

500 Toronto Teens Join 10,000 More in a Day of Tzedakah

Toronto teens join teens from across North America, Europe and Israel as part of the Global Day of Jewish Youth Service

Daniel Horowitz

More than 500 Toronto-area teens recently rolled up their sleeves and joined forces with 10,000 other Jewish teens from across North America, Europe and Israel on April 10th, as part of J-Serve, the Global Day of Jewish Youth Service.

2011 marks the second year in which Jewish teens from across the Greater Toronto Area had the chance to participate in this international initiative, thanks to funding by UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and the PANIM Institute of BBYO. J-Serve Toronto coincided with the kickoff of Volunteer Canada's National Volunteer Week, our country's largest celebration of volunteers, volunteerism, and civic participation.

J-Serve Toronto 2011 is presented by BBYO, in partnership with B'nai Tzedek Teen Philanthropy, an initiative of UJA Federation's Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto, B'nei Akiva, Canadian Young Judea, Chabad Youth Network, GROW, Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, Jewish Student Union, NCSY, Tzofim and United Synagogue Youth.

For Toronto's Sam Strelshik, 17, and the co-chair of The Jewish Foundation's B'nai Tzedek program, and a member of the J-Serve organizing committee, the day was everything it was meant to be.



Pictured are some of the more than two dozen J-Serve Ambassadors who lead J-Serve recruitment efforts among their peers and within their schools and youth groups.

J-Serve brought together a diverse and committed group of Jewish teens for one common purpose, bettering our community," said Strelshik. "They've all heard about the concepts of Jewish values such as gemilut chasidim (acts of loving kindness), but on this day, they all learned firsthand the importance of tzedakah and tikkun olam, our responsibility to repair the world. No longer are they just words, they're a part of their lives."

"It was so incredibly fulfilling and satisfying to serve on the J-Serve organizing committee, with so many other dedicated, enthusiastic, young volunteers," said Orli Matlow, co-chair, along with Sam, of The Jewish Foundation's B'nai Tzedek program. "To see so many young people giving up their free time simply to help others is such a positive sign for our entire community. Many of these volunteers will, hopefully, continue to personify and practice the values of tzedakah and tikkun olam as adults, and that is so encouraging for the future of our Jewish community."

The Toronto initiative was just one of over 100 events internationally, where teens participated in a variety of different projects. (ShalomLife.com)

"Whether it was cleaning for Passover at the Anshei Minsk Synagogue, visiting with patients at Baycrest, selling pins for the Canadian Cancer Society's annual daffodil month, or spearheading a transformative cleanup of Earl Bales Park for the City of Toronto,

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