

This is my 9<sup>th</sup> Maccabiah Games and although each one was special and unique in its own way, I believe that the 20<sup>th</sup> Maccabiah will be the most successful of all. Our Israel Connect program was a fantastic success, the Opening Ceremony was unbelievably exciting and emotional and the members of Team USA are showcasing their outstanding athletic abilities and competing with honor.

The program for the Juniors' athletes has been designed to provide them with the best athletic, cultural and social and experience possible.

The Hub- the Maccabiah version of an "Olympic Village"- is located on the beach in Haifa, and is where the Juniors' go for relaxation, medical services, dining, entertainment and more.

Juniors' athletes are housed by delegation rather than by sport, Our 330 Juniors athletes are staying in the beautiful beachfront Leonardo Haifa Hotel. It is, by far, the best Juniors' accommodation center ever.

These young men and women are not only outstanding athletes. They are intelligent, inquisitive, articulate, friendly, social and savvy. They are the leaders of tomorrow. They are the future of the Jewish people.

For me, the essence of our Maccabi Mission and the ultimate goal of these Games is to help ensure the continuity and perpetuation of the worldwide Jewish community by doing our part to keep Jewish Kids Jewish. The Maccabiah Games strengthen the connection between Jews of the Diaspora and the State of Israel. These Games enrich the lives of thousands of Jewish athletes by giving them the opportunity to live the Magic of Maccabi – an experience that for many will be truly transformational.

It has been such a pleasure to spend time with these amazing Juniors' athletes. Many will return home with medals. All will return home with memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.