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Nachshon, the Israeli Educational Institute for Social Leadership-2013-2014

Name of program

Nachshon, the Israeli Educational Institute for Social Leadership

Year of activity

2013-2014

Name of the report's writer

Ayelet Chaim-Sarig

Function of the report's writer

Operations Director

Phones & Emails

Mail: ayelet.sarig79@gmail.com

Phones: 08-6896894 / 052-8345385

Status of program

139 students (68 boys & 71 girls) finished their year at Nachshon successfully at the end of June 2014, thus completing the 17th year of activity at Nachshon (which started Sep 2013 with 163 students).

Beginning Sep 2014 we began our 18th year of activity with a new group of 153 students (77 boys & 76 girls) attending our three locations at Metzudat Yoav, Kibbutz Shoal and in the city of Sderot.

Main achievements during the last year of activity

1) Sports/physical training/preparation for the army:

- In the weeks the students are at the mechina (and not traveling) there are 3 sessions a week

of physical training.

- Sport day held in each group separately, then for all three groups, and then as part of the sport championship for all mechinot in Israel.
- Army Panel held with graduates who are now soldiers in different positions to discuss the possibilities, held twice a year.
- Navigation and topography day and night field trips.
- Tours to different army bases around the country.
- Lessons on the spirit and values of the IDF.
- Battle heritage in class or on field trips to different parts of the country.
- Lessons on Israeli wars and the combat doctrine of the IDF.

2) We held two memorial days for our two graduates who fell in combat, Moran Vardi alumni of the 1st year at Nachshon and Ran Hendifer alumni of the 5th year at Nachshon.

3) The mechina location in the north of the Negev area allows us to hold a wide range of community activities during the year on a regular basis and on special occasions. All three groups volunteer in the community during the year on a permanent basis in places such as: elderly homes, youth clubs, absorption centers, children centers, with holocaust survivors and more. Also during the year a week before Passover each group holds a camp for children from broken homes (two locations in Kiryat Gat, and one in Sderot).

During this last summer, July and August of 2014, due to the "Zuk Eitan" army operation we had an opportunity to volunteer at all of our regular places, also during a national time of need and crisis. This was done thanks to the help of our new graduates from the last year and many more from previous years who joined as well. This was a very meaningful experience for our students who got to feel what significant donating is all about.

4) Activities with our alumni: Nachshon now has over 1,200 graduates all over the country, who divide into several smaller groups of interest. Some enjoy coming back to the mechina and assisting with guiding navigation trips, participating in army panels, giving lessons in class. Some enjoy studying evening we hold on different subjects, some gather as a retuning entire group to hold a joint Shabbat with the current year of students. The older alumni, who are well over their thirties, contribute with a monthly donation which helps cover the mechina activities. We also hold several large activities during the year for the alumni such as the mechina birthday, Yom Kippur at the metzuda and more. We have an alumni coordinator in charge of the connection with everyone and organizing the activities, and the important thing is that each and every one can find what suits them best and how they would like to remain in contact with Nachshon and still feel the Nachshon spirit even after years away.

5) The lesson specification will appear separately as PDF file as requested.

Evaluation

1) Ongoing feedback surveys during the school year (at the end of each and every day) and at the end of the program, asking about the counselors, the lecturers, the subjects learned and more. Thus enabling us to make necessary adjustments as we go along and not only by default. During the past year we managed to stay in control on a daily basis and we made changes involving teachers, changing lessons who were rated poorly by the students and adding new ideas and issues to the curriculum. Also, we learned from our experience which travel weeks needed to be altered due to weather changes (for example the 'Golan week' was moved from the beginning of the year till the 9th week of the mechina, and instead the 'Judean desert' week was held early in October). Also we had a change due to the security mode in Israel, and had to cancel a joint day for all three groups planed originally to be held in

Sderot. Another change to the original calendar of activities, all three groups voted on staying in for the Shavuot holiday.

2) Monitoring alumni's military service, to determine rates of enrolment and of filling meaningful positions (officers and commanders) etc: this was done mainly by our alumni coordinator, and if need be the heads of the mechina can assist with the relevant department in the army/or ministry of defense.

3) Ongoing assessment of educational program by Amuta leadership: the Amuta members receive reports each meeting and are able to be a part of the ongoing evaluation process. Moreover, some of the Amuta members join in on travel weeks/ and give lessons on a regular basis and so they are able to meet with the students and the staff on a regular basis and give their input and contribution to the program.

4) Extensive alumni activity - enabling alumni inputs and participation in program curriculum, as well as providing support for alumni endeavors in bringing their personal "Nachshon" visions into fruition.

Others

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

1) To continue and stick to our goals:

- Running three mechina groups in three separate locations but under one educational and administrative roof.
- Connecting the Israeli youth with Jewish youth from abroad done mostly by our special program for the participation of students from abroad (last year 2014 we had 6 and this year 2015 we have 8).
- Connecting the mechina groups and their surrounding communities.
- Improving our connection with our alumni.

2) Every year we engage in the recruiting of students for the next year. During the past year 2013-2014 we engaged in the following activities in order to recruit the current year of students:

- Open days at the mechina inviting nominees to take part in lessons and observe life as a student.
- Open Shabbat for nominees.
- Personal interviews for nominees held with a staff member and a student at the mechina.
- Meeting with the nominees parents of all three groups (during the month of May every year).
- Team building field trip for two days for the nominees to get to know each other (also during May).
- Seminar abroad for nominees from the US (by Gilad Olshtein the head of the mechina usually during March).
- Team building day in the summer close to the beginning of the mechina year.
- A week before the mechina actually starts the students come for a day at the actual facilities to get adjusted.

3) With the help of our coordinator to continue and hold the current successful activities for the alumni and to develop more ways in which we can reach out to those who are not yet involved. A new initiative established in order to assist with this is a program called 'the devoted trustee of the year...' – each year at Nachshon has a devoted alumni or two who are in charge of the connection with his/her group, thus enabling us to be in better and closer contact with more people and to learn from them directly what it is that interests them and the ways in which they would like to be more involved.

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