

By Kathryn Fleisher (8th grade)

My first NFTY event was this Fall Kallah 2011. I am younger than almost all of the other kids going so I was a bit nervous about it and yet, after hearing so much from the other kids in my youth group, I had high expectations. Experiencing Kallah however, exceeded any and all of the expectations that I had. The whole event was just so much fun and the people there were some of the best that I have ever met.

When our youth group pulled up to Suburban Temple I was amazed at the amount of Jewish kids in one area! Living on the west side of Cleveland is great, but other than our temple Beth Israel, there really isn't much of, if any, Jewish population and so I love any opportunity to meet other young Jews. The first thing that anyone said to me was, and I quote, "Hi, I don't know you yet but I know we are going to be friends, mind if I hug you? Oh who am I kidding you will get so many hugs today it won't even be funny!" She was so right. I got more hugs and talked to more teenage Jews in the first night of Kallah alone than I usually do in a month! I can proudly say that I have some amazing new friends from all over that I did not know before Fall Kallah started, and now I will never forget them.

We also did some more serious things with this wonderful group of people. One of these activities was service projects. We were all split up into groups and all of these groups went to do service projects around the Cleveland area. For me, this was an amazing and very touching experience that I hope to do again sometime soon. My group went to the [Edna House](#) in downtown Cleveland, which is a rehabilitation center for women drug and alcohol addicts who are trying to become clean, sober, and turn their lives around. When we got to the Edna House we were given a tour of the house, we met the people currently living there, and then were assigned tasks around the house. I was working on dinner in the kitchen and so I really got a lot of one on one time with a lot of the woman that were there. They told us about their lives before addiction, lives in the home, and they really opened up to us. The most touching thing that anyone said to me was, "We were all really nervous about having all of you girls here because we thought you would treat us like we were different, but you guys are great and its terrific having someone to talk to and tell our stories to. We appreciate it so much and it helps so much with recovery to know someone cares."

Kallah wasn't all serious though. We also had so much fun. We had song sessions and dance parties where we all got to be crazy and let go of our stressful lives to just be ourselves with people we love and are so comfortable with. We also took a trip to the West Side Market, we bought food and walked around, all the while enjoying ourselves. The last thing I really want to mention that I loved about Kallah was the services! I don't always enjoy services, I'll admit it, but the services NFTY-NEL held were all-inclusive, easily related to my life, and very interesting.

I loved my experience at Fall Kallah and I hope to experience it again and again.

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By Zack Roth (12th grade)

It is assumed by the outside world that the worst feeling for a Jew is the possible anti-Semitic environment. This is incorrect. The worst feeling for a Jew is to lose his or her Jewish identity. I, Zack Roth, attended Fall Kallah this year to give myself a chance to blend into my Jewish family, as I am rarely around my own religious group. I go to Rocky River High School, and I am one of only three Jews there. As soon as I walked into Suburban Temple Friday afternoon, the Jewish connection among us was revived. I have pride in what my Jewish ancestors believed in. Receiving it again, present-day, is soothing and more invigorating than ever. As Kallah continued, we got to know each other. I met Arabic, Black, and Russian Jews (although they were all from Canada for the most part). I have only had Shabbat dinner with my Aunt and Uncle a couple of times. Therefore, when our dinner began with lighting Sabbath candles, I could feel my Jewishness re-planting itself in me. As we went deeper into the night, talking about possible ways to prevent autism and other diseases, you get a sense what should have been done already, and what needs to be accomplished. Why hasn't the U.S. government set aside a certain percentage of taxes, and used them to cure the worst illnesses, such as quadriplegia? It is a task before us. We ended the night with a dance session.

The second day was filled with service projects after we went downtown for lunch. We visited victims of alcoholism, drug abuse, and homelessness. It was a very up close and personal. I went downtown to the [Lakeside Men's Emergency Shelter](#). After staring at half-naked bodies shaking as they sleep less than two inches from your outstretched arm, you realize that many people need help. The only way to help them is to keep trying. Do whatever you need to do to help these people is my motto. Whether it is community service, donations, it needs to get done. Doing nothing will amount to nothing. I am forced to sit back and wonder, why was I a lucky one, born in America, not getting hunted by tribes? As I replayed this thought in my head over and over again as David talked at Temple Tifereth, I reached my apex in thought and discovered I did make an impact. After dinner, we as Jews got together in a room for one last special time, as we laid down in the dark, reflecting on the day's work to the rhythm of a soft guitar. It is a really moving experience if you take it seriously.

As morning came as my family dropped off my guests at Suburban Temple, I hugged some people I knew I was never going to see again. This was my last Fall Kallah.