MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: The Hannaton Mechina
Year: 2019-2020

Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole rapport will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as word document).

Name of the Program: The Hannaton Mechina
Year of activity: 2019-2020
Name of the report's writer: Dr. Noga Zivan
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Number of active participants in the program: 340
Estimated number of impacted participants: 340

Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):

The 45 members of the 2019-2020 Mechina class completed their studies at the Hannaton Educational Center in July. Despite the difficulties caused by COVID-19, they were able to undertake their full programs, resorting when necessary to distance learning. The Mechina’s 300 alumni, who are currently prevented from visiting Hannaton due to COVID-19 restrictions, are meeting regularly for study and discussion online. 53 new students have arrived for the 2020-2021 Mechina year.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):

The 2019-2020 cohort began its year as normal. A four-day hike, ending in a dawn opening ceremony marked the beginning of the year, which then continued with the planned program of Jewish and leadership development activities. These included; a series of outdoor navigation exercises, a week-long Negev ‘survival and familiarization’ seminar, a religion and state seminar in Jerusalem, a week-long activism seminar in Tel Aviv, and an MDA First Responder course. The students took part in 12 hour-and-a-half long lessons and 14 hours of volunteering activities weekly. In November, they wrote a new version of a popular song, calling on politicians to form a government in order to avoid third elections. The video can be viewed here: Israel’s Youth Choose Change.

Following the announcement of a nationwide shutdown in mid-March, all members of the Mechinot were forced to return to their homes. Before leaving, they and the Hannaton staff worked together to create a detailed action plan for transitioning the programming to an online format. The daily program activities included 3 online lessons, group discussions, online exercise classes, as well as social events and activities such as online movie-watching sessions. In addition, students were expected
to volunteer in their local communities a minimum of three times a week, working with the elderly, volunteering with Magen David Adom, and assisting in local schools and kindergartens. Attendance throughout this difficult period was excellent.

In April, the center was allowed to bring its students back as a volunteer corp. The main areas of focus were agriculture, work with children and youth at Kibbutz Hannaton, distributing food packages to people in need, and working with children with special needs throughout the Jezreel Valley region in Northern Israel. This last effort was so successful that the Mechina was asked to partner with the Jezreel Valley municipality to create an ongoing volunteer initiative for the following year. The students also organized a week-long social change project to raise awareness about domestic violence, which increased dramatically in Israel during the period of the shutdown. As a result of this project, the students connected with a shelter for battered women in Haifa. Management there was so impressed by the students that they asked them to volunteer again next year on a weekly basis. This has now been added to the volunteer options for the 2020-2021 year. In their final weeks at the Mechina, students set out in small groups for a ten-day hike in the Galilee and held a moving ceremony for their families over Zoom to share their experiences and conclude the program.

The Hannaton Alumni Network
The Mechina has close to 300 alumni throughout Israel. The Hannaton Alumni Network aims to continue to build on the experiences which the graduates had at the Mechina in order to keep them actively engaged with Jewish learning and to encourage them as leaders within their own communities. In 2019-2020 activities included:

- A “life management” seminar for recent graduates of the army, to help them make the big decisions about their lives
- A study session for the current Mechina class, led by graduates, on the IDF;
- Annual reunions for each class;
- Class meetings approximately once every two months; online when necessary;
- More than 50 graduates came to the opening day of the Mechina in September 2019, 10 came to the navigation seminar to offer support and guidance and 30 came to a special late-night program to share their experiences in the army;
- Candle lighting during Chanukah 2019;
- Regular contact with individual graduates, including attending special events (completion of courses in the army, graduations, weddings) and in times of crisis.
- Several groups of graduates are living together in Beer Sheva, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and these flats are centers for the graduates to meet;
- Many graduates are combat officers and had to remain in the West Bank for six or more weeks during COVID-19. Hannaton staff helped remotely to support them.
- More than 20 online lectures, lessons and discussions during COVID-19. Over 80 alumni attended the first session, and at least 30 participated in each subsequent meeting.

Some additional numbers:

- There are 287 graduates
➢ 42 are officers or in an officer’s course (which adds at least one year to their mandatory IDF service)
➢ 39 have signed on for a longer service (keva) but are not officers
➢ 55 received some type of certificate of excellence during their service
➢ 29 are now in college or university, studying Social Work, Law, Art, Psychology, Medicine and Theater, among others.
➢ 12 have worked as counselors in a Mechina or similar program.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future…):
Evaluations are carried out annually to check; overall satisfaction with the program; what the participants learned, feedback on specific courses, values of leadership, volunteering before and after participation, future plans; attitudes to Judaism; Zionism and humanism and so forth.

In the year reported, 97.1% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the Mechina program, and 79.5% said they would recommend the Mechina experience to others. 96.9% felt they had formed strong bonds with their fellow participants. 76.6% felt their time at the Mechina influenced their attitudes towards volunteering.

In the new academic year, Hannaton Educational Center has engaged the services of Erech Musaf to carry out its external program evaluation. The methodologies which will be used will remain similar.

Once important measure of success has been the Mechina’s growing reputation among potential participants. During recruitment for the 2020-2021 year, more than 1,100 high school students completed an online form, 370 came to visit for a Shabbat and 230 were interviewed. This is a testament to the esteem in which Hannaton’s Mechina is held, and its growing reputation.

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:
More students have been taken on for the 2020-2021 academic year, and provisions put in place to allow them to attend in smaller capsules, according to Ministry of Health guidelines. This has created additional costs for the program, but remains essential for its operation. Online learning has also been refined.

Classes in this year’s Mechina included include: Practical Halacha; Ethical Dilemmas in the Talmud; Revolutions and Revolutionaries; Political Philosophy; History of the Land of Israel; Gender and Feminism; Zionism and War; and Zionist Thought. The weekly schedule will also include time for prayer, group dynamics, cultural evenings, and special guest lectures.

Volunteer work is central to the life of the Mechina, with two days a week spent in service to others. This year, 2 additional volunteering opportunities have been added to the curriculum – with a shelter for battered women in Haifa and helping special needs children throughout the Jezreel Valley.

Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qv9pVBC3S_c
Other requested documents attached.