



**NCSU**

**RELIEF  
MISSIONS**

LEARNING THROUGH SERVICE

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## Dear Friends,

I began my 20 years of service as a paratrooper in the IDF in 1984 and very quickly came to understand that Israel's mandatory military service has, in a large part, helped make Israel the global powerhouse it is today. That experience in the service of country is of immeasurable value. Learning through service is an education unlike any other.

And like the IDF experience, it's impossible to overemphasize the impact NCSY's relief missions have on their teen volunteers as well as on the ravaged communities they serve. I still see the tearful thank you the Minnesotan brothers gave the NCSY volunteers for saving their elderly father's life. NCSY teens had repaired their father's furnace before an impending snowstorm, making it possible for him to stay in his home. When another one of our groups returned a year later, the brothers embraced them, welcoming back the "Jewish group from New Jersey."

The sense of purpose and satisfaction teens feel when giving to others in many ways makes them the true beneficiaries of these missions. I have been awed and inspired at seeing the hearts and minds of Jewish teens transformed when given the opportunity to live Jewish values. They return infused with a sense of purpose and often take on leadership roles in their own communities. Many point to the mission experience as the reason they are teaching in Jewish schools today.

When I led the first mission to New Orleans in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina, I could never have imagined that over the next fifteen years we would run over 100 missions with more than 1,800 teens to places like Texas, New Orleans, and Puerto Rico and partner with stellar organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Repair The World.

Today, with the establishment of the NCSY Relief Missions division, I am proud to carry on the tradition I was part of in the IDF. With this new venture, NCSY will be able to expand the opportunity for more Jewish teens to help more people heal after a natural disaster.

We're just getting started and we hope you'll join us on this life-changing journey.

*Ethan Katz*

Rabbi Ethan Katz  
Director, NCSY Relief Missions  
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## **NCSY Relief Missions are transformative volunteer experiences that empower teens to make an impact and contribute to something bigger than themselves.**

Through these relief missions, teens gain a new perspective, connect to the Jewish value of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), and experience a newfound desire to help those in need by being taken out of their comfort zones and placed on the front lines in the aftermath of natural disasters.

## **NCSY's first relief mission dates back to 2005, after Hurricane Katrina struck Louisiana.**

Since then, NCSY has run more than one hundred missions, with more than 1,800 students volunteering in disaster-stricken areas like Minnesota, North Carolina, and Texas. In 2017, NCSY teens were on the first flight to Houston after Hurricane Harvey. Today, NCSY's Ready Teams—teens who have been trained and prepared to deploy on short notice—are often the go-to resource for many relief organizations including Habitat for Humanity and Repair The World.

We envision a future in which relief missions become an integral part of all Jewish day school curricula, serving as the principal training ground for the next generation of Jewish community leaders.

This coming year, NCSY Relief Missions will expand from twenty to thirty missions, broaden the volunteer base to teens from NCSY's eleven regions in North America, and increase the base of organizations partnering with us.

## **NCSY prepares Ready Teams to be on standby for when natural disasters strike.**

Ready Team Mission Preparation is an area of the relief missions program that prepares groups of 10-15 teens for missions. Teens who are part of these groups receive extensive training in planning, logistics, and team leadership, as well as preparation for working with victims.

After disaster strikes, the Ready Team is mobilized to hit the ground running during the most critical time, providing immediate relief.

Ready Teams meet throughout the year to maintain an awareness of what it means to provide service to others by learning about Jewish attitudes towards helping those in need and why Israel is the number one responder to natural disasters. The teens also develop expertise in a multitude of areas including logistics management for setting up an on-the-ground base.

In addition to the critical support Ready Teams offer, the teens themselves are often the most impacted after seeing the enormous difference they've made in disaster-stricken communities.

# NCSY has run over 100 missions to over 20 different locations across America.



## RELIEF MISSION GOALS



**1** Developing leadership skills and instilling a genuine passion for volunteering in their own communities and around the world.



**2** Increasing awareness and compassion for those less fortunate while deepening their appreciation for their own lives.



**3** Strengthening their Jewish identity and connection to Jewish values through an immersive, hands-on experience of *tikkun olam*, as well as follow-up activities.



