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Philadelphia Service Trip

Over the weekend of October 16th-18th, I participated in an incredibly meaningful service trip to Philadelphia. I am a committed member of the J-Teen Leadership community and I was so excited to partake in this experience. In Philadelphia, there were no natural disasters; however, there were many man-made concerns. We went on this service trip with a specific focus on two Jewish values of life: clothing the poor and feeding the hungry. The most significant aspect of the trip for me was going to the Jewish Relief Agency Food Pantry. When we arrived, there were over 300 people packing boxes of food. Some individuals were directing each line of activity and many others were sorting and placing food in different boxes. It was a mixed group of people of a variety of ethnicities and ages. To see this huge group that comes together monthly, working hand-in-hand with one another was amazing. I was astonished by the younger children whom were so eager and happy to help. The boxes that we helped to pack were for people in the Philadelphia community to receive food, while still preserving their dignity. Instead of being a pantry where people would have to come and get their own food, JRA has routes in order to deliver to the people. It is so essential that individuals have a sense of dignity and not be made to feel like a charity case. After packing tons of boxes we got back on the bus to go to a building where there were a lot of elderly people waiting for their food to be delivered. We went in small groups to meet the people receiving these packages and to see their smiling and appreciative faces greeting us at their doors was wonderful. I love doing food justice work and this past Thanksgiving when asked what I was most thankful for, I said that I am grateful to be able to have an abundance of food and to not have to worry where my next meal is coming from. Working at JRA for the short amount of time that we did was inspiring for me. The Jewish value of *ha'achalat re'evim*, feeding the hungry is one that I find particularly special and the work that I participated in allowed me to truly experience this value. I love working with J-Teen and going on service trips and I am so beyond thankful to have had this opportunity.