

Witnessing Israel's Legal System with JNF's Law and Justice Tour

A SECURITY BRIEFING FROM THE ISRAELI police, visits to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) military court, the Supreme Court, and so much more gave the 31 participants of Jewish National Fund's first ever Law and Justice Tour an eye-opening and unforgettable experience of Israel. The five-day trip allowed U.S. law enforcement and legal professionals to see the great work that JNF does in Israel and receive a first-hand perspective of



Lt. Wagner at Special in Uniform

how the legal system operates there.

Deborah Riegel, a New York City lawyer who co-chaired the trip, noted that the Law and Justice Tour participants were one of JNF's most diverse groups, and that visiting sites like Ammunition Hill and meeting with Israeli officials helped many of them "connect a little bit more" with Israel. Riegel added that this trip will help spread JNF's message

in communities that are unfamiliar with its work. "We brought people to Israel who will go home and be our ambassadors," she said.

"During the trip, I learned a great deal about Israel and its judicial system," said Alan Lubel, a trial attorney and Atlanta, GA resident. "Despite the absence of a written constitution, Israel has a well-developed constitutional jurisprudence. Of note, the Israeli Supreme Court heard more than 9,000 cases in the past year."

This was Lt. Scott Wagner's, from Omaha, NB, first visit to Israel. Lt. Wagner expressed admiration with the level of law enforcement in the country. "As law enforcement," he said, "this is what we have to do to survive. We have to be reactive to crime and terror and do what we have to do to protect our lives and the lives of others."

In addition to exclusive meetings with Israeli Police Spokesperson Mickey Rosenfeld on how security concerns are addressed in Jerusalem's Old City, the group sat for a briefing with Col. Bentzi Gruber at Ammunition Hill, the site where the intense battle to unify Jerusalem was fought during the 1967 Six-Day War. The briefing at Ammunition Hill, a JNF partner, dealt with the important topic of "Ethics in the Field."

Participants also visited a group of soldiers at the Palmachim Israeli Air Force base. These soldiers are part of Special in Uniform, a JNF partner program that aims to integrate youth with disabilities into the IDF. "Our visit with



Special in Uniform participants touched me tremendously," Lt. Wagner said. "Being in law enforcement, there is great importance placed on inclusion, teamwork, and responsibility, which is exactly what Special in Uniform does for youth with special needs," he said. Lt. Wagner even brought along some of his sheriff's office shoulder patches to give to the soldiers. ■

For more information on JNF's Lawyers for Israel group, please contact Jessica Schapiro at jschapiro@jnf.org or at 212.879.9305 x297

LOTEM's Mother Nature Program Helps Women In Need

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND'S PARTNER organization LOTEM-Making Nature Accessible is the leading organization in Israel offering accessible hikes and educational nature activities to individuals with special needs. Five years ago, LOTEM began Mother Nature, a program designed to bring groups of women and children from domestic violence shelters on empowering encounters with nature. The opportunity to leave shelters and experience days of respite in nature helps the women and children regain trust in their surroundings, while strengthening the parent-child relationship. The experiences help them transition back into normal, independent living. With 13 shelters across Israel, LOTEM's Mother Nature program assists hundreds of women and children in need.

One participant in the program, Portia, originally from San Francisco and a mother of two, is grateful for the help and activities she received following her divorce. "It was amazing. We got to run around and we went to the olive press. We went to a trail and my children were free and as happy as can be, and they were showing the other children around. It was a little bit of our old life. A little bit like normal life. Just going out to enjoy nature and see just how beautiful Israel is was a reminder that life goes on."

Since its founding in 1993, LOTEM has been dedicated to helping people with disabilities maximize their enjoyment of nature. From programs for the visually impaired to accessible nature trails at JNF's Nahal HaShofet, LOTEM serves more than 32,000 participants with physical, mental disabilities, as well as mothers and children, like Portia and her children, in shelters every day. Nina Paul, president of JNF's Women for Israel, said that "JNF's Women for Israel has been an integral part of supporting LOTEM, and continues to be proud to support a program that helps change the lives of people with special needs as well as women and their families in Israel." ■

To learn more about JNF's Women for Israel campaign, please contact Sharon David at sdavid@jnf.org or at 212.879.9305 x242

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