# IN THE WORDS OF OUR TEENS



"This is definitely a trip that I will never forget. It was the perfect balance of fun activities, helping others, and experiencing new cultures. I would do anything to go on this trip again, and be with the same group of amazing people that I met during these few days."  
—Julia Neuwirth



"I gained a greater appreciation for *chedsed* work. I now think about my actions in a whole new way and reflect on what I can do to make the world a better place."  
—Evan Hainn

"It's hard to describe this trip because it was so amazing and meaningful. Doing *chedsed* over the trip makes you realize how much you can do - and need to do - to help people in need."  
—Aliza Kass

"The recent trip to Puerto Rico made me recognize that *chedsed* is anything that helps make someone's life a little easier, that makes them smile. It doesn't have to mean building a whole house; it can just be laying the foundation. As I was leaving, my only thoughts (besides "when can I go to sleep?") were, "I don't need to travel to do *chedsed*, because *chedsed* is right around the corner," and "What can I do at home to help others?"  
—Charna Rosenberg



"The trip to Puerto Rico opened my eyes to the world beyond my local community. It taught me the value in helping people in need and doing things for others even though I never met them and will never see them again. It made me feel good about the assistance we provided and also expanded my interest in *chedsed* as a whole."  
—Ahuva Abraham



"One moment that was eye-opening for me was when we saw a little boy's reaction and he said enthusiastically, "This is my new house!" For us, we just went in and did some hard labor, but for him, we made him a home."  
—Abby Goldberg

"Seeing the smiles on the faces of Levid and his friends when we finished the job was incredible. It felt great to know we helped people who really needed us."  
—Matthew Levine

"It is great to know that we are helping the Puerto Rican community rebuild and that our work is really making a difference. I hope I can continue with charity work in the future."  
—Jonah Giat



"I'm extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to go to Puerto Rico and directly impact lives after Hurricane Maria totally devastated the island. Going with NCSY made it all the more meaningful, as we were able to represent Judaism in a place where the majority of the population had never met a Jew before. All our work showed that even a small group of people can make a large difference. Hopefully, we will all remember this when opportunities for *chedsed* arise in our own communities."  
—Naomi Kutin

"We always think about making a difference in the world, but most of the time it's nothing more than a thought. This trip gave us the perfect opportunity to turn our thoughts into actions and create something so great out of nothing. It was an inspiring experience, where I learned just how grateful I should be for the life I have, and how much of a difference I can make in someone else's life."  
—Kayla Seidel



# SPOTLIGHT ON

NEW JERSEY NCSY'S FRED AND ROSE DISTENFELD Z"L

# RELIEF MISSIONS

## Rochester, Minnesota

*Teens Volunteer in Minnesota to Help Areas Ravaged by Red River*

In October 2010, the Red River in Rochester, Minnesota overflowed, causing heavy damage to nearby homes. Within days, two teams of volunteers were deployed and on the scene, offering help and leaving a lasting impact no one could have predicted.

One morning, the group passed two brothers desperately working to repair their house. When the NCSY teens offered to help, the men were overjoyed. It wasn't until after they spent the day ripping apart floors to drain the water so the furnace could be used that they truly understood why.

When they finished, the brothers cried tears of gratitude, explaining that their elderly father lived upstairs, and thanks to the efforts of the NCSY volunteers, they would now be able to use the furnace before the impending snowstorm next week.

"You saved our Dad's life," the brothers said. The teens left such a lasting impression that the following year, when NCSY brought a new group of teens, the brothers greeted them with a hug, welcoming back the "Jewish group from New Jersey."



## Houston, Texas

*NCSYers Salvage the Remains of a Texas Synagogue After Hurricane Harvey Hits Hard*

After Hurricane Harvey slammed Texas in 2017, NCSY teens were among the first who traveled to Houston to provide comfort and relief to the hundreds of Jewish families whose homes and synagogues were demolished by the floodwaters.

In one hard-hit shul, teens worked tirelessly to sort through and salvage what they could from the ruins

of torn *siddurim*, *chumashim* and *talmuds*, while setting aside the rest for *genizah* (holy burial).

Remarkably, the group discovered one remaining *Chumash* intact amidst the wreckage. In a moment that could only be described as life-changing, the teens stood there together, and read the holy, timeless words aloud.



# Puerto Rico

## Teens Travel to Puerto Rico in the Aftermath of Hurricane Maria

Twenty NCSY teens traveled to Puerto Rico, in partnership with PR4PR, last May after Hurricane Maria devastated the island, leaving many families living in temporary tents.

Working in poverty-stricken areas, the teens spent hours scraping tar off of the roofs and delivering wood frames to build houses. They also made meaningful connections with the native Puerto Ricans, who struggled for words to express the depths of their gratitude.

In just a few days, the group accomplished what would have taken the Puerto Rican community months to complete.

