

Toronto teen elected BBYO int'l president

Cara Edell
Special to The CJN

Amanda Freedman, a student at the Anne and Max Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto, was recently elected international president of B'nai Brith Girls, BBYO's division for young women.

Freedman, 17, will serve at the helm of a 10-member teen board that will help chart the organization's vision for the coming year and provide leadership and support to teen leaders in local communities throughout the BBYO system.

BBYO is a 90-year-old pluralistic Jewish teen movement whose goal is to involve Jewish teens in meaningful Jewish experiences, by providing leadership and identity enrichment programs.

Freedman was elected Feb. 9 at BBYO's largest annual international convention in Dallas, Texas, where the theme was "Welcome Home – Every Jewish Teen, Anywhere." It brought together almost 2,000 teens plus hundreds of stakeholders from 20 countries for the weekend event.

"To be elected to BBYO's international board is such an honour. It means getting the experience to look at our movement through the widest lens, while also focusing in on specific communities that need our help," Freedman said.

"It means waking up every morning

thinking of ways to improve our Jewish movement and working toward a brighter Jewish future, and going to sleep every night knowing that I have done something to ensure that Jewish youth are connected to their Judaism to make us a stronger people."

As international president of B'nai Brith Girls, Freedman will travel to communities across North America and overseas as an ambassador of BBYO. She will work with the network of regional presidents and act as a liaison between the teens and staff of BBYO serving on the international board of directors.

"I will be able to convey the teen perspective to help give them the best experience possible," she said. "I will get to work with the rest of the international teen board to implement new initiatives, set up foundations for the future, and overall, spend the next year doing everything we can to make BBYO the best movement it can possibly be."

For the 2014-15 term, BBYO is planning to work alongside other Jewish youth movements, Freedman said. She will have the opportunity to meet the international pres-



Amanda Freedman

idents of these movements and work with them to achieve the common goal of a stronger Jewish future.

Freedman said she's been involved with BBYO since she started high school. She initially joined the organization because her mother had been in BBYO when she was a teenager in Tulsa, Okla. Freedman's older brother, Jesse, was also very involved with the organization and, at the time, was the newly elected regional president.

"Initially, I was reluctant to go to BBYO because unlike Jesse, I attended Jewish day school and I didn't think BBYO would be a different Jewish experience. But I really owe my brother a big thank you for pushing me to go, because BBYO has given me more than learning Hebrew and studying Torah in school could."

Freedman has been an active member of BBYO since she joined. "I was inspired as a young ninth grader to take a step into leadership and run programs for both my chapter and my region, and I loved the experience of running programs so much that during Grade 10, I served as my chapter's *s'ganit* (vice-president of programming)."

Throughout that term, Freedman said, she noticed what her chapter did well and where it needed improvement, so she decided to run for chapter *n'siah* (president). She held this role throughout her Grade 11 year and was further inspired to become regional *n'siah* in Grade 12.

"BBYO has given me a community, a network, a family and a home. It has given me the opportunity to meet Jews from all over the world, and taught me that even Jews from different backgrounds all have one thing in common that unites us. BBYO has helped me understand that I am a part of something much greater than myself – the global Jewish community, and shown me that when Jews from all walks of life come together, we have the power to change the world."

Freedman said she used to be afraid to run for student council because she never thought she would do a good job, but BBYO changed her outlook.

"BBYO inspired me to take a step into leadership by doing something as simple as running one program, and it was that act that ignited passion in me to make a difference and inspired me to get involved. I have gained confidence in myself and my abilities to make an impact through BBYO, and I have been able to personally inspire others to get involved, which to me is the greatest impact I can make."

Happy 90th Birthday, Wolf Bronet

Canadian Magen David Adom is proud to honour **Wolf Bronet** on his **90th Birthday**. To help him fulfill his dream of donating the **12th ambulance** to Magen David Adom Israel in tribute to the 12 tribes of Israel, please call **514-731-4400**.