

New York Girls Saving A Child's Heart



Arielle Nir (left) and Chloe Rudensky (second from right) with children in Israel for the Save A Child's Heart project

Save A Child's Heart (SACH) is an Israel-based international humanitarian project providing cardiac surgery and other critical procedures for children from developing countries.

Chloe Rudensky (18) from Lawrence and Arielle Nir (18) from Great Neck began volunteering at Save A Child's Heart in October and will continue through June when their year in Israel ends. The project flies children from developing countries to Israel for surgery at the Wolfson Medical Center in Holon. Since 1995, SACH has provided care to over 3,000 children from Africa, South America, Europe, Asia, and throughout the Middle East.

The pair are gap-year students at the Israel Experience program at Bar Ilan University, taking Jewish study seminars and undergraduate academic courses at the university's campus near Tel-Aviv. The two girls, along with a fellow student from Florida, spend their Wednesday afternoons running activities and providing friendship to the children both pre- and post-surgery.

The project's young-leadership director, Randi Weiss, said, "The volunteers help ease any discomfort or homesickness that the children and sometimes mothers might be feeling while they're waiting for or recovering from their surgeries. Volunteers play an important role in engaging the children in different activities that challenge them and keep them occupied."

Chloe, a member of the Beth Sholom community and former HAFTR student, previously volunteered at IShine, an afterschool program providing activities for children living with an illness or bereavement in the family. She said, “At Save A Child’s Heart, I play games with the children and dance with them. It feels great when I see I have made the kids smile. I enjoy seeing them progress and get better. Sometimes there are difficulties when I can’t understand the language. I usually use hand motions, and that works most of the time. One highlight has been teaching the children words in English, especially when they reply back to me.”

At Bar Ilan, as well as Jewish studies, Chloe is taking undergraduate courses in marketing, biology, bio lab, English composition, and trends and ideology with credits transferrable to most universities throughout North America. She said, “Next year, I hope to study in a good college in the city, eventually working in a field with children.”

Rabbi Tully Bryks, Israel Experience director, said, “Students choose from a wide range of internship and volunteer opportunities throughout the year. I am extremely proud of the contribution Chloe and Arielle are making to the lives of these children. It is a great opportunity to give back during their year in Israel.”

Arielle, a former North Shore Hebrew Academy student, added, “It is so nice to directly communicate with these children from all over the world. Playing and interacting with them really touches me. I love the Israel XP program. Living here on my own is a true experience. I am definitely growing as an individual!”

For more information on Save A Child’s Heart, visit www.saveachildsheart.org. For more information about Israel Experience at Bar Ilan University, visit www.israelxp.com. v