

FRIENDS FOREVER INTERNATIONAL

World Peace...Grown Locally



Winter 2018

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2018: Dancing, Cooking, Growing, Learning.

We've gathered some of our stories from the year together for this newsletter. Read on for tales from alumni, first year participant's stories of challenges overcome and new experiences had, as well as testimony from their parents.

Naama ('18, Middle East Program) takes a moment to reflect and write at the top of Mount Major.



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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US

Naama and Rawi chose to share their collective story through a mix of song and speech. Teammates in Team L'Uniteds (Middle East Program), the

two wrote new lyrics to the tune of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah. Rawi and Naama (who are Arab and Jewish, respectively) presented their song and story to New Castle Congregational Church.

*We broke down all the stereotypes,
And looked each other in the eyes,
The differences between us doesn't matter.*

Listen to the rest of the song and hear all our participant's stories by watching their presentation videos on our Youtube Channel! <https://www.youtube.com/c/FriendsForeverInternational>



Naama and Rawi telling their story at New Castle Congregational Church.



Rawi and Naama in New Hampshire.



FALL OVERVIEW!

We had an incredible fall program season with three teams from Northern Ireland in New England! Teams L.Y.F.F.E., LOL, and Eth12 made an incredible impact on local youth and community members during their two weeks in the U.S.

Our fall programs overlapped with Halloween and this year we took full advantage of that to volunteer at Durham Downtown Halloween and host a team-led Haunted House at the HQ for neighborhood families! Despite the early cold weather, the teams dove into winterizing the Peace Garden with Eastern Bank, gleaned apples with NH Gleans, and tackled a ropes course with gusto. They volunteered a total of **2,185.5 hours**, practiced healthy living by working with

a dietician from Emery Farms and learned about mindfulness and yoga, implemented recycling and composting in their host homes, and benefited from **97** workshops - the majority of which were alumni-led!

As they move into their Community Building Phases back home, our young people will draw on these experiences to develop their Social Action Projects. Follow the rest of their journey at www.ff.international/team-updates.

Fall Programs ended with a celebration of all the hard work our teams put into volunteering, learning, facing fears, and growing into the incredible leaders the world needs.

DANCE - A COMMON LANGUAGE

Over the summer in New Hampshire, our Summer Alumni Team routinely led the teams in impromptu ABBA dance-alongs. In Illinois, Team Salmon turned a grocery store stop into a dance lesson with the sunset as their party lights. Arab and Jewish teammates taught each other traditional dances and songs while the store customers looked on - some even joined in!



Team Salmon teaching each other traditional dances.

In the fall, young people that the teams met over the two weeks from Spaulding, Oyster River, and Marblehead high schools attended their Farewell Celebration. At the end of the evening they turned on the music and had an impromptu dance party!

These moments are excellent reminders that our youth, while leaders and change makers, are teenagers and still enjoy being silly with new-found friends, especially when making Steve dance to the Baby Shark song!



Summer alumni lead a Mamma Mia inspired dance at a summer farewell celebration.



Steve dances to the Baby Shark song with the fall teams and their new friends.

JESS, AN ALUMNA FINDING PURPOSE IN NEW ORLEANS



Jess holds up a picture she made with a resident of Greenbriar.

“Something I struggled with when I moved to Scotland was I began to focus purely on one thing, which was my nursing degree. I began to have this feeling of missing out. I couldn’t work out what it was, as I loved my studies, had amazing new friends and flatmates, enjoyed exploring my new area and was content, even after leaving the comforts of home. Despite having all this I knew something was missing.

During my 2 weeks with FFI in New Orleans during March 2018, I found the answer - I was missing the feeling of volunteering. My volunteering bug has become a long term, life changing condition that seemingly has no cure. My adventures with FFI restarted and my journey reached a new and exciting level as it was at the end of this trip that Steve asked me to become a board trustee of Friends Forever Europe.

