

Machon, 1992
Washington, DC Trip

Washington

Campers spend a great deal of time looking forward to the Washington trip and they had a wonderful time. Jeremy Bash, a counselor in our aidah, put together the program. He is from the D.C. area, studies at George Washington University, and was an intern for AIPAC. Without his contacts, we could not have put together this program. Attached is a copy of our itinerary.

Our major focus was, "What is our role?" We also focused on Israel issues as a follow-up to our Yahadut program at camp. Additionally, we attempted to have a meeting with someone who works with the "American Israeli Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Social Services."

Although Jeremy put a great deal of time and effort into this program (he began coordinating a month before camp started) the end result is still a collection of seemingly random meetings with people from every organization. The meetings have no thematic progression and are unrelated. This is a function of the difficulties in scheduling so many different groups. Additionally, we had little control over the meetings besides the times. Often, the planned speaker had a substitute step in. Some speakers have their own agendas and did not talk about the requested topic. As a result, the meetings were of uneven quality.

Another major factor of the trip is the campers' attitudes towards the educational components of the program. For the most part, they were totally uninterested in the program and agreed to tolerate those parts until they had free time. This was unrelated to the presentation. During meetings, the counselors spent most of their time as policemen and campers often used this time for sleeping and urgent rushes to the bathroom. Rarely were they paying attention and rarely did have more than 2 questions at the conclusion of a presentation. This disinterest was apparent both during the trip, and during summary discussions after our return. With the exception of a few campers, the aidah learned little from this program. However, I must point out that everyone enjoyed themselves immensely on the trip.

In its current form, I don't believe the trip is justified because of the combined factors of our programming restrictions, the high cost, and the camper's attitudes.

The organization "Panim el Panim" does a fantastic program in Washington. However, it is very expensive.