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Debbie Bodkin, a police sergeant-turned UN volunteer in Darfur and Kosovo, talked to the BBYO teens at their event.

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TORONTO – As lights winked out across Toronto a flame burned bright and strong in the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization's teen lounge this past weekend. From Saturday evening to Sunday morning 40 dedicated teens stayed awake through the night for the BBYO's 12-hour Genocide Aware-a-thon. The event took place between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. and featured speeches, films, discussions and – at dawn – a peace vigil paying tribute to the 400,000 people that have died in the genocide.

Speakers throughout the night included Debbie Bodkin, a police sergeant-turned UN Volunteer in Darfur and Kosovo; as well as Ismail Adam, a Darfurian emigrant and the current President of the Darfur Association of Canada.

"[The Aware-a-thon] is dedicated to Darfur; enlightening ourselves, understanding the crisis, and learning other ways to be proactive," stated Sarah Katz, BBYO's regional vice president of service and advocacy, and the teen-aged organizer of Saturday's event.

"Through the Aware-a-thon and other similar experiences, BBYO offers teens a chance to participate in the world around them. From volunteering

at seniors' homes to lobbying parliament, our teens are actively giving back to the community," said Kevin Goodman, BBYO's regional program director.

In addition to creating awareness about the oft-mentioned but not widely understood situation in Darfur, the event served as a fundraiser for the Jewish World Watch Solar Cooker Project. While refugee camps in neighbouring Chad are relatively safe, there exists an acute risk of rape or attack on refugee women while gathering firewood, which must be done outside the guarded area of the camps.

Not only do the solar cookers ensure refugees' safety by decreasing their dependence on wood, but they also provide women with income opportunities through the local manufacturing of cookers and accompanying accessories.

Accordingly, each of Saturday's Aware-a-thon attendees gathered pledges before their all-nighter to raise nearly \$1,500 for the Solar Cooker Project. For \$30, Jewish World Watch provides a refugee family with two solar cookers, along with necessary accessories and training.

For more information on the Solar Cooker Project, please see [www.JewishWorldWatch.org](http://www.JewishWorldWatch.org).