AFIKIM English summer camps - 2017

30 exceptional students from the United States and Canada (through Yeshiva University’s Counterpoint program) staffed the English language camps in the cities of Arad, Dimona, and Kiryat Malachi and provided 180 Israeli campers in 3 different camps from varied socio-economic backgrounds with an unforgettable summer experience. The long days of boredom and lack of structured routine can lead to disaster; these camps provide a fun-filled, stimulating and structured experience for the Afikim junior high and high school students living in the periphery. In the Afikim summer camp, the children enjoy social activities, enrichment workshops, trips to parks and attractions, sports and all in English! In addition to having fun, the youth participate in informal educational classes in English. Now back in school, it is possible to see the influence of the camp on the students grades in English and overall as they gained confidence over the summer months. The camps provided crucial opportunities for identity building and personal enrichment. As in past years, the program included classes given in English and workshops in arts, fashion, music, dance and sports.

The volunteer counselors were recruited and selected in the United States by Yeshiva University based on a show of interest and motivation and experience working with youth. The counselors participated in training programs in both the US and Israel which included informal education workshops, creative arts, introduction to Israeli society across the spectrum and specifically in the periphery communities.

Each camp was staffed by 10 undergraduate students from abroad who work together as educational teams to mentor the Israeli campers and taught Jewish history, heritage and culture through special trips, activities, teambuilding exercises and English language reading and writing skills. (attached is a sample counselors’ schedule) The theme of this summer’s English curriculum, “Me and My Community,” illustrated how advanced English skills can help the campers excel academically and set them down the road to professional success, thereby empowering them to improve their own lives and positively impact their communities.

In addition to educational excursions and leadership workshops in locations around the country, the campers took part in historical tours in the Old City’s Jewish Quarter, the City of David, and the Western Wall promenade in honor of Jerusalem’s 50th Anniversary.

This summer, the Ministries of Education and Welfare have officially recognized the Afikim/Counterpoint program as a direct continuation of the school year. This accreditation speaks to the high academic standards under which the program has developed.

A highlight of this summer’s program was a festive Bar Mitzvah celebration for participants from Kiryat Malachi who didn’t have an opportunity to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah. The celebration was held in the Old City of Jerusalem at the Western wall. The bar mitzvah was a moving experience that set the tone for an inspirational and transformative summer.