

The following article was written by Ruth Brown of New Orleans, LA on her return from Achva West, a six week summer tour of the Western United States that travels from Denver, CO to Los Angeles, CA. Led by Rabbi Aryeh Lightstone and 15 Achva counselors, summer 2006 saw 140 post 9th graders from diverse yeshiva day schools tour through Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, Nevada and California.

Achva would like to thank Young Israel Charities, of NCYI; The Jewish Children's Service of Louisiana and the Young Israel of Hillcrest, NY for helping to make possible Ruth's amazing summer adventure.

Not only did she clearly enjoy the trip but the tour gained tremendously from her enthusiasm and desire to participate in every activity. While most Achva participants come very comfortable surroundings, Hurricane Katrina reminded us how fast things can change, G-d forbid. This is a lesson we can all learn from.

Being from New Orleans, I found the first week of Achva West overwhelming. Since most of the kids are from the greater New York, New Jersey area (with contingents from Canada, Florida, etc.) there were so many new people to meet. However, after adjusting to the new environment, I went from having one friend from Memphis, to having many friends from all over.

So how did a girl from New Orleans end up on Achva West? Because of Hurricane Katrina, I was temporarily living in Memphis, Tennessee attending Margolin Hebrew Academy for this past school year. My friend's mom had housed some kids that came to Memphis while attending Achva East last summer. (Achva East is Achva's tour for post 8th graders that travels around the Eastern half of the United States; it spends a Shabbos in Memphis.) My friend and I had nothing to do for the summer, so her mom introduced the

A SUMMER EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER

ACHVA WEST 2006

By Ruth Brown



idea of Achva West to us, and we were excited to meet new kids and explore new cities.

The most amazing part of Achva West was being able to see such beautiful, educational, and exciting sites with these awesome people. Some of the most incredible activities were white-water rafting in Yellowstone, horseback riding in Bryce Canyon, bike riding on Venice Beach, and spending a day at Disneyland in Los Angeles. I saw some spectacular things that I would never have had the opportunity of seeing if not through Achva. I had a blast touring the beautiful but very hot West Coast. The religious part of the program was also fantastic. We participated in several interesting Torah discussions, where each person could voice their opinion. Shabbat was also a very inspirational time that I miss very much.

Besides for the touring part of this Young Israel program, my goal of the summer was to make a lot of new friends who I could remain close with after the summer, and I can proudly

say that I accomplished my goal. This Achva West teen touring program is a program enabling kids from different parts of the country to bond and have fun while participating in incredible activities. The summer flew by so quickly, and during the last week, I made a special effort to take it all in and appreciate every minute of the program my parents sent me on.

Once I got home, I missed the program so badly and I really wanted to go back. I couldn't believe that I wasn't eating dinner with my friends, going to Universal Studios with my friends, and riding on the bus with my friends. This summer of 2006 was one of my best summers ever. Although Achva West only lasted five-and-a-half weeks, my Achva friendships and memories will last a lifetime.

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