

Young Zionist

Magen: The IDF needs YOU!

Rebecca Shapiro and Emma Lewis

Relaxing in Eilat over the winter *chofesh* (holiday), the war that had just begun in Gaza seemed distant to us on Year Course. Little did we know that only a week later we would be playing a vital role in the war effort by packing medical supplies that were to be sent straight to the front line. All that was needed was one text message, and minutes later, over 120 Year Coursers had signed up to a week in Sar-el.

Those who signed up were split into groups and sent to seven bases across the country. We were sent to Mazrap, a base that coordinated all medical supplies to the IDF. Our week consisted of preparing and packing thousands of medical kits, that were transported daily to Gaza. Despite the long days and monotonous work, we gained an appreciation of the vital role we were playing at this precarious time, and were aware of the necessity of our work towards saving lives. It was standing at the flag raising ceremony every morning whilst wearing the uniform of the Israeli army that made us feel truly a part of Israeli society, perhaps for the first time on year course. As news would reach us about the situation in Gaza, we began to understand the immense sacrifice Israelis our own age were making for the country we love. This understanding spurred us on and inspired us to work the long hours whilst putting up with the cold conditions and disgusting food!

We are proud to say that during our time in Israel, we were able to give back and help at such a crucial time. We are also proud that as members of FZY, we were able to fulfil the aim of *Magen* (defence of Jewish rights) by truly defending and protecting the state of Israel, its soldiers and citizens. Never before have we felt so closely connected to our homeland. In times of peace and especially at times of war, we feel that every Year Courser should have the opportunity to participate in Sar-el. It gave us pride to help defend our country, and to know both for ourselves and as part of FZY, that we took part in the continual struggle for our Zionist dream.

Rebecca and Emma graduated from Year Course in 2008.