

CTEEN EAST VALLEY

Donor Appreciation Report



The nine teens that participated in the CTeen University Summer Course.

JUDAISM MEETS PADLET!

Bryce Raizes, Bay Area, CA

When Coronavirus hit, I had never been to a CTeen event. I live in California, and was visiting family in Arizona when I first heard about a Zoom virtual event. I was interested so I joined to see what it would be like. It's been a joyride since then. All the other teens have been so fun and welcoming to me and made me feel like part of a family, even if it was through a Zoom screen. I now feel so much more connected to Judaism, but more importantly, Judaism is FUN to me now!

One moment that stands out among the others was the get-to-know-you-padlet game. Padlet is an online note sharing portal. Each of us shared a statement about ourselves and then needed to guess who the other statements were about. It was hilarious and gave me so much insight in to the other teens personal lives.

CTeen, thank you for making me feel like family in these crazy, socially-distanced times! And thank you for helping me do more Mitzvot, so I can help make my community a better place.

INSIDE:

- My Shoe Story - 2
- The Chanukah Miracle - 3
- CTeen University - 4

IT ALL STARTED WITH A SHOE...

Hunter Quick - Perry High School

Hi, my name is Hunter. My CTeen story starts not too long ago. Unlike my peers, I didn't know about the club until my senior year in High School. It all began with the shoe game. It sounds crazy, so let's start from the beginning.

Originally from Russia, my family is not religious, my Jewishness stretches as far as munching on a box of Matzah from Fry's (the flavored kind of course!). I'd been to synagogue once before but it had been pretty boring. Halfway through my senior year of high school I hear about this Kosher Food Club. The only reason I knew about the club was because I was a teacher's assistant in the classroom where it was held, once every two weeks. I figured that I'm already in the classroom, so instead of leaving for break, I'll just stay and try it out, nothing much will happen, right? Or so I thought. The Kosher Food Club, or as it was nicknamed, KFC, was actually quite fun and the students in it were kinda cool. Yet while I did participate, I kept mostly to myself so no one knew I was Jewish... until the shoe game.

During one of the club meets, while we're all munching on great food, Rabbi T announces for everyone to throw one of their shoes in the middle and then grab someone else's shoe. In order to get your shoe back from whoever grabbed your shoe, you need to answer a question they ask about themselves. It just so happens that I had grabbed Rabbi T's shoe. He needs it back. But first, he's gotta answer my question. Off the top of my head I ask, "Am I Jewish?" He pauses, thinks and says with a trace of uncertainty, "Yes?" Rabbi T got his shoe back and the rest as they say is history.

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Rabbi T got his shoe back and the rest as they say is history.

Soon after I joined the extra-curricular club Thursday meets. The first thing I noticed was how everyone was friends and so accepting of new people, like myself. I started to feel like I had found a warm family of friends. This was very important to me, because at Perry High School there had been a few uncomfortable cases of hate crimes. Swastikas were found outside the school and one boy dressed up as Hitler. Being part of the CTeen club made me feel included, safe, normal. I knew that I have a place where I will always be welcomed and have a common denominator we all share, our proud Jewish roots. When we put up a menorah in our school for the first time and I showed the picture to my mom and aunt, they were so proud!



Here's Hunter proudly wrapping Tefillin and praying!

Later, I joined the International Shabbaton in New York City, it was so cool to see what Jewish life is in the "shtetl"! Most of my friends back home were Christian, so finding a community who I could connect with Jewishly and who accepted me for just the way I am was just incredible.

This past Summer I joined CTeen University, a college level course in Jewish basics offered by our club, and it taught me so much. I had never read Torah before and learning somehow made me feel more Jewish and helped explain why we do things, not just what we do.

And to think that it all started because of my shoe...

THE MIRACLE OF CHANUKAH IN PERRY HIGH



The Kasher Food Club and the proud Menorah of Perry HS! Reut is at the bottom in the yellow and gray shirt.

Reut Ben-Ezer founded the Kasher Food Club at Perry High School, a weekly club where students meet other Jewish students, have Jewish discussions and best of all, eat delicious Kosher food! For the first time ever, Perry High School proudly displayed a 6 foot Menorah this past Chanukah. Here's the inside story.

