

Project Dreamland returns to Beth Israel

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In March of 2016, Beth Israel members along with many in the greater Omaha Jewish community had a Shabbat experience like none other. Project Dreamland featured a group of nine young men, all with significant physical challenges who shared their amazing drive, determination, and true zest for life. Those who met the group came away touched and in many cases, awed, by the interactions which made a deep impact on so many. Rabbi Ari Dembitzer described the weekend as “a celebration of inner strength.”

Shortly after the weekend concluded, people started asking “When can we do this again?” Beth Israel Synagogue is pleased to announce Project Dreamland – 2017 will take place **Nov. 10-12**, welcoming yet another group who will truly inspire those who meet them. These young men and women who cope daily with physical challenges or are fighting cancer will be traveling to Omaha from St. Louis, Cleveland, Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey, and California.

The paths of the group members have merged through Rabbi Ari's work with Camp Simcha. The camp is for children with cancer and different chronic illnesses and is under the umbrella organization called Chai Lifeline. Camp Simcha provides a happy and magical environment for children so they can confront their challenges



with increased strength and willpower. Rabbi Dembitzer has worked with Camp Simcha since 1997.

“The members of this group each have amazing talents and have touched the lives of those around them” shares Rabbi Ari. “Each person has found a way to focus on their potential while working each day in handling their physical challenges.”

Omaha newcomer and Beth Israel's NCSY coordinator Yaakov Jeidel traveled with the group in 2016 and knows many of this year's group members. “It is going to be great to introduce our visitors to the Omaha Jewish community - and for the Omaha Jewish community to meet them” he states.

“Each group member will impact anyone they meet.” He adds “The Friday deli, Shabbat dinner at Beth Israel, and the Henry Doorly Zoo are just three items on the jam-packed itinerary that has been planned.”

The visitors arrive on **Thursday evening, Nov. 9** and will be hosted by Beth Israel families. The first event of the weekend will be a barbecue with JYE BI teens having the first chance to meet the group. Friday will include davening, a Bagel Bin breakfast, learning sessions, a visit to Friedel Jewish Academy, the Star Deli experience and a trip to the Old Market. Shabbat will begin with dinner **Friday, Nov. 10** beginning at **6 p.m.** The dinner is open to the community.

One of the group members will speak on Friday night. Pricing and reservations are available by calling 402.556.6288 or on-line at orthodoxomaha.org. Reservations are needed by **Nov. 3**.

On **Saturday morning, Nov. 11**, members of the group will help lead services, speak during services and following kiddush, and be a part of special JYE BI activities. Saturday evening will feature a special Seudah Shlishit and a musical Havdalah. It's more JYE BI activities on Sunday morning followed by a trip to the zoo before departing Omaha.

The Project Dreamland 2017 Planning Committee includes Yaakov Jeidel, Julee Katzman, Sharon Kirshenbaum, Karen Cohen, Katherine Pawlowski, Helene Shrago and Bette Kozlen. “The first Project Dreamland was absolutely fabulous” shares Julee Katzman. “So many great friendships were established with that group which continue today. We can't wait to meet our ‘new friends’ and give them the best Omaha welcome possible.”

Funding for Project Dreamland 2017 is being provided through the Staenberg Family Foundation Anything Grants program with additional funding from Shirley and David Goodman and Karen and Michael Cohen. Also providing funding is Mort Glass, doing so in loving memory of his wife Janet.

To be a volunteer or for other questions, please contact Beth Israel at 402.556.6288.