

USY

"The Pride of the Valley" Recognized as the Far West Region's Most Improved Chapter in 2004, AAE's USY chapter is made up of an active, fun-loving, socially-minded group of teens who are seeking social interaction and community involvement.

Each year at Regional Convention in May, our chapter has been recognized for their creative and unique programs, our email blasts and website <http://www.aaeusy.org> and for outstanding contributions to Tikkun Olam, USY's Tzedakah fund. Our chapter has the opportunity each year to allocate 40% of the funds we raise here at AAE to organizations of our choosing. In the past several years, we have made generous contributions to the FWUSY Hevrah program for teens with special needs, Project Chicken Soup, Beit T'shuvah, Interfaith Food Pantry and CHPHP.

Junior USY: For students in 7th and 8th grade, an introduction to USY tailored to the social needs of middle-school students. Junior USY helps to bridge the gap left when students go to various new schools after years together in elementary school. Social, Shabbat and Community Service programs provide opportunities for wonderful reunions, new avenues for involvement and shared memories for a lifetime.

Our Junior USYers also have the opportunity to attend 2 regional Kinnusim each year. The Fall/Winter Kinnus provides a dynamic and exciting introduction to USY and allows Junior USYers to see more seasoned Senior USYers in action, leading ruach, services and sessions. The Spring Kinnus is more focused on an educational theme that is woven into social action and Israel projects, Shabbat moments and a great Saturday night program. USY Kinnusim are home-housed in local communities by other USY chapters and synagogues. Junior USY also provides our 7th and 8th graders with their first taste of USY leadership either through serving on the Board or the Steering Committee. These USYers who choose to take that extra step work together to plan and implement programs, make calls to encourage friends to join them and share ideas for how to keep USY fun and exciting.

Senior USY: For high school students in 9th through 12th grade. This group meets more often providing a wider range of programming appropriate for teenagers. USY Members attend regional dances, Shabbatonim, Kinnusim as well as the annual LEAD retreat at Camp Ramah and Regional Convention, where they have an opportunity to meet with USYers from throughout the Region. Over winter break, USYers also attend International Convention, which brings together USYers from each of the 17 regions across the US and Canada for 4 amazing days of programming, social action, incredible events and ruach. USY also runs programs in the US and in Israel over the summer as well. Our USY members are well represented at these events and currently hold leadership positions on regional Boards. Many of our programs have been recognized throughout the region including annual events such as Conclave, Into the Night and our Shabbat Dinners. AAE USYers are a visible presence throughout Adat Ari El and can frequently be seen volunteering their time and energy during Simchat Torah and Purim festivities as well as other congregational programs.

Our Senior USY advisor is Matthew Chesler. Matt is a FWUSY alumnus and has worked as an advisor for many years. Matt has been part of the AAE staff now for 4 years and has been instrumental in our chapter's growth and leadership development.

USY weekends are outstanding ways to get involved, get a genuine sense of what people love the most about USY and to spend time with new and old friends.

Shabbatonim: These weekends are specialty weekends that run across Shabbat. These include the Back to Israel/Go To Israel Shabbaton, the SATO/HeChalutzim Shabbaton (Social Action & Israel), and the Senior Shabbaton for graduating 12th graders. These are home housed.

Kinnusim: Kinnusim bring together 250+ USYers from across the Region for an incredible weekend of programs at a local synagogue. The focus of the weekend is slightly broader and will incorporate a wide variety of programming during the course of the weekend. There are 2 Senior USY Kinnusim each year and these are also home housed.

Regional Dances: Each year, the Region holds 2-3 Regional Dances on Saturday nights for USYers to come together for an evening. The Opening Dance, usually held right after the fall Chagim, is open to both members and Jewish guests who might be interested in trying out USY. All other dances are members only activities.

LEAD Retreat: The Leadership Education And Development (LEAD) Retreat is held over Veteran's Day weekend in November at Camp Ramah each year. This is an intense but rewarding opportunity for established and emerging chapter and regional leaders to come together to learn how to be better leaders, role models, motivators and advocates. Each year since 2005, AAE USY has been proud to recognize one of our own as the recipient of the Ross Family Scholarship for Emerging Leaders of USY. The "Ross Scholarship" was established by Evan (z"l) & Kathy Ross in 2004 to recognize leadership commitment and potential. The Scholarship provides full registration to the annual LEAD Retreat for the recipient.

Regional Convention: Regional Convention is held each year over Memorial Day weekend in May and brings together over 350 Far West USYers for the culminating event of the year. The Convention Co-Chairs spend close to 9 months developing programs, education, activities and unique experiences to wrap up the year. Regional Elections are also held at Convention each May and chapters are recognized for their hard work with the presentation of many awards. AAE USY has boasted many award winners over the last several years:

Diane Meskin, Myra Meskin, Ari Polsky:

Marla Bennett Chalutz/ah of the Year Award

Bennett Cross, Seth Samuels

Rabbi Marvin J. Labinger Award for Outstanding Citizenship