

Is there an English equivalent for the word 'hagshama'? The dictionary gives us the word 'fulfillment', but it appears to miss the mark in terms of what we mean exactly. Peleg Rappaport (Kibbutz Bror Hail) is part of a team of ten teens who traveled to San Diego to serve as counselors at local summer camps (KEN, Sababa and Simcha). She searches for the words to express what she felt while guiding children and teens at camp; at the same time she searches for a way to describe their attitude to Israel.

"For me, this delegation was an eye-opener. For the first time I heard stories of immigration to Israel of a single person, motivated solely by Zionism; I witnessed Jewish fellowship in the Diaspora; I understood the significance of exposing Israel to Jews across the world."

This is the second delegation to be traveling to San Diego to serve as counselors at summer camp. In Sha'ar Hanegev we send only those who have had at least two years' counseling experience and have proven abilities in counseling, adjustment, creativity and further qualities that will serve them as counselors overseas.

We are in touch with three day camps for children of different ages. Our teens join the local staff of counselors, stay at their homes, and discover San Diego and its Jewish community including its connection to Israel and Sha'ar Hanegev. We ask them to bring their Israeli character to the camps, their connections with different places, people and customs.

As far as the mutual connection is concerned, we seek the winning formula and discover that, as in most things, there's no one consistent rule. Sending teens for the purpose of generating and tightening relations is the type of thing that you know how it begins but don't know how it will develop.

When we challenged our teens to build an Israel-related activity, they pondered over what would reach the American kids, what would connect them. "In the end we chose to focus the activity on three stations: Israeli symbols, Israeli music, and Israeli food," says Bar Balkin (Kibbutz Bror Hail). "At the first station, the kids were given a white cloth, a reminder of Israeli symbols, and an open corridor for them to express their creativity and interpretation of the symbols. At the second station we exploited their previous knowledge of some Israeli songs. So we jointly inquired into the significance of a few of the songs, focusing on a number of our cherished artists such as Arik Einstein. In order to complete the Israeli experience, they learned to dance the *hora*. At the third station we brought in a *taboun*, also an Israeli object (for making flat pita bread), which afforded us an engaging group experience."



"I think that everybody get something out of this. The American Jews benefit from becoming familiar with a different culture. But we get even more out of it. In my opinion, we gained the most from the campers themselves. We gave them so much and witnessed how it comes right back at us. We made new friends and had multiple experiences that we're sure to remember for the rest of our lives," exults Peleg Rappaport.