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Masa Israel Journey and Israel Action Network Launch New Fellowship

New York – Masa Israel Journey and the Israel Action Network announced today the launching of their inaugural Masa-Israel Action Network Fellowship, in which alumni of long-term, immersive Masa Israel programs will gain insight about the state of Israel advocacy in the United States and receive tools to help them counter the assault on Israel's legitimacy in their communities. The goal of this volunteer Fellowship is to offer young adults a unique opportunity to engage in supported, hands-on work in their community.

Masa Israel Journey, a joint project of the Government of Israel, The Jewish Agency for Israel and its partners, The Jewish Federations of North America, and Keren Hayesod – UIA, approached the Israel Action Network, a strategic project of The Jewish Federations of North America, in partnership with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, to collaborate on the fellowship after receiving repeated requests from Israel program alumni for more effective Israel advocacy training, coupled with an opportunity for hands-on work.

"Our alumni return from their experiences in Israel hungry to do more and support Israel in any way they can. We wanted to provide an opportunity to help them channel their passion for and personal relationship with Israel into meaningful, productive action," said Avi Rubel, Executive Director of Masa Israel Journey in North America. The fellows will support the Israel Action Network's mission of countering the threats of delegitimization, while applying the knowledge and perspective they gained while participating in their five- to ten-month Israel program through Masa.

Masa-Israel Action Network Fellows will work with their community's Jewish Federation, community relations council and other organizations to assist with Israel advocacy-focused programs and gain experience serving as a non-voting member on a community relations council or Israel affairs board.

"This is an extraordinary partnership that immediately integrates young leaders with a demonstrated commitment to Israel and advocacy directly with Federation and Jewish community relations councils, both reinforcing their experience in Israel and continuing to engage them when they return home," said Geri D. Palast, Managing Director, Israel Action Network. "This is a win-win for young people and our communities."

The organizations hosting the fellows include: Jewish Federation of Cleveland, Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, Hillel at SUNY Albany, Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ, The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, and Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh.

“Throughout my 10 months in Israel, I developed a deep passion for and solidarity with the State of Israel and the people who live there,” reflected one of this year’s fellows, Toby Lausin, on why she decided to participate. “When I saw that Masa Israel was providing an opportunity to learn how to advocate for Israel and defend it against misinformation and misconceptions, I was ecstatic to participate and learn how to do that effectively, in my hometown of Cleveland. In addition, I hope to offer insights based on what I learn through the fellowship, what I learned in my year in Israel, and the perspective of being a young professional in Cleveland.”

Participating Federations, community relations committees and other participating organizations are equally optimistic about the potential for this year’s Masa-Israel Action Network Fellowship and the impact it will have on them and their communities.

“Our community relations committee is interested in supporting young adults who want to ensure Israel's well-being and security. The need for young, driven and smart volunteers to engage with the organized Jewish community in activities directed toward building support for the State of Israel has never been stronger,” explained Dayan Gross, community relations director at the Federation of Greater Cleveland. “Through the Masa-Israel Action Network Fellowship, fellows will learn the basic skills to strengthen local advocacy efforts as part of a nationally-driven strategic approach. We plan to work with our fellow to learn the local political landscape and focus on the goals, methods and tools being used by our community.”

This year’s Masa-Israel Action Network Fellows include:

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| Ari Eckmann | Ari is from Potomac, MD and returned to Washington, D.C. after finishing Israel Teaching Fellows this summer. He is interested in pursuing a career in education and wants to help others strengthen their engagement with Israel through advocacy. Ari will be at Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. |
| Tiffany Harris | Tiffany is from Fircrest, WA and returned to Washington, D.C. after finishing an International M.A. in Security and Diplomacy from Tel Aviv University this summer. Tiffany is interested in going into advocacy/diplomacy work and views this fellowship as an opportunity to gain insight into how to help strengthen the relationship between Israel and North America. Tiffany will volunteer as a fellow in the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. |
| Jacqueline Kelly | Jacqueline is from Warminster, PA and returned to New York City after finishing an M.A. in Political Science in Action, Leadership, Communication and Elections from Tel Aviv University this summer. Jacqueline sees the need for quality representations of Israel in North America and intends to devote her career to furthering this work. She will volunteer as a fellow at the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York. |
| Toby Lausin | Toby is from Pepper Pike, OH and returned to Cleveland, OH after finishing Israel Teaching Fellows this summer. Toby is interested in working professionally for the Jewish community of Cleveland and believes the fellowship can provide the tools necessary to turn this passion for Israel advocacy into direct action. Toby will volunteer as a fellow in the Jewish Federation of Cleveland. |
| Ariel Pedoeem | Ariel lives in West Orange, NJ, where she returned after finishing a year at Machon Lev in Israel during the 2009-2010 academic year. She will volunteer as a Fellow in MetroWest, NJ this year, while working as a Research Assistant at New York University. She is eager to continue her relationship with Israel |

- advocacy following her time in college. This year, she will be at Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest, NJ.
- Brooke Prince Brooke is originally from outside of Baltimore, MD and returned there for college at UMBC after spending a year learning at Midreshet Amit during the 2010-2011 academic year. She will volunteer as a fellow at The Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore, MD. She feels that her love of Israel helps her be a strong advocate and allows her to speak firsthand of her experience, using it to her advantage.
- Lauren Rosenblum Lauren returned to Los Angeles, CA after finishing Israel Teaching Fellows this summer. She is interested in working professionally in the Jewish community and wants to assist in strengthening the relationship between Los Angeles and Israel. She will volunteer as a fellow in the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles.
- Tara Silverman Tara is from Poughkeepsie, NY and returned to New York after finishing Israel Teaching Fellows this summer. She will pursue graduate school in Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) and additionally, wishes to help the Jewish community engage with Israel in meaningful ways. She will volunteer as a fellow with the Hillel at SUNY Albany.
- Elayna Tell Elayna returned from a year volunteering with Oranim Community Involvement in Ashdod, Israel in 2011, back to her home community of Pittsburgh, PA. This year, in her final year of school, she will volunteer as a fellow in the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. It is important to her to use the tools and experiences she has gained while in Israel to inform others about Israel and correct misinformation.

For more information on the Masa-Israel Action Network Fellowship, contact Dena Stein, Director of Alumni Relations at Masa Israel Journey by emailing denast@masaisrael.org or Noam Gilboord, Director of Community Strategy at JFNA/JCPA Israel Action Network by emailing noam.gilboord@jewishfederations.com.