

*Letter from mother of Mai, a 2013-2014 Urban Leadership young adult participant from Beer Sheva, volunteering in Tel Aviv-Yafo [Translated from Hebrew]*

July 2014

To Our Dear Mai and Garin Friends,

This is the time for me to tell to truth and admit that when you first told us that you were going to do a Shnat Sherut (volunteer year), we were very skeptical. We thought it was a waste of time, that you should be drafted and not “waste a year.” We had many concerns. Today, at the end of the year, I can say that we were wrong. We watched you and we stood by you all year. Through you, we have been exposed to so many values, and it is we who have learned so much from you.

When you began your Shnat Sherut and you turned us into partners in the path, we discovered the meaning of giving, of social involvement, giving back to the community, and the amazing connections that were made between you and the other Garin members, between you and the kids you worked with.

We saw your growth from a young girl leaving the safety of the “nest”, from a place where you have everything, and we watched you grow into an independent adult, knowledgeable and assertive, and dealing with so many new things: living with a group, learning to run a house, organizing a budget, learning to cook, being responsible and independent. We saw how much you much you gave and how much you gained. We saw how you coped with difficult circumstances head-on without taking any shortcuts. You discovered your own abilities on your own. We saw the camaraderie that emerged within the group and your caring for one another. Now we can say that your choice was the right one, and we were wrong.

I think that through the framework of BINA, you acquired values, grew stronger, and became a person who is sensitive and attentive to the needs of diverse communities. The Mai who began her Shnat Sherut a year ago is definitely not the same Mai who completed it... and we are so proud of you for it!

On a personal note, I know that I will definitely recommend to others this amazing experience called Shnat Sherut. It is clear to me that this year will impact the rest of your life. You couldn't have learned what you learned this year anywhere else. It was truly the school of life.

I personally wish you, and your wonderful Garin friends who have become an important part of your life, much success. I have no doubt that we will all be hearing about you soon, and we will continue to see you involved and contributing to Israeli society.

Go to the army in peace and come back to us in peace. Take care of yourselves. And continue to be who you are: a unique and special group!!!

Love,  
Mom