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►► JF&CS Youth Visit Israel on Donor-Funded Trip ◀◀



JF&CS is proud to share that in late December, 10 of our former foster youth visited Israel on a ten-day trip. They were accompanied by three frontline social workers and one manager from JF&CS. The youth range in age from 19-24 and they are all part of either our Just-Us League youth group or our [Pearl Project](#).

The trip was the first of its kind for JF&CS and was made possible by the exceptional generosity of donors, most notably the Wattenberg Auslander Fund for whom our appreciation simply cannot be measured.

For some of the youth, this was their first time on an airplane. For many, it was their first time in Israel, and for others who were born in Israel, this was a rare opportunity to visit family they haven't seen in years.

It was a very intense week of travelling, programming and coming to terms with their own identities as they were challenged both physically and emotionally. They hiked in the Golan Heights, climbed Mount Masada, visited an artist in the mystical city of Tz'fat, swam in the hot springs at Tiberias,

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floated in the Dead Sea, visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem and experienced Yad Vashem - the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre.

and services.

On the last day of the trip in Tel Aviv, the group met with other youth who had grown up in the foster care system in Israel. They spoke freely and openly with one another about their personal experiences. One of the striking differences was that in Israel, the foster care system ends at age 18 when teens go into the army. Most government services end at that time for the youth who grew up in care. The group we met with were from [Ohr Shalom](#) - an organization that supports their youth in many ways with much of its funding received from Toronto philanthropists. Our youth connected strongly with the Israeli youth over their unique and shared experiences. One young man on our trip noted, **"No one knows what it's like to grow up [without parents] more than them so to have them there for something so purely positive when there have been so few of those moments just cemented those bonds even more."**

The other major factor on this trip was our incredible social work staff who were up at 6 o'clock every morning to ensure that all ten were ready to go on time ... not an easy task! Staff participated in every activity and when the day ended after evening programming, they would meet for another hour or more to discuss each youth and their needs for the coming day. Travelling with social workers allowed the youth to trust and share their most vulnerable moments without fear of judgment or repercussion.

Simply put, this was a life-changing experience for all the participants. The group was incredibly grateful for this opportunity and even met up a few weeks after arriving home for a reunion. They came prepared with personal thank you letters they had written to the donors to express their appreciation. One participant let us share a few of her words:

"Going on a trip with other former youth-in-care from JF&CS allowed us to strengthen the small, but meaningful community we are building at JF&CS. I witnessed my peers leave their comfort zones on this trip. I saw some come out of their shells and offer much laughter and insight. I bonded with them in many different ways and I truly feel that we became like a big family on this trip."

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If you are interested in learning more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent to a Jewish child in need of a loving home, it's never a bad time to start a conversation. Only one parent per home needs to be Jewish. Single parents and LGBTQ parents are proudly welcomed. Per diem is paid. Simply call our Intake team at 416.638.7800 x 6234 and tell them you would like to talk!

►► JF&CS Has a New Website! ◀◀

JF&CS is pleased to share our newly-designed, highly functional website. The address hasn't changed; we are still www.jfandcs.com, and we encourage you to visit the site to learn more about all we have to offer!

Jewish Family & Child | 4600 Bathurst St, 1st Floor, Toronto, ON M2R 3V3

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