united as I sing Hatikvah. I don't sing with them, because we sing together.

- Erica Kahn, Israel

Saying Hello and Goodbye to the (Former) Next Shinshinim

Looking back on last summer's Israel trip, I remember the excitement of waiting to meet the 2016-17 shinshinim, Itamar, Ziv, Orel and Michal (AKA the Israelis that would be living in Cleve-

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My Testimony

testimony.theater.cleveland is an educational and dramatic encounter between teens and first, second and third generation Holocaust survivors. The program meets weekly for rehearsals and culminates in a performance based on the survivors' stories. For more information about the program, contact Sheri Gross: 216.409.6295 or email sheri10568@gmail.com.

Being of European descent and a third generation holocaust survivor on both sides of my family, I find myself greatly impacted by the Holocaust – always have. I am fascinated by textbook narratives about the Holocaust, yet they cannot compare to the raw, personal stories that I feel so privileged to have heard from Holocaust survivors themselves. I recently participated in Cleveland's first year of the program "Testimony Theatre", where real stories of six completely different survivors were brought to life in a play written by a group of high school students, including myself. The goal of this play was to bring light to the biggest revenge Jews have against the Nazis - life. These six individuals, all from different areas of Europe, are just a small percentage of the greatest revenge of all, and they touch the hearts of every person they meet.

The "Testimony theatre" process began as we pre-



pared questions for our interviews with survivors, generating information that would later become the play. Each survivor was able to meet with us at least once to tell us their holocaust survival story, answer questions, and bring us into their lives. After we interviewed all the survivors, Sheri Gross, the director behind "testimony.theater.cleveland", combined the stories into a cohesive play that came together as a story of strength and survival... the stories came to life in front of our very eyes. A small audience of survivors attended the last rehearsal to give their seals of approval before we performed their stories in front of the community. I portrayed Albert Pollack, a brave man from Poland, whose story really touched me. Albert, being around my age at the time of the war, did anything and everything to live; he taught us that "determination

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land for a year with our quirky community). Do they know English well? Will they wanna be friends with our icnext group? Are we going to be as close with them as we are with the current shinshinim (Itamar, Lotem, Noam and Yuval)?

I remember how we met them...our icnext group was traveling through Jerusalem and suddenly our bus pulled to the side of the road. In step our new best friends – Orel, Zev, Michal and Itamar. As we said our hellos, I immediately sensed they would be a remarkable group of Israelis to have in our community, but I never guessed we would become so close so fast! A week later we said goodbye to them at Ben Gurion airport, and everyone couldn't wait to see them in Cleveland in the fall!!!

Now their year has passed. I truly feel connected to these new friends - "shinshinim" - and I can't believe their time in Cleveland is already coming to an end. It feels like just yesterday that our bus pulled over to the side of the road.

Orel, Michal, Ziv and Itamar have had a huge impact on us and will always be remembered in our icnext group, Hebrew school and community.

Thank you guys for making our time together one of a kind, and I hope something that you too will never forget!

- Ari Sternberg, Israel and Cleveland

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is a powerful feeling; it will give you the energy to fulfill your dreams". That is exactly what he did, and he survived. My experience in testimony theatre was one that I will never forget. From interviewing each survivor, all the way to our final performance this was one of the most impactful and powerful experiences of my life.

- Shai Paz, Cleveland

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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