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Jewish teenagers celebrate their culture

BY STACEY RAMELSON

Some 750 Jewish teenagers from more than 11 countries gathered together recently at the B'nai Brith Youth Organization's (BBYO) International Convention in Los Angeles. Teens who attended had the chance to see what it is like when the best leaders of the organization take charge.

International vice-presidents worked together with their steering committees to make the leadership convention as great as it could be.

Throughout the weekend event taking place Feb. 17-21, enthusiastic teens were seen throughout the hotel, dressed in bright colours.

One of the convention's challenges included competing for the girls' spirit cup and for the boys' spirit gavel. The 14 members of Lake Ontario Region, including participants from Thornhill, Richmond Hill, Toronto and North York, were seen cheering, wanting to bring home the spirit cup.

"It's one of the most phenomenal Jewish experiences," Richmond Hill's Maya Feldberg said. "You really gather an understanding of how amazing BBYO is as an organization and how so many people can come together in one place to celebrate our culture and youth movement. It's one of those experiences that you will take with you for the rest of your life."

Ms Feldberg spent her days at the con-

vention attending programs to better her understanding of her Jewish culture. She said she enjoyed every second of the event and wished it did not have to end.

There were electives, rallies, and even time to shop at shuk — a regional-based clothing and accessory sale where teens are able to purchase items representing communities they came from.

Teens were able to see what is involved in working for BBYO and what it takes to make it successful.

The international presidents explained that BBYO is a life-changing, teen-lead organization, that strives to accept newcomers, plan broad fun-based programs and educate others on the life of a Jewish teenager.

Local BBYO programs take place every Wednesday night from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Dufferin Clark Community Centre, activity rooms 5 and 6, 1441 Clark Ave. W. in Thornhill.

For information on programs or becoming a member, visit www.bbyo.ca or contact Kevin Goodman, BBYO program director at 416-398-2004.

BBYO offices are located at 4700 Bathurst St., second floor, Toronto Ontario, M2R 1W8.

Stacey Ramelson is a Grade 11 student at Westmount Collegiate Institute in Thornhill volunteering at The Liberal and was a participant at the leadership convention.

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