

Zara Singer
Detroit Trip Essay

Detroit was an amazing first J-teen leadership experience for me because I was not only able to do community service and learn more about Detroit, but I was also able to emotionally connect and witness how our volunteer work and the work of others contributed and touched the lives of those we worked with.

Motown, our first stop was amazing for me because I've grown up loving that music and those artists and I've been obsessed with Michael Jackson and the Jackson 5 since I was seven years old so it was amazing to get to learn more about their history and actually see everything for myself.

Working with the little kids was amazing because they all had so much spirit and potential despite their circumstances and they were all so unique and had their own individual interests and I was able to see them that way instead of a crowd of a bunch of kids who are all the same and less fortunate than I am. Even though we are the ones who they are supposed to look up to and even though they are so young, they are the ones who truly inspired me and who I know are capable of achieving great things no matter what.

The sandwiches were also a great act of service because even though we weren't there to give them to the people who were getting them, we knew that they were going to people who were hungry and would be grateful. Even though it just seems like a regular PB&J or whatever it was, it was something that people who are homeless and/or starving were going to be so happy to receive and it reminded me not to take too much for granted and I was so proud of how many sandwiches we were able to make.

The Shabbat services were really interesting at the

Downtown Synagogue because I always felt that my temple is so small but being there it really felt like a close family and I thought it was so great how everyone knew each other and there were some people there for the first time and it was great to see them trying new things. I've always been raised conservative and never really thought about what my life would be like without my religion but now I'm super grateful that I am constantly reminded of something that I always have and that is bigger than myself that I can also share with others no matter where I am.

The services Saturday morning at the hotel were a great way to get to know everyone and really understand the meanings behind the prayers I had gotten so used to saying my whole life. I learned lots of new things about my everyday Tefilah that I had not known before.

It was also really great to tour Detroit and learn more about the environment and the community we were doing service in. It was really cool to see how they love their city and don't see it as something that's beyond repair like many others assume about Detroit.

I loved helping out with the elders because, like the kids, they all had their own personalities and interests and didn't let old age slow them down. They were all unique and special in their own ways and I felt truly honored that they were not only vulnerable enough to be seen in a home but to also let us in and share with us.

Breakers Covenant Church was an amazing experience for me because even though I wasn't on the last trip, I could tell how much they have improved and are committed to helping others and making it a better place. The service truly inspired me and I got emotional just by looking at the faces of some of the members of the church while they were praying. Services and religion shouldn't be something boring that you dread but something that lifts you up and inspires you to be grateful for what you have even when it isn't much and I saw that on so many faces that day and it was absolutely beautiful and extremely moving. I felt honored again to have been able to do

service and help clean up around the church because I knew that I was at least doing something for this wonderful place that had inspired me and continuously inspires others.

I learned a lot on this trip and I was really glad I got to experience it and I am very thankful for J-teen and my religion because I wouldn't have been able to witness this without them. It was a great and inspiring time and I learned that there's much, much more to Detroit than just the airport!