



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USY 68th Annual International Convention in Orlando to Teach Teens How to Make Their Dreams a Reality

USYERS TO VOLUNTEER IN THE COMMUNITY ON CHRISTMAS DAY

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New York, NY, December 17, 2018 – This December 23-27, nearly 1,000 Jewish teenagers, educators, and USY staff and alumni will gather in Orlando, FL at USY, USCJ's youth movement, 68th International Convention.

The largest annual gathering of Conservative and Masorti Jewish teens, the convention will bring together young adults from across the globe to experience and give back to the local Orlando community, engage in interactive learning, gain leadership skills, and build a strong Jewish future. This year, with almost 600 USYers registered, the convention will welcome more teens than it has the last two years.

“At International Convention, USY and USYers shine brightly,” said Dana Prottas, Senior Director of Teen Engagement. “It is the paramount example of what the USY experience is all about – learning and growing together, experiencing new facets of community, and realizing and achieving dreams – all while giving back to the local host community. Our USYers’ light will shine bright in Orlando this December.”

This year, our North American USYers will have an opportunity to meet and learn from teens from Israel and Argentina, who are members of NOAM, the Masorti youth movement. They will also hear from Israeli youth on behalf of the Jordan River Village Camp, the only year-round, overnight camp and retreat center in the Middle East where children (ages 9-18) living with serious illnesses of all backgrounds can just be kids.



Over the course of five days, teens will participate in programming around the convention theme, *Im Tirtzu - Israel at 70: Making Dreams a Reality*. Using Israel's vibrant history and innovative current-day landscape as a guide, teens will examine the power of dreams through interactive educational workshops, deconstructing the vision of Theodore Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, and examining different figures that took Herzl's dream and brought it to life.

USY will partner with several organizations to educate and equip teens with the skills they need to be forward-thinkers about the causes they care about. Educational partners include StandWithUs, Director of University of Central Florida Hillel Aaron Weil, Rabbi Joshua Neely of Temple Israel in Winter Springs, Florida, Rabbi David Kay of Ohev Shalom in Orlando, the Orlando JCC, Center for Israel Education, and Rabbi Adam J. Rosenbaum of Synagogue Emanu-El in Charleston, South Carolina.

"International Convention is incredibly special because it gives teens the opportunity to engage with other teenagers from around the continent," said Zachary Zabib, USY's 2018 International President. "It allows us to learn each other's stories, to learn together and, most importantly, to make an impact together.

As a way of spreading Christmas cheer to those who celebrate, teens will participate in hands-on social action projects on Christmas Day, volunteering at a number of local organizations around the Orlando area. Volunteer opportunities include serving breakfast at local Ronald McDonald Houses, creating gingerbread houses at a rehab center, playing games with residents at nursing homes, and preparing food and care packages for Orlando-area firefighters who are on call on Christmas.

In addition to experiential and educational programming, the convention is a celebration of the culmination of the year, fueled by the *ruach* (spirit) of the USYers. The teens will take advantage of all that Orlando has to offer, spending time at some of the city's most popular attractions, including Universal Studio, Disney Springs, and the ICON Orlando entertainment complex.



The convention is sponsored by Ahavat Achim (Atlanta, GA), Alpha Epsilon Phi Sorority, Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity, B'nai Torah Congregation (Boca Raton, FL), Butler Motor Transit, Camp Airy & Louise, Dubow Family Foundation, Jewish Theological Seminary/Albert A. List College, Jewish Youth Directors Association, Kosher Gourmet, Lainie and Harvey Rosen, Liquid Screen Design, Michael and Rachel Schor, Noam Olami, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El (Highland Park, IL), Shearith Israel (Atlanta, GA), Tampa JCCs and Federation, Temple Beth Israel (Sunrise, FL), Temple Beth Sholom (Sarasota, FL), Temple Beth Torah (Tamarac, FL), Temple Israel (Winter Springs, FL), USY Youth Commission, and Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity.

A detailed convention schedule and further program information are available upon request.

About USY

USY is USCJ's youth movement for Conservative Jewish teens across North America. For more than 60 years, USY has taught young Jews the values and skills they need to become exceptional leaders in their religious and secular communities. USY empowers youth to develop friendships, leadership skills, a sense of belonging to the Jewish People, and a commitment to inspired Jewish living through meaningful and fun experiences rooted in Conservative Judaism's approach to learning, spiritual expression, and social responsibility. Through year round programming and domestic and international travel opportunities, USY inspires in teens a deep sense of pride in and love for their Jewish identity. To learn more, visit www.usy.org.

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