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Jewish youths come together for Tikkun Toronto

By **SHERI SHEFA**, Staff Reporter
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TORONTO — For the fourth time in as many years, Toronto Jewish youth groups have come together to organize a day dedicated to giving back to the community.



Teens take part in last year's Tikkun Toronto program.

On April 13, an event called "Tikkun Toronto: Jewish Youth Repairing the World One Day at a Time," to be held at Beth Radom Congregation, will engage more than 150 Jewish young people in community service initiatives throughout the Greater Toronto Area.

"The goal for the event is to get teens involved in the community and instill in them a desire to continue to give back by showing them all of the different ways that one can give back," said Missy Korn, Bnai Brith Youth Organization's (BBYO) program director.

"There is a shadow over community services sometimes. Kids don't think that it's fun, or they don't see the benefits of it, and between myself and the others on the planning committee, we want to show kids, to show Jewish teens, the benefits."

This initiative — funded by UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and organized by BBYO, Canadian Young Jews, United Synagogue Youth (USY), Bnei Akiva and Darchei Natan Teens — provides 14 options for the teenage participants to choose from.

For instance, students in grades 8 to 12 can choose to visit the Cammer Lodge Nursing Home to help set up for their Passover celebration. For three hours, the volunteers will help set up the party room with decorations, food and drinks and help bring the residents, who require assistance, down to the party room.

Other options include participating in the Global Day for Darfur Rally, serving ice cream and painting ceramics with the seniors at Extendicare during their ice cream social, and helping to create banners and volunteer packages for the annual Walk for Israel.

Children in grades 5 to 7 can volunteer in an event called "Sustainability Cookie Sweetness, With Some Tie-Dye on the Side."

During their three-hour volunteer session, the students will learn ways to improve the environment, and they'll tie-dye pillow cases that will be donated to those in need.

Parents are also encouraged to participate as supervisors. Teens and parents can register online at www.tikkuntoronto.org.

"The kids go to the website and pick their first, second and third choice, and then they come to Beth Radom, where it is being held, for an orientation seminar and some ice-breakers," Korn said.

"They'll be divided into different projects, get on buses and go volunteer for three hours. Then they come back to the shul for pizza and a wrap-up."

She said that she hopes this event will offer a range of volunteer opportunities that will benefit everyone involved.

"It fulfills a need in that kids in high school have to do community service hours, but my personal goal for the event is to show teens the wide variety of ways they can fulfil these community service hours," Korn said.

"Hopefully, it'll give them a desire to continue giving back to the community, even if they don't require community service hours... My personal goal for this day is to instill in the teens a desire to give back and to participate in the tikkun olam in general across the world."

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