

## Building on a Solid Foundation of Service

*"A greater sense of service."*

*"The chance to get out of their privileged environment and see how others live."*

*"An opportunity to live with other Jewish teens from around the country."*

These are a handful of comments we heard from parents as their children started their AJSS summer of service. Families and teens alike expected a lot from the experience. Six weeks later, here's what parents had to say:

*"I love that this is not just another expensive program to provide a community service aspect hidden inside some elaborate teen tour. We were not looking for credentials for a college application. We wanted our son to work, develop new skills and meet new people outside of his comfort level. AJSS met all or our expectations and more."*

*"My son wanted to do community service. I wanted him to do so in this country and with Jewish teens. We both got what we wanted."*

*"Not many programs encompass all that AJSS has. Working with a group of Jewish teenagers to help those in need—while learning good skills and doing away with things too often taken for granted—is a very positive experience."*

*The Johnson City group repairs a roof*



The message is clear: AJSS has the right formula for meaningful community service. For almost 60 years, AJSS has offered a distinctive, always relevant, program for Jewish teens who want to serve. One key to our longevity is the program's depth. Spending six weeks working in another community, taking responsibility for the group's success and enriching

Jewish identity through service transforms our volunteers. What's more, the experience puts them on a path to leadership in the Jewish community and beyond as they move on to college and their adult lives.

This spring, as a member of the Jewish Coalition for Service, AJSS participated in a meeting sponsored by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation to promote the notion of making service a rite of passage for young Jewish adults. We are proud of our history and Henry Kohn's



*Little Rock participants building a wall*

vision for giving young people meaningful opportunities to engage in acts of *tikkun olam*.

As part of our continuing quest for growth, AJSS is increasing its online presence. In 2007, the Internet became an essential tool in our recruitment efforts—attracting more participants from outside the New York area than ever before. Past and prospective participants are visiting our website, which features photos from recent summer projects. Our evolving website will provide the opportunity for our alumni to connect with us and each other. We encourage you to log on to [www.ajss.org](http://www.ajss.org) and become a part of our network.

We know that each of us puts our Jewish values into action when we support the work of AJSS. A donation to our Annual Campaign will help us continue to provide this extraordinary opportunity for service, growth and *tikkun olam* to young people.

Shalom,

Larry Green, Chair (Camper '72, Counselor '74)

Rena Convisor, Executive Director  
(Camper '80, Counselor '84)

LITTLE ROCK, AR—The Habitat for Humanity of Pulaski County and its “over the hill” gang of volunteers hosted our first summer service project in Arkansas. In 2007, AJSS teens had the opportunity to work alongside these retirees, who served as supervisors, mentors and often comic relief on the jobsite. These men welcomed us into their hearts and homes, making the Habitat experience a truly remarkable one.

Over the course of the six weeks, we worked on five houses in various stages of construction. We started with easier tasks, such as building a porch and blocking in walls. But with guidance, we were framing and roofing like pros by summer’s end. After installing countless doors and windows and struggling to raise heavy walls, the volunteer group has a new-found appreciation for all of the effort that goes into building a house. Working side-by-side with homeowners was especially rewarding, as we met the deserving individuals who benefited from our labors.

On Fridays, we’d shift gears into deconstruction to help make sure Habitat’s retail outlet, ReStore, had a constant supply of merchandise. We also helped ReStore employees stock new items and reorganize the store. It was great to see mattresses we had just put out on the floor sell immediately, generating more revenue for Habitat to provide affordable housing to the greater Little Rock community.

To escape the brutal Arkansas heat, we also helped out at the Arkansas Rice Depot, the state’s largest food bank. We grew to enjoy the tedious task of taping labels onto donated cans and even

the messy but gratifying task of sorting and repackaging cleaning products. Due to a chronic shortage of summer volunteers, the Rice Depot administrators were especially appreciative.

We were lucky enough to have a local Jewish community in town. The folks at Federation and in the larger community were welcoming, and it was a treat to take part in services at various synagogues in Little Rock. Others welcomed us into their homes and churches, too. Indeed, we were overwhelmed and flattered by the number of invitations we received, and these visits became some of our most memorable experiences.

Yet it wasn’t all work and no play. We had a great time taking advantage of everything Little Rock has to offer: revisiting history at Central High School on the 50th anniversary of the “Little Rock 9,” sampling fruits and vegetables at the famed Farmer’s Market and marveling at the views from atop Pinnacle Mountain. A trip to Memphis, Tennessee, capped off our summer with a real taste of Americana at Graceland and important history lessons at the National Civil Rights Museum.

We are grateful to all who made our summer possible. Specifically, we’d like to thank Christ Episcopal Church and Promised Land



*The “Over the Hill Gang” members working with AJSS*

Church for providing us a place to live and Second Presbyterian for kitchen privileges.

Congratulations to directors Lisa Rothstein Goldberg and Matt Goldberg for a great summer. Special thanks must also go to our counselors, AJSS veterans Dahlia Rockowitz and Matt Present, for the guidance and support they offered all of us.

In keeping with the nature of our service program, the volunteers are truly responsible for the success of the summer. The 16 participants on this project continually impressed the Little Rock community with their work ethic and positive attitudes.

Of course, they too reaped the benefits of an AJSS summer—lasting friendships, new life skills and a sense of having done good by doing so well.

