

ORTHODOX UNION

NJ NCSY IS HOT ON THE TRAIL OF DISASTER RELIEF THIS OCTOBER

OU Staff

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Disaster Relief 101, once again this semester, will be an unofficial elective course for New Jersey students in yeshiva and public high schools, under the auspices of New Jersey NCSY. Rabbi Ethan Katz, Assistant Director of the Region, based in Teaneck, will be leading two missions of gallant teens this October to Buffalo, NY from Wednesday, October 6-Sunday, October 10, and to Nashville, TN from Wednesday, October 20-Sunday, October 24. The purpose of both trips will be to provide physical support to help rebuilding efforts in the cities and spiritual support to their local Jewish communities.

This is the fourth year Rabbi Katz has been leading leadership missions in humanitarian aid and Jewish values. The teenagers come together from across the state to exemplify that acts of kindness can bridge Jews of all backgrounds, while reaching out to help non-Jews as well.

NCSY is the international youth program of the Orthodox Union. Its New Jersey Region leads the way nationally in sending out these humanitarian missions to locations far from home.

Participating students on both trips this Fall come from the Jewish Educational Center and Bruria High School in Elizabeth; Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School in Livingston; Torah Academy of Bergen County (TABCO) in Teaneck; Maayanot Girls High School in Teaneck; Bat Torah-The Alisa M. Flatow Yeshiva High School in Paramus; Teaneck High School; Fairlawn High School; and Northern Highlands High School. More schools are expected to be added before the missions depart.

Rabbi Yaakov Glasser, Regional Director of New Jersey NCSY, declared, “Our chessed (acts of loving kindness) missions and tikkun olam (making the world a better place) trips empower Jewish teens to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the world around them. We are providing the only program that brings together Jewish teens from across the spectrum of affiliation with the common experience of giving of themselves. For many of our parents, fighting for Soviet Jewry and activism for other causes was formative in the development of their Jewish identity. These trips afford Jewish teens the opportunity to make a real difference in the world around them.”

Declared Rabbi Katz, “We are taking the brightest and most determined Jewish teenagers and we are empowering them with the experiences of what it means to live our lives as Jews. We have a responsibility to help others in need — Jews and non-Jews alike — and to make this world better than the day before. These students are not afraid to get down-and-dirty to help strangers or to share their joy of Torah in distant Jewish communities.”

Back by popular demand, Rabbi Katz and his proactive team of teens will be heading up to Buffalo, as they partner with Habitat for Humanity to rebuild housing stock within the deprived neighborhoods of the city. After a warm welcome last year, the teens decided to return up north to add a burst of sunshine at the Jewish community amidst the cooling weather with special programming at the local Jewish day school, and a visit to the Jewish nursing home. Additionally, they will be creating a special Shabbaton for public school students involved with Jewish Student Union (JSU) clubs and chapters of the Upstate New York NCSY Region.

Ten students from TABC and five public high schools will be hopping a plane to Nashville to help rebuild from the flood last May in which more than 100,000 homes were destroyed. The trip is coordinated with Nechama: Jewish Disaster Relief, an organization that provides direct support to communities recovering from natural disasters. The team will spend that Shabbat with the families of Congregation Sherith Israel, an OU-Member shul in Nashville.

“When it comes down to it, we will go where we are needed the most,” said Rabbi Katz.

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