Within my new role I helped develop our alumni movement, helped organise the first Alumni Seminar in Northern Ireland and worked to improve our charity position. I knew that everything I was doing was making an impact, no matter what size. I had that non-stop feeling of giving back and the satisfaction of knowing it did not have a dead end, this time it was a continuous cruise.”



Jess and Hagar in Northern Ireland.

HAGAR: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTHERN IRELAND PROGRAMS

“I think it’s very important to continue the connection between the Northern Ireland alumni and the Middle East alumni movements [...] I also think it’s good for the new people, and their parents, to see that they’re a part of a really big family that includes family members from all over the world. Additionally, all the conversations I had (no matter if it was about Israel or just personal) were an opportunity to speak with people from Northern Ireland about the global impact FFI has.



Hagar (bottom left), speaking with Northern Ireland team leaders about her life in Israel.

Also, Paula (leader) said to me after the conversation I had with the youth leaders, that she thinks it’s important that adults feel that they can learn from young people, and not always the other way around. I think it’s also important for the young people to understand they can share their knowledge and teach adults something new. I had this opportunity, to learn a lot and to share my knowledge, this week more than any other time I can remember.”

TESTIMONIES

“The participants’ eagerness to help, willingness to take direction and openness to new experiences is what the American Red Cross is all about. Your youth group has been truly impressive and inspiring.”

~ Peter, Boston Red Cross

“I cannot express how happy I am to hear this. Please believe me when I tell you this wee girl wouldn’t even tell a waiter/waitress what she wants to eat in a restaurant and always gets me to do it. The way she has come out of herself is totally amazing.”

~ Aimee’s mom, Northern Ireland Program Parent

“The program made my child more responsible he started to clean his room and to go outside instead of playing Playstation all day long.”

~ Aml Khashan, Middle East Program Parent

When Jay came home our town was voting on cutting teachers jobs. On the spur of the moment Jay wrote a speech and went to speak at a City Counsel meeting on behalf of the teachers. This may or may not have happened if he hadn’t been a part of Friends Forever... but because of the experience and skills he gained and believing that his thoughts had value it was something he could easily do after having been a part of Friends Forever. There is something very cool about watching your kid peel out of the driveway, speech in hand to go fight city hall.

~ Jay’s mom, United States Program Parent

JAKE FOUND FOCUS THROUGH FOOD



Jake focusing on his omelet!

Jake is restless. His foot is always tapping and his mind moves a thousand miles a minute. At his parent meeting this year in Belfast, we asked the team to take a vote on how many fruits/vegetables they would have at each meal. Jake voted to have 3 vegetables, and his mother turned around and said “What three vegetables do you know?”

A few weeks later at Leonard’s New Castle Home in New Hampshire, Jake picked up a kitchen knife for the first time and started prepping vegetables for dinner. His leaders witnessed a sense of calm come over him. He was focused, sure of himself, and eager to learn.

When the team visited a vocational and technical school in Lexington, Massachusetts, the culinary program helped the team prepare omelets. Jake’s eyes lit up and he raced to the stove top to cook. After that, Jake started asking

his site manager, Rebekah, questions about how to prepare food. He took pride in learning new skills in the kitchen, always seeking a chance to contribute to the meals.

Cooking is something Jake learned to pour his overflowing energy into. He found a true passion. And the team, pushed by Jake, gained a newfound love for trying food. Team L.Y.F.F.E. went on to try nearly twenty new food items, ten of which were new fruits and vegetables. (Hopefully Jake told his mom!)



NH ALL-FEMALE TEAM FROM SPAULDING HIGH SCHOOL



Three members of the team met and talked with our fall alumni at a soup kitchen.

FFI is excited to announce our first all-female team! This team from Spaulding High School will be the pilot team for our program focused on young women’s empowerment and leadership. They will travel to Northern Ireland over their April Break in 2019 and will meet with women leaders in business, politics, science, and the arts from around the world. If you are interested in meeting this team contact Chelsea at chelsea@ff.international!

We’re excited to develop new programs to meet the needs of our teams and explore all the different kinds of leadership that the world needs. If you have an idea for a new program you’d like to see started in your community, contact Steve at steve@ff.international.

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