

DEVELOPING THE FUTURE GENERATION OF ISRAELI LEADERS

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I grew up in a small city, located on the northern coastline of Israel called Nahariya.

Most people are of the general opinion that the opportunities for personal development are less in a small town than in a bustling metropolis. Perhaps, I felt this way too, until a very meaningful thing happened in my life.

It all started when I was a teenager.

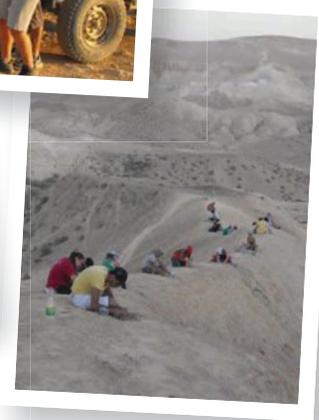
When I was in the ninth grade a representative of *Kav Hazinuk* (starting line), a program that I never heard of before, visited my classroom. Of course, I wasn't aware of the impact this would have on me then, but it was at this pinnacle moment, which I began my journey towards becoming a leader.

Kav Hazinuk is a program that cultivates tomorrow's leaders. The program coaches talented youth between the ages of 15-25 to become true leaders in their communities and, ultimately, Israeli society. Participants are mentored through intensive, hands-on projects that focus on social change. *Kav Hazinuk* was brought into the Upper Galilee through the Partnership2Gether program, and is now well-established in the area.

Kav Hazinuk intrigued me greatly. I decided to apply. Although I wasn't an adult then, I had to go through a screening process just like adults do when they apply for a job: interviews, small groups, and also a two-day training session to assess my independence.

Kav Hazinuk - starting line

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To my delight, a decision was made and I was accepted into the program. My journey would soon begin.

Although high school was a very busy time, I was expected to attend a weekly meeting after school quite a distance away from Nahariya. Every week for three years, I would meet my teammates from six different cities and Arab villages at the north of Israel and we would learn together about leadership. We learned about leadership models, about Israeli society, and how to work as a team. We also practiced leadership during field trips and outdoor trainings. The program taught me things that I had little experience with: independence, courage, and the ability to have constructive dialogues with my peers. This all allowed me to understand that although some of us come from completely different backgrounds and with varying political perspectives, we can trust each other, love each other, and build meaningful relationships.

A very important part of the program was during the second year, when I was in the 11th grade. During that time, we were asked to design a project that would have a positive impact on Israeli society. We weren't told what that project would be or what topic we should choose, the only instruction we received was that we were to go out into the world and make a difference. In order to achieve the best results possible, we worked with actual world business models, gaining a great deal of knowledge in entrepreneurship and creating projects. I worked on my project with two

other teammates, and we decided we wanted to work on a project to improve Israel's image abroad. Using the tools we had received from this program, we created an innovative advocacy tour, which we worked hard to plan, fundraise, and execute. It took us a year and a lot of effort, but at the end we were able to establish a connection with Nahariya's twin city in Germany, find a donor that helped us with purchasing air plane tickets, and found a German speaking advocacy expert that was willing to help us create the perfect program for our tour. At the end of this process, we travelled to Germany and had a genuine and productive dialogue with over 300 high school peers, about Israel.

Working on that project helped me discover my true passion and calling that led me to become a *shlichah* in this community.

Sometimes we don't know how one small encounter can really change our lives. Looking back, that day in the ninth grade when I heard about *Kav Hazinuk*, had a tremendous impact on my life. Not only did I realize what I'm passionate about, but I also made friends for life. For example, one of my teammates from the project became my best friend. In fact, we are so close that he will be officiating my wedding this summer.

When we talk about philanthropy and giving back, I think of *Kav Hazinuk*. I received so many tools and learned so many skills and the only thing that was expected of me in return was to implement them to make the world a better place.