How did it all begin?

I'm part of a club that plans the school assemblies. We were charged with preparing for the huge holiday show and we prepared a lot of holiday decorations yet no Chanukah decorations. I was really upset about this. There's plenty of Christmas trees, yet not a single Menorah.

Not cool. So what happened?

My friend Menny, he's not Jewish but we call him an honorary Jew because he knows like everything about being Jewish, he asks me how to write the Hebrew words Chanukah Sameach, and he draws up these really nice Chanukah signs! A few days later I find out that they didn't put them up with the rest of the decorations. They said that the signs had been lost, which made me even more upset.

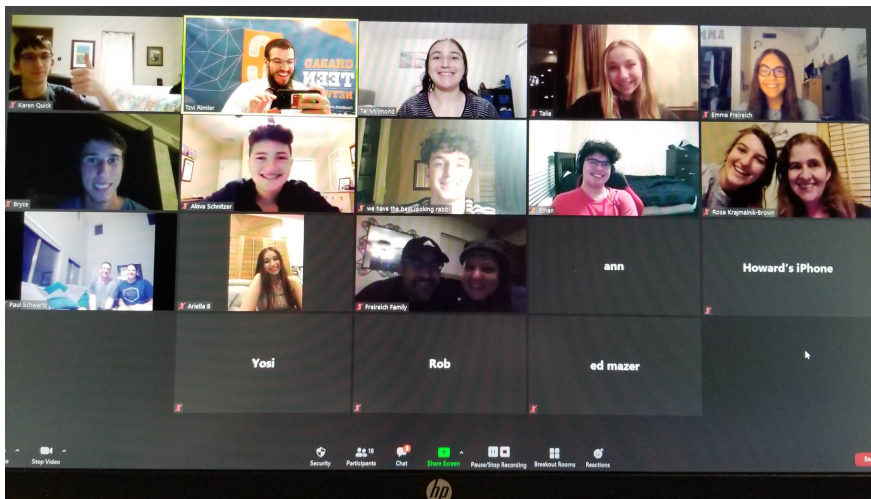
Oy! That must have made you feel terrible! What did you do about it?

So I went to Mr Ames, the Assistant Principal for Activities, and I just told him exactly how I feel. I tell him that I just don't get it, why couldn't we have our own part in the celebration, we want a menorah to represent us too! And just like that, he said sure!

Wow! That sure takes a lot of guts! Good on you for speaking up!

I felt so relieved and happy. A Menorah in Perry! Together with Rabbi T and the students at Kasher Food Club we built the Menorah and when I asked the school where to put it, they told us to stand it up right in the main lobby as you walk in! The proudest Perry Menorah!

I heard lots of people commenting on how they saw the Menorah and how cool it looked. Everyone was very supportive! And of course they all saw it as they walked in each morning. At the end of the year our Menorah even made it in the school yearbook!



- Teens and parents at the CTeen University Zoom Celebration

For 7 weeks, 9 teenagers used their free time to take a summer course in Judaism and earned 2 college credits. Thanks to support from many of you, even teens that couldn't afford the course were able to participate. Here's what they had to say.

CTEEN UNIVERSITY

“ Talia Breyer

I learned so much about judaism and had so much fun along the way, and... I love CTeen University!

“ Eden Millmond

My favorite lesson of all was learning about our day of rest, Shabbat. It taught me to stop and appreciate all that G-D does for us.

“ Hunter Quick

This course taught me how every mitzvah, no matter how large or small, makes a huge contribution to anywhere I am in the world.

“ Ethan Schwartz

My favorite class is the one about Kosher. it was so interesting to learn how even food could be special.

“ Tal Millmond

I get to learn about who you really are and how you can contribute to the world.

“ Emma Freireich

One thing I love about CTeen University is that I get to connect with my faith while I connect with my friends.

“ Akiva Schnitzer

Here's something that left me mindblown: We learned that when you give Tzedakah (charity), you're actually getting more than you give! Wow!