## *At a scenic overlook in Arkansas*



## **Little Rock, AR Project**

### *Directors*

Lisa Rothstein Goldberg and Matt Goldberg

### *Counselors*

Dahlia Rockowitz and Matt Present

Jacob Agus-Kleinman	Baltimore, MD
William Finnie	Wilton, CT
Justin Fisher	Short Hills, NJ
Ariela Fleisig	Yorba Linda, CA
Morgan Foster	Westbury, NY
Jenna Gross	Dresher, PA
Jacob Harris	Potomac, MD
Ilana Herr	Baltimore, MD
Sasha Lamb	Washington, DC
Shane Lampert	Newton, MA
Marisa Lupo	Briarwood, NY
Benjamin Lynford	Brooklyn, NY
Chelsea Markowitz	Solon, OH
Yael Munishor	Denver, CO
Sydney Shapiro	Sharon, MA
Emma Taffet	Short Hills, NJ

# Teens Feel Right at Home in the Volunteer State

JOHNSON CITY, TN—The Appalachia Service Project of Johnson City, Tennessee, hosted a dedicated group of AJSS volunteers this summer. Supported by federal and private dollars, the ASP has been working in this area since 1969, bringing thousands of college and high school volunteers to help with repair, renovation and restoration projects for the needy.

Our volunteers learned how to handle everything from hammers and paint brushes to shovels and weed whackers as they tackled roof repairs, foundation work, landscaping and more. We worked on four different houses, putting a new roof on the first one in two days. But then came a big challenge.

The roof was higher, bigger and more steeply pitched. It was in far worse shape, too, requiring a plywood base to support the new shingles. We also shored up the foundation, replaced two porches and installed new rain gutters. As we worked, we bonded with the home's owner, an 82-year-old woman named Doode. She loved to sit and chat with everyone as we worked, and we loved to listen. On our last day, she had tears of gratitude and hugs for each of us. Her neighbors were so grateful for our work they treated us to pizza and ice cream.

## *Digging ditches in Tennessee*



*The Johnson City crew with homeowner, Doode*

Next up was a trailer in desperate condition. We dug a 100-foot trench to connect the house to water, finished the roof, painted ceilings and floors, secured flooring and dug a drainage ditch and basin. We then got the chance to give a small house a much-needed overhaul. The entire exterior, two porches and two rooms got a fresh coat

of paint. Working alongside the owner's grandson, we were able to replace half of the kitchen floor as well, including adding a new foundation.

Almost as satisfying was our immersion into the local culture and community. The Blue Ridge Mountains provided a beautiful backdrop, and we took advantage of the scenic surroundings on weekend travels. We heard indigenous bluegrass music, visited the birthplace of country music, attended the International Story Telling Center and went camping. A visit to Grandfather Mountain offered great hikes and a 360-degree panorama of Blue Ridge beauty.

Piney Flats United Methodist Church was our home-away-from-home. In addition to providing living quarters, the church welcomed us into the community with dinner invitations, youth group activities and the chance to attend services. Pastor Laura Razor also joined us at one of our Shabbat services.

We extend our gratitude to Cathy Kaczmarek and Paul Milkman for their continued leadership on this, their 15th AJSS project. Sam Thomas and Rachel Simonson, former campers-turned-counselors, also offered outstanding support on and off the worksite.

But it is our group of AJSS volunteers that filled this summer with meaning and purpose—not only for the people of Johnson City but for themselves.

## **Johnson City, TN Project**

### *Directors*

Cathy Kaczmarek and Paul Milkman

### *Counselors*

Sam Thomas and Rachel Simonson

Noah Brau	La Jolla, CA
Jessica Brenner	Short Hills, NJ
Alexander Bromberg	New York, NY
Julia Fوسفeld	Oakland Gardens, NY
Deborah Herr	Baltimore, MD
Abigail Krolik	Baltimore, MD
Rachel Lamb	Washington, DC
Douglas Levin	Rumson, NJ
Hannah Levinson	Katonah, NY
Barbara Jean Livingston	Volcano, HI
Teddie Olender	Bloomfield Hills, MI
Karen Schuster	Glenhead, NY
Ryan Schwartz	Parkland, FL
Joshua Sklar	Montclair, NJ
Julie Suzzan	Manhasset, NY
Addison Weinstein	Upper Dublin, PA

For those of you who missed the party, it's not too late. Henry Kohn, AJSS Founder and Chair Emeritus, celebrated his 90th birthday this spring with a party at the 92nd Street Y. More than 150 friends, family members and former AJSS volunteers came to honor Henry and his tireless work to make the world a better place.

Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum (Counselor '80, Jeanerette, LA) and Fred Nathan Jr. (Camper '77, Las Cruces, NM) delivered personal tributes. Joining them to raise a glass in Henry's honor were Ruth Messinger, President, American Jewish World Service; Jerry Silverman, President, Foundation for Jewish Camping; and Simha Rosenberg, Executive Director of the Jewish Coalition for Service. For a moving look back at Henry's involvement with AJSS and memo-



ries from family, project directors and board members, see the video on the AJSS website, [www.ajss.org](http://www.ajss.org).

On the occasion of Henry's birthday, the board also established the Henry Kohn Scholarship Fund. The scholarship will give Jewish teens from less affluent families the opportunity to attend AJSS. One of Henry's central visions is to give teenagers a chance to share a summer with others from diverse backgrounds. He benefited from scholarship support and believes strongly in the idea of bringing young people together to share the experience of doing good.

To extend this vision, you can add your support with a tax-deductible contribution—simply indicate you want your donation to go to the scholarship fund.



*Henry Kohn and his granddaughter Julia on the worksite during her AJSS summer*



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