

Toronto-area teens attend largest BBYO international convention in Dallas

TORONTO – More than a foot of snow couldn't stop 10 Toronto-area teens from joining about 800 of the world's leading Jewish communal thinkers – all 18 years of age or younger – from gathering in Dallas recently for BBYO's largest International Convention (IC) in its 85-year history.

BBYO has been hosting International Conventions since 1924, setting the course for the coming year, determining strategies for strengthening BBYO as a youth-led movement and connecting teens to the Jewish community at large. This was BBYO's most "international" convention in years, bringing together Jewish teens from North America, Bulgaria, Serbia, France, the United Kingdom, Israel and more.

With a convention theme entitled, *Dream Big. Act Bigger*, participants set their focus on making a difference in the world immediately.

The weekend was originally headlined by the Day of Service, in which teen participants would disperse throughout Dallas to more than two dozen service sites, but plans changed due to inclement weather. Instead, the teens participated in an advocacy simulation, choosing an issue of importance about which to lobby 'Congress' and then find out whether they were success-



Nineteen Canadian delegates, who travelled from Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton, were among 800 teens from eight countries attending the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization's International Convention in Dallas, Texas.

ful. The Day of Service was framed with Jewish serving, learning and skill-building sessions on creating social change through community organizing, coalition building, philanthropy and community service.

"IC changed my life completely," said Toronto's Jesse Freedman. "Because of it my passion for BBYO and my Jewish identity has increased by immeasurable amounts. I can't even choose a highlight because no particular

part was better than the rest. Every program at IC simply added to the already immense impact BBYO has had on my life."

Features of the weekend included a Shabbat song ses-

sion, more than 30 different Jewish educational workshops throughout the day and multiple services to choose from, allowing the teen participants to customize their own Jewish experience; an address by keynote

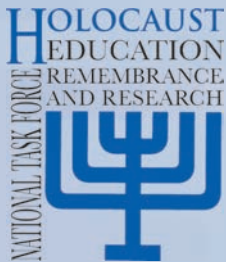
speaker, Israeli-based communications consultant and author Neal Lazarus, who encouraged young people to visit Israel and a 'Think Pink' gala to raise awareness for breast cancer.

"Uniting so many teens was really inspiring. By the end of the weekend, the teens really demonstrated an understanding of how powerful they can be as a group, and were able to envision how they can create real change in the world," explained Kevin Goodman, program director at BBYO.

In addition, the Toronto-area delegation was presented with the prestigious Max F. Baer International Spirit Cup in recognition of their regional *ruacb* (spirit) displayed through cheering, participation, cooperation and spirit clothing.

"This was the second year that I attended IC, and I can honestly say that the experience just reaffirms my love for BBYO," said Michelle Covant, Regional *N'siab* (president). "Winning the Spirit Cup was such an exciting moment for all of us and really serves as recognition of a year of tremendous local growth."

For more information about BBYO in the Toronto area, contact Kevin Goodman, regional program director, at kgoodman@bbyo.ca or (416) 398-2004 ext 222.



B'nai Brith Canada is pleased to announce the participation of eight eminent Canadian scholars, who will be undertaking original research on the St. Louis Era for a special publication of the

National Task Force on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research

Professor Doris Bergen

Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Professor of Holocaust Studies, Department of History, University of Toronto

Professor Amanda Gzyb

Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario

Professor Richard Menkis

Department of History, University of British Columbia

Professor Harold Troper

Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, OISE/University of Toronto

Professor Michael Brown

Department of Languages, Literature and Linguistics, York University

Professor Rebecca Margolis

Department of Classics and Religious Studies, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Institute of Canadian Studies, University of Ottawa

Professor Norm Ravvin

Department of Religion; Chair, Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies, Concordia University

Professor James Walker

Department of History, University of Waterloo

The Task Force operates under the auspices of B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights, linking scholars, legal experts and educators with Holocaust survivors and community stakeholders, in an effort to share and enhance important Holocaust-era research and educational initiatives underway throughout Canada. The Task Force is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) through its Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP).

If you have any recollections or personal experiences relating to this troubled time in Canada's history, when Jewish refugees desperately trying to escape the Nazi death machine were refused sanctuary in this country, please contact the Task Force at info@holocaustbbctaskforce.ca or call (416) 633-6224 ext. 122.

For more information, go to www.holocaustbbctaskforce.ca