

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: Tzahali Academy

Year: 2019-20 5780

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

Name of the Program: Tzahali Academy

Year of activity: 2019-20 (5780)

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Number of active participants in the program: 65 young women graduates of religious high schools

Estimated number of impacted participants: About 1000 people when include the families of the participants, the residents of Kibbutz Ein Tzurim, the families that the young women volunteered with during the year, participants of other Mechinot that Tzahali met with, Tzahali alumni and potential participants, and their peers at Midreshet Roni, in the army, sherut leumi, and other walks of life..

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

Tzahali as a program is now on break. The fourteenth year ended at the beginning of July (extended slightly because of the corona pandemic) and year fifteen will begin at the beginning of September. The 65 participants are getting ready to join the Israeli army, better prepared, with greater motivation, and a better understanding of whom they are and their mission. The staff is spending this season (July and August) reviewing and evaluating the year, planning for the upcoming year based on what they learned from the review and evaluation, and training new staff. They are also taking some vacation time after finishing an intense and successful year. Dealing with the coronavirus, as mentioned later, added to both the intensity and the success. There will be about 67 young women starting the 15th year of the Mechina on September 1.

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

As in every year since Tzahali was founded fourteen years ago, the year was extremely busy; complete with all types of activities, experiences, and leadership opportunities as well as personal, social, group, and educational challenges.

The 65 participants opened the year in Elul with an evening of spiritual and emotionally rich Slichot. On Hashanah Raba night Tzahali participants and alumni

attended an evening of learning together at Masu'ot Yitzchak in memory of Tamar Ariel Z"L. During the year, the regular learning included Torah, Halacha, Midrash, Chasidut, Talmud, Prayer, and Jewish Philosophy.

Learning at Tzahali also occurs beyond the walls of the Beit Midrash and what is written in books. An important and unique educational feature of the mechina is the emphasis on "group living". Each participant is part of a group, which sustains independent group life. They live in their own dormitory; have their own kitchen and dining hall, educational staff, and classrooms. Each student is active within her group and together (taking turns and in teams) they are responsible for running the kitchen, buying the food, preparing the meals, cleaning, planning and implementing social activities for themselves and the kibbutz, as well as Shabbat and special activities.

Much thought and time is spent teaching skills of conversation (sensitive talking and empathetic listening) and the skills needed for successful group living. Each person reflects on her own values leading to both personal and group growth. These skills and experiences are very important for today's high school graduates to learn, especially as preparation for army service.

Once a week the young women volunteered in the area. This year the focus was in Kiryat Gat where the students worked with families who have children with special needs, on two moshavim in the Lachish area and on Kibbutz Ein Tzurim where they worked with senior citizens. In addition to weekly volunteering, they participated in special volunteer activities including; International Cleaning Day and Good Deeds Day. Of course, these volunteer efforts ended with the outbreak of corona.

Tzahali students learned about Israeli society and its challenges both in the classroom and through meeting a wide variety of people during educational experiential excursions (סדרות). During these three-day trips, the students travelled to and experienced different areas in Israel. They learned about the area, the people living there, and its history. Additionally, they discussed its Zionist connection, how social activists there are striving to make life better, their successes and challenges. Three of the trips were to the Negev, Tel-Aviv, Judea and Samaria. The 4th trip that was supposed to be to Jerusalem, because of the corona, was done virtually.

At the end of November, there was a special evening of intergenerational learning of parents and their daughters. The students informed their parents about how their year at Tzahali was going followed by learning in Chevruta with their parents. The evening finished with a sheur given by a Tzahali tejacher. Prior to each Chag they learned about the Holiday and organized a special program. Prior to Chanukah and Purim, the students organized an activities fair for the children of the kibbutz.

In preparation for the army, the students had a number of special workshops including one about suicide prevention and choosing life and another about sexual harassment. In addition, they heard lectures about battle legacy (מורשת קרב) and had discussions with army officers about the importance of army service and different army roles and assignments. The students also received spiritual and Halachic preparation for army service from the teachers at Tzahali.

During the year, the young women spent ten Shabbatot at the Mechina including Shabbat Shuva before Yom Kippur and Shabbat Zachor before Purim. On Purim

there was a megillah reading; a number of the students read a Chapter (פרק) from the Megillah for their peers followed by joyous dancing.

Just like everyone else, we were surprised by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. We had just completed a powerful experience on Purim night (March 9) and the students went home the following day to celebrate part of the Holiday and a long weekend with their parents. Instead of returning to Tzahali the following Sunday, they returned in mid-May. We were able to start teaching through Zoom so remote learning started almost immediately. In addition to learning by Zoom, students started volunteering in small groups (capsulot) in agriculture and with the Home Command. Other students volunteered near their homes

Like other Mechinot, the participants returned to campus in mid-May. Even though we were following the instructions of the Ministry of Health, (dividing the students in capsulot) all of us had concerns. We were overjoyed that all the students returned with a tremendous amount of motivation. This led to an incredible experience during the last two months of the program. This period brought greater group cohesion and the time was used effectively for continued growth and preparation for their drafting into the Israel Defense Forces.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):

Please refer to the separate Evaluation Report

Provisional guidelines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

There will be about 67 young women starting the 15th year of the Mechina on September 1.

During this upcoming year, Tzahali Academy will continue to be an intensive experience. The participants will be involved in multiple areas of study and immersion including:

- In-depth, existential and relevant Jewish Studies
- Preparing themselves emotionally, mentally, and physically for meaningful army service.
- Understanding Israeli society through meaningful dialogue with its different groups including four multiple day educational excursions to different areas in Israel
- Volunteer community social action activity

The participants are responsible for their daily schedule and prepare special programming including the "excursion/trips."