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3rd of Kislev, 5772

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Shabbat times for Toronto

Candle lighting: **4:24pm** on Friday, 02 Dec 2011
This week's Torah portion is Parashat Vayetzai
Havdalah (45 min): **5:27pm** on Saturday, 03 Dec 2011

[Shabbat times for Montreal](#)

BBYO members attend summit about equality

Frances Kraft, Staff Reporter, Thursday, December 1, 2011

Tags: BBYO News



From left are Joey Harendorf, Benji Fages and Jesse Freedman, who took part in the BBYO Panim Institute's teen summit on equality in Boston.

“So many times, the Jewish people have been shown inequality,” he noted. “It’s very important that we show our interest in learning how to become better citizens, and learning about equality.”

TORONTO — Three Toronto-area teenagers returned recently from Boston, where they spent three days learning about equality issues.

Benjamin Fages – a 16-year-old Grade 11 student at the Anne and Max Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto’s Kimel Family Education Centre in Thornhill, Ont. – said he thinks the conference was important.

Fages, Jesse Freedman and Joey Harendorf – all members of B’nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO) – were the only Canadians among 85 Jewish teens who took part in One For All: A Jewish Teen Issue Summit on Equality. The program, which ran from Nov. 13 to 15, was offered by the BBYO Panim Institute in partnership with five other organizations including Facing History and Ourselves, which fights racism and antisemitism, and Keshet, an advocacy group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Jews.

The summit was geared for high school students who have shown a commitment to leadership and service, and was created as a response to bullying among today’s youth, according to a BBYO news release. It addressed equality issues surrounding race, religion, ability, class, gender and sexuality.

Fages, who has focused his social action efforts on Israel advocacy, said he believes it’s important for him to show his support for equality issues too.

He added that the summit opened his eyes “way more” toward people with disabilities, and he also became more informed on gay and transgender issues.

Freedman – regional vice-president and immediate past president of BBYO’s Lake Ontario region – said that, for some young people, the word “gay” has become a synonym for “bad”... When someone says, ‘That’s so gay, tell them, No, it’s actually not.’ ”

The 17-year-old Grade 12 student at Crestwood College is intrigued primarily by the political philosophy underlying equality issues. “These problems aren’t ones we’re going to solve at a three-day summit. We’re going to be struggling with them our whole lives, but [the summit] did give me interesting perspectives on society and equality.”

While in Boston, Fages also met for the first time with a new national group that he is co-chairing, the Coalition of Jewish Teens (CJT). The group brings together members of North American Federation of Temple Youth, the Zionist youth group Young Judaea and BBYO – and “hopefully in the future United Synagogue Youth and NCSY.

“We’d like to create a coalition of the leadership from different groups, so we can connect Jewish youth regardless of where they are on the spectrum,” said Fages, who sits on his school’s student council.

Harendorf, 16, a Grade 11 student at Westmount Collegiate Institute in Thornhill, attended the summit to learn how to inform others about equality and what to do if he comes across a situation that needs to be addressed, without using derogatory language.

The Toronto regional BBYO vice-president and head of programming will be one of the people running an equality program at BBYO’s upcoming Lake Ontario region convention Dec. 9 to 11.

The summit “was a great experience,” Harendorf said. “I learned a lot, and it inspired me.”