The New Israeli Guardians-2012-2013

Name of program
The New Israeli Guardians

Year of activity
2012-2013

Name of the report's writer
Avital Oren

Function of the report's writer
External Relations Coordinator

Phones & Emails
Mail: avital@hashomer.org.il
Phones: 054-655-6260

Status of program
Today, there are 45 participants in HaShomer HaChadash's third Young Leadership Program in the Galilee. The program has grown in scope and depth, and the participants are working the land, helping farmers and ranchers in the north, learning intensively on subjects such as Jewish and Israeli identity, Zionism, Arabic, the bible, and civic responsibility. Participants are learning and experiencing the Zionist ideals on which the State of Israel was founded. They are learning to care for and about the land, and the values of social activism and mutual responsibility to Israel and the Jewish people.

Main achievements during the last year of activity

...: 2012-2013 saw critical change in the educational program, with more defined and in-depth learning. The 14-month work-study-volunteer program was again a transformative experience
for the participants. There were four groups, each with 10 participants. Each group works and studies at a different “activity center” and is run by a group leader.

The participants spent an intensive year learning about their Jewish and Israeli identities, Zionism, the bible, Arabic, and training to be HaShomer HaChadash volunteer guardsmen, protecting the land of farmers and ranchers in the north.

Each morning the participants helped surrounding farms to work their land. They planted and harvested crops, including grapes, fruit and vegetables, and helped to care for the animals, including milking the cows. This year, the program participants also hosted groups from all over Israel and from overseas who participated in HaShomer HaChadash’s agricultural volunteerism program. Together with the Young Leadership participants they built terraces to keep the herds from roaming, fixed fences that had been destroyed by thieves, cleared land and cared for fields of grape vines.

In the evenings the Young Leaders patrolled the surrounding areas, and with their presence they prevented a number of arson attack and the theft of livestock and property.

Special activities and events included: Identity week, when participants explored their personal identity, their family identity and their national identity; Tu B'Schvat planting with participants and parents, an incredible Shabbat in Jerusalem, delving into ancient Jewish history and contemporary issues facing Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel; Purim party in Jerusalem; field training to be volunteer guardsmen; visit to the Sea of Galilee in the footsteps of “The Second Aliyah”; a day at the Machon HaShitim where participants learned about the holidays of Israel, with focus on the holidays during the month of Tishrei and an incredible Independence Day celebration at the Megiddo junction that brought over 1,000 people from all over Israel and was organized in part by the participants.

For the participants, the Young Leadership Program was a springboard to a deeper understanding of who they are in a Jewish and Israeli context, what connotes a meaningful life for them and how they can make a difference in society. The values that they learned and lived during the program will be with them and direct them into their future.

The main achievements of the first Young Leadership Program was the intense self-exploration the participants went through, the significance this had on their personal growth, their awareness of their responsibility to be socially active Israeli citizens and their motivation to serve in elite combat units upon entering the army after the program's completion. All of the participants plan to serve in a combat unit.

At the same time, as the participants strengthen their Jewish-Israeli identity, they also strengthen the courage and spirit of the farmers they assist. These farmers play a strong role in the North’s economic sustainability.

**Evaluation**

The evaluation consisted of personal interviews with the participants and the teaching instructors, as well as evaluation by HaShomer HaChadash’s educational director.

During the interviews, the majority of participants expressed deep satisfaction with the
program and said that it had a significant affect on them.

It was found that:

- 100% of the graduates have confirmed that they are more aware of and connected to the Jewish people, to their Jewish identity and heritage and to the land after participating in the program.
- 100% of the participants said that during their army service they are more inclined to take responsibility and be social leaders in group dynamics and in unit activities.
- 80% of the graduates are in touch with HaShomer HaChadash and continue to volunteer in their spare time from the army.
- Parents in touch with HaShomer HaChadash’s educational director reported that their children were more connected to their family, to their land and to their heritage after completing the program.
- All of the farmers were satisfied with the HaShomer HaChadash young leadership volunteers and reported that this assistance was instrumental in sustaining their farms.

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