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**Jewish Standard**

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- COVER STORY
- LOCAL
- WORLD
- FOCUS ON ISSUES
- OPINION
- CALENDARS
- ARTS&LEISURE
- PHOTO GALLERY
- COMMUNITY
- LIFECYCLE
- AUDIO/VIDEO
- BLOGS
- SPECIALS
- D'VAR TORAH
- HOLIDAY
- SPORTS
- ROCKLAND
- LAST WORD
- ARCHIVES

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## Blogs

entries tagged with: **Rabbi Ethan Katz**

### N.J. Jewish teens volunteer in Minnesota to help areas ravaged by Mississippi River

\_JStandard • Local | World  
 Published: 05 November 2010

(tags): torah academy of bergen county, rabbi ethan katz, national council of synagogue youth, rabbi joshua kahn, minnesota



*NCSY volunteers gather outside City Hall and a flood-damaged café in Hammond, Minn., along with the owners of the café and NCSY's partners from the NECHAMA disaster relief organization. PHOTOS COURTESY TABC*

Fifteen members of the New Jersey region of the National Council of Synagogue Youth volunteered in Minnesota last month to help clean out homes — and Oronoco Park — flooded by three to six feet of water from the Zumbro, a tributary of the Mississippi River.

The Orthodox group, which worked in three different towns near Rochester, worked closely with NECHAMA: Jewish Response to Disaster, an organization that provides direct support to communities recovering from natural disasters. It also spent one day working with 30 Jewish teens across the denominational spectrum.

The fifteen volunteers are students at Torah Academy of Bergen County in Teaneck; Teaneck High School; Fair Lawn High School; and Northern Highlands High School in Allendale. Rabbi Ethan Katz, assistant regional director of New Jersey NCSY, led the group, and the trip was staffed by Rabbi Michael Hoenig, NCSY adviser, of Teaneck, and Rabbi Josh Kahn, dean of student life at TABC, of Bergenfield.

May 2015						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

trip and share

This is the fourth year that TABC and NCSY “have partnered to bring a group of 15 high school boys on a disaster relief mission,” according to Kahn. “The annual experience is life-changing for our group. Doing disaster relief work with ... NECHAMA,” which means “comfort,” “helps our students understand that they are Jewish ambassadors. Our students see in a very real way that they can and do make a difference in someone else’s life. It is a valuable way to gain perspective on what really matters and the need to include community service as part of our life. It is especially meaningful,” Kahn wrote in an e-mail, “when someone has tears in their eyes and says that although all of their possessions were ruined, at least this experience opened their eyes to seeing that there are good people in the world. Or that the future is bright because of the kind of teenagers here.”

NCSY’s Katz said, “This was our most amazing trip yet. I am extremely proud of our students, who tackled any assignment they were given with tremendous spirit and eagerness to assist and improve the communities in Minnesota. They truly rose to the occasion and worked as a team to accomplish the set tasks; they were a tremendous Kiddush HaShem.”

The TABC volunteers were Philip Blass, Oren Elsas, Gideon Finkelstein, Jonathan Fuchs, Netanel Lederer, Zachary Margulies, Jonathan Packer, David Schwartzman, Matthew Silverman, and Avi Strauss.

Volunteers from Fair Lawn High School were Jonathan Holzsager, Zachary Lipson, and Levi Ryablov. Avishua Stein and Phil Katz were volunteers from, respectively, Teaneck and Northern Highlands high schools.

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Comments (0)

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Page 1 of 1 pages

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