

May 27, 2016

Emerging, veteran leaders see ‘new light’

Tanzman fellows learn the ropes on federation mission to Israel

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For some who had been to Israel many times in the past, participants on a recent visit there had the chance to see the country in a whole new light and learn how their community helps in more ways than they ever imagined.

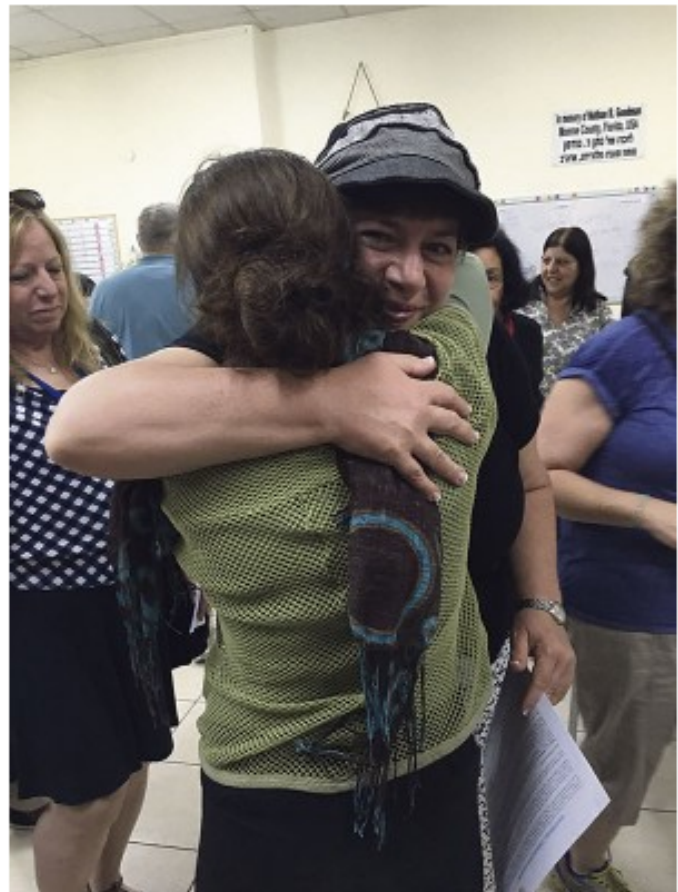
On the May 8-15 Tanzman and Leadership Mission, veteran leaders of the Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ traveled with up-and-coming leaders as they experienced Yom Hazikaron, Israel’s Memorial Day, and Yom Ha’atzmaut, Independence Day, together.

The joint mission with the Marion and Norman Tanzman Fellows — community members being groomed as future leaders — was designed to engage them “wholly and completely,” said Laura Safran, the federation’s director of community impact.

Seven of the eight fellows, all women — one had a family emergency — visited sites both with the leaders and by themselves.

The Tanzman program is designed to hone such skills as communication and strategic planning and impart a broad perspective of the community’s history and issues and the roles of its agencies. Safran noted most of the women already had a connection to Israel, including two who had previously lived there, and half of them speak Hebrew.

“They were already extremely devoted to the country,” she said, “so it was not a simple challenge to get them to see another side of the land and a way to connect with the people.”



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Tanzman fellow Cheryl Minkoff hugs a client of Amit Shikum, a federation-funded project that provides vocational rehabilitation to mentally ill people, in Nazereth.

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Federation first vice president Jeffrey Schwartz of Monmouth Junction said that although he had been to Israel many times, this was his first federation mission.

"I was very impressed by the money our federation gives to Israel" and what those funds accomplish, he said. "I enjoyed all the different events as well as meeting the people who run the programs and the clients. It added an emotional connection to what we do in Israel."

He said he was also taken with the Tanzman fellows; they had many lively discussions reviewing ongoing programs in which the future leaders shared their view of federation efforts and learned from the veteran leaders about funding structures and strategic planning.

To help them forge a connection, the fellows visited the sites of a number of federation-funded programs, such as Amit Shikum in Nazareth, part of the "Clubhouse" movement in Israel, which receives \$15,000 to provide vocational rehabilitation to reintegrate mentally ill people into society, and Bridge for Youth in Tel Aviv, which receives \$10,000 to help youth at risk of becoming high school dropouts.

The fellows were on their own when they accompanied counselors from Crossroads — an agency that works with teens living on the street — for a late-night run in Jerusalem to meet with some of those young people, many of them Americans with substance abuse problems. Crossroads receives \$20,000 from federation.

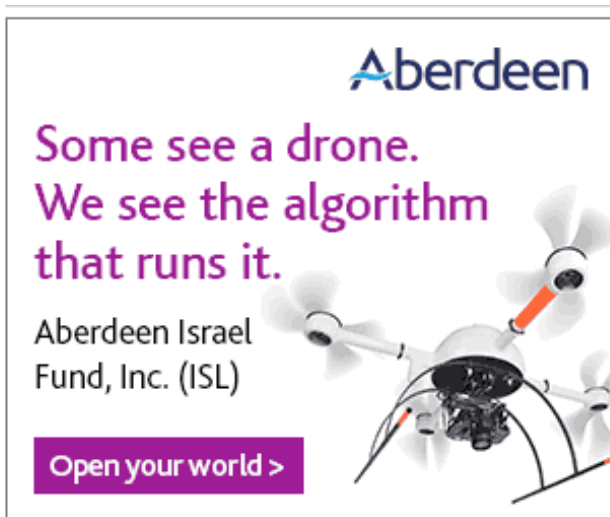
Safran said that among the experiences that illustrated the complexity of life in Israel was a meeting with Rabbi Seth Farber, executive director of ITIM, an organization that helps Israelis navigate the complexities of Jewish law in regard to issues like conversion, marriage, and divorce. The visitors, said Safran, were moved by Farber's "optimism and fierce passion to contribute to positive and significant encounters with Jewish life."

For Tanzman fellow Bonnie Leff of Manalapan, the trip provided a chance to see Israel "through a different lens, as a melting-pot society."

"There are a lot of problems," she said. "When we as Americans think about Israel's problems, we think about the Palestinians and going to war, but there are a lot of other problems with children and families. Every time we visited another agency, my eyes were thrown wide open."

Leff was struck by how similar many of the problems were to those in American society. "I had no idea there were high school students living on the street or at risk for failing," she said.

"They also have refugees coming across the border who are living in hovels with their babies, and they don't have enough food or diapers," she said. "We found Israel is a country like other countries."



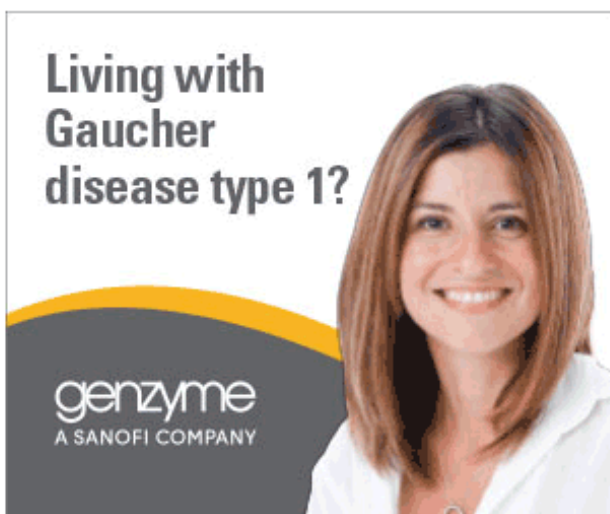
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