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Top row, left to right: Avigayil Warshawsky, Bella Koslowe, Eva Kaminetsky, Emma Goldberg, Leebee Bendheim, Dr. Isaac Snyder, founder of TEACH, Akiva Morris and Yitzchak Brander Bottom, left to right: Atara Mandelbaum, Kayla Schiff, Eva Rothschild, Elianna Wasserman and Avigayil Ehrlichman.

H.O.P.E. Springs Eternal at Yeshivat Noam

HEIDI MAE BRATT

Teaching youngsters to regularly place money into a tzedakah box is a wonderful thing. Teaching them how to do a chesed project for their bar or bat mitzvah is also a wonderful thing. Teaching them how to become an “institution” of giving takes wonderful to a new level.

Areyvut, the Bergenfield-based nonprofit that helps youngsters connect to and create chesed opportunities and more, just wrapped up its 9th year of H.O.P.E. (Helping Organizations Provide Essentials), a Jewish teen philanthropy program that it established at Yeshivat Noam in Paramus.

What makes H.O.P.E. a different and educational philanthropic program is that the youngsters themselves determine through research, interviews, and other methods, where to make their donation as they learn the process of communal philanthropy.

The 12 seventh-grade students who participated in H.O.P.E. at Noam this past year worked together as a board and had to decide where to focus, develop a mission statement, decide which agencies to invite for a site visit, and ultimately, where they would allocate the money.

In the process they learned about philanthropy, local communal needs and the nonprofit community. They met representatives from local agencies, solicited and reviewed grant proposals, and developed valuable leadership skills, all while having fun.

“We want each student to know that they can and must make a difference,” said Rabbi Chaim Hagler, principal of Yeshivat Noam. “The H.O.P.E. program accomplished this for our students. They are ready to better the world.”

The students chose TEACH (Together Educating All Children In Hospitals) and presented a check for \$1,500 to Dr. Isaac Snyder, executive director of TEACH, before school let out for the summer vacation break. TEACH is a nonprofit organization that creates an outlet for children of all ages to engage with the sciences through

the medium of fun, interactive experiments, while in the hospital.

The students also painted colorful murals with messages of hope to be installed at a local hospital.

Jewish Teen Philanthropy programs like H.O.P.E. offer concrete ways for students to learn about the importance of making a difference while giving back to their communities. In addition to teaching students about giving, the program offers ways for participants to work on teambuilding and build a tight-knit caring community of friends.

“Through participating in H.O.P.E., I have learned lessons and skills that I will take with me throughout my life,” said Noam student Eve Kaminetsky. “I have realized that even though I am just a seventh grader I can really make a difference in people’s lives. Even if I’m only one person out of the whole world.”

Another Noam student, Atara Mandelbaum said, “The H.O.P.E. program taught me how I can engage and help local agencies.

Bella Koslowe said: “As a result of H.O.P.E. I feel really good about myself.”

And another student, Yitzhak Brander said, “Leadership is important to me because with leadership there is the ability for a community to do amazing things like with Moshe (Moses) leading slaves to become close to Hashem (God) or Yehoshua (Joshua) bringing desert wanderers to conquer.”

In the nine years that Areyvut has run this program at Yeshivat Noam, they have engaged 155 students and allocated \$16,100 to local and Israel-based agencies.

Areyvut’s founder and director, Daniel Rothner, explained how the lessons of H.O.P.E. follow participants way beyond the program.

“The lessons H.O.P.E. participants learn are ones they use throughout their life to help guide their philanthropy, communal involvement, and leadership. Areyvut instills these life values and lessons through H.O.P.E. and various community unity programs.”

Heidi Mae Bratt is the editor of About Our Children.

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