

Graffiti for a good cause at UNLV Hillel

Three world famous graffiti artists recently descended on UNLV's campus for the largest pro-Israel advocacy event in the school's history. During the all day event on Monday, February 24th, the artists painted a mural on a ten foot tall, plywood wall on UNLV's North Field. The mural featured UNLV's mascot, Hey Reb, in an inspiring message about Israel. The occasion was hosted by The Hillel Jewish Student Center and Students For Israel, a program of the Jewish Federation of Las Vegas. It marked the first event for the UNLV Students for Israel group since being reestablished earlier this semester.

"The artists, who have all travelled extensively in Israel, showed students how to paint their own messages and spoke about their personal experiences with the country, while some of the students shared stories of their own trips to Israel," commented Andrew Spivak, Director of The Hillel Jewish Student Center at UNLV. "It was a unique and meaningful experience and I am thrilled that we were able to bring the program to Las Vegas."

"The Artists for Israel program on campus was so awesome that I went home and registered for the Nevada Community Birthright Israel trip this summer," noted Connor Zwerg, a sophomore from Las Vegas. The Nevada Community Birthright Israel trip will give two groups of 40 young adults, ages 18-26, an opportunity for a free trip to Israel this summer, a gift from the Birthright Israel foundation and the Jewish Federation of Las Vegas.

The organization that arranged the demonstration, Artists4Israel, is a non-profit group that uses various types of media to inform the public of Israel's beauty and support of art. The graffiti program has been performed on over fifteen college campuses around the country since Artists4Israel was founded in 2009.

"This program transcends politics to talk to students about Israel in a fun, interactive way," explained Spivak.

The event featured music and Israeli food. All students who participated in the activities received cards with positive facts about the state of Israel. Students could also create a custom graffiti t-shirt with the artists. Although Hillel students organized the event, it was open to all, so many who stopped to see the art had never before had any connection to Israeli culture.

"Our goal was to show students the beautiful sides of Israel from tolerance to art and freedom of speech for all," commented Udi Hager, the Israeli Fellow at UNLV. "We are proud that hundreds of students were exposed to these great sides of Israel during the event."

"This was a great way to engage hundreds of students on campus and create allies for Israel," commented Robert Scholes, a UNLV freshman from Las Vegas. "Even some of my friends who only had time to look at the wall and grab a flyer between classes will have positive memories of the art and Israel."

In addition to students, members of UNLV staff and faculty members joined the festivities, and twelve students from the Adelson Educational Campus took a field trip to see the art project. The event was also sponsored by CSUN, the UNLV student government. In a recent meeting, the twenty members of the student senate voted unanimously to grant \$1,500 towards the program.

Hillel at UNLV also received grants from Stand With Us and The Israel on Campus Coalition. The Jewish Federation of Las Vegas and private donations generously covered additional costs. If you are interested in getting involved in the Hillel Jewish Student Center at UNLV or want more information about the Nevada Birthright Israel trip this summer, please contact Andrew Spivak, Director of Hillel, at andrew.spivak@jewishlasvegas.com or 702 355 5695.