Before leaving, the students spent Shabbat at the local Chabad house, which brought renewed energy and enthusiasm, and a feeling of kinship amongst their fellow Jews.



“The true impact of the mission was revealed after my students returned home. They were inspired to take on new leadership and volunteer roles in their local communities. Essentially, these missions are helping us create a better Jewish future. If only all of our students could have this experience!”

—Rabbi Jonathan Kessel, Chessed Coordinator, Torah Academy of Bergen County



# New Orleans, Louisiana

*A Decade After Katrina, NCSY Returns to Louisiana*

It's been over a decade since Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana, but its effects are still apparent in much of the city. Consequently, a group of NCSY teens returned to New Orleans in February 2019 to continue the rebuilding efforts and offer words of strength and comfort to those who were still grieving.

Volunteering for several hours a day with Habitat for Humanity, the teens helped construct houses and worked with Green Light to install free energy-efficient light bulbs. To get a firsthand look at the hurricane's lasting impact, they visited the Ninth Ward, a neighborhood that was completely destroyed by floodwaters, resulting from the failure of the federal levees during Katrina.

In between their volunteer efforts, the teens visited the local synagogues and cemetery and met members of the Jewish community to connect and offer emotional support. It was a true show of Jewish solidarity, one the teens won't soon forget.



# ENDORSEMENTS

“ The mission was truly transformative because NCSY got these teens to step outside their familiar, insulated community, to physically volunteer their time and labor for complete strangers. After being exposed to the aftermath of these natural disasters and meeting those who were affected, my students were able to understand that it's a responsibility that we, as Jewish people, have to make the world a better place.”

—Rabbi Joshua Kahn, Head of School, Yeshiva University High School for Boys

“ In just a few short days, NCSY gave my students a sense of purpose and helped them feel like they were making a real difference. You should have seen the students' reactions when the homeowners came outside with tears of thanks. It was incredible.”

—Fred Nagler, Principal of Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies

“ NCSY has found a significant place for itself in the Modern Orthodox community with the Relief Missions.”

—Rabbi Eli Ciner, Head of School, The Frisch School

“ What a student can learn, experience and grow from on an NCSY Relief Mission cannot be accomplished in any other setting.”

—Ms. Sarah Kesler, College Guidance Counselor at Bruria High School for Girls

“ We are very grateful to NCSY for the opportunities they afford the Ma'ayanot students. We value the relief missions because they allow our students to interact with a population that they would not ordinarily have exposure to and because it forces them to reach beyond themselves and give back in such a meaningful way. It is because of NCSY's continued generosity and commitment to informal education that we are able to give our students this incredible opportunity.”

—Rabbi Zev Prince, Assistant Principal of Co-Curricular Life, Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School





## On-Site Partners

ACT Houston	Houston Food Bank	PR4PR
America Investment	International Orthodox Christian Charities	Repair the World
Chefs for Puerto Rico	NECHAMA	Ronald McDonald House Charities
Green Light New Orleans	Northeast Recovery	Saint Bernard's Parish
Habitat for Humanity	One America Houston	TECHO
Hike for KaTREEena		Texas Baptist Men

## Day Schools

Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies	Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls	The Jewish Educational Center
Bruriah High School for Girls	Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School	Torah Academy of Bergen County
Heichal HaTorah	The Frisch School	Yeshivah of Flatbush
		Yeshiva University High School for Boys

## Public School Cities

Boston	Freehold	Montclair
Brookline	Highland Park	Newton
East Windsor	Hightstown	Paramus
Edison	Livingston	Teaneck
Elizabeth	Manalapan	West Orange
Fair Lawn	Marlboro	

## Sponsorship Opportunities

"Ready Team" Program .....	\$118,000
NCSY Regional Mission Series.....	\$72,000
Relief Mission.....	\$18,000
Relief Missions Handbook.....	\$10,000
Certification Program.....	\$7,500
Travel Sponsor: One Mission .....	\$5,000
Teen.....	\$1,800
Travel Subsidy.....	\$1,000

*Teens will be asked to run individual "crowdfunding" campaigns to raise \$500 or more in support of their mission experience. By volunteering and taking an active role in raising support, Jewish teens will have a fuller appreciation of the purpose and responsibility we share.*

Contact [reliefmissions@ncsy.org](mailto:reliefmissions@ncsy.org) or visit [reliefmissions.ncsy.org](http://reliefmissions.ncsy.org).

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NCSY is the international youth  
movement of the Orthodox Union