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**News Release**

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**JEWISH FEDERATION AND JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GIVE GIFT OF ISRAEL TRAVEL TO AREA TEENS**

Local teens who hope to travel to Israel can defray over \$4,000 of the trip's cost through savings and scholarship programs offered by the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh and the Jewish Community Foundation. The Passport to Israel and the Israel Scholarships programs make educational trips to Israel just as affordable as they are meaningful for young Jews.

Passport to Israel is a savings account in which families deposit a minimum of \$200 each year for a minimum of four years and receive a match of \$100 per year for up to eight years. At the end of eight years, families that have deposited the annual minimum deposit will have saved \$1,600 and will receive \$800 in matching funds, resulting in \$2,400 that could be used for an eligible trip to Israel. Enrollment is open through May 31, and can be completed online: [https://JewishPittsburgh.formstack.com/forms/passport\\_to\\_israel\\_enrollment](https://JewishPittsburgh.formstack.com/forms/passport_to_israel_enrollment). Families are advised to open Passport accounts when children are elementary school-aged; new accounts can be created for children as young as first grade and up through ninth grade. Deposits to Passport accounts are not tax deductible.

Passport to Israel accounts are maintained by the Jewish Community Foundation, with matching funds contributed by the Sholom Comay Family Endowment. "Helping Pittsburgh teens make their dream trip to Israel come true carries forward Sholom's commitment to strengthening young people's connection with Israel and with Jewish tradition," said Estelle Comay, the widow of the endowment's namesake.

Families can also apply for additional funding from the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh's Israel Scholarship program. The non-need based scholarship awards \$1,750 to teens and young adults going on eligible programs. This funding is allocated to all applicants who can demonstrate that their program meets eligibility requirements. Need-based funding above the \$1,750 is also available. An application and interview are required in order to obtain the funds.

Eligible programs are at least three weeks or 21 days long and include an academic, cultural or vocational focus. Most local and national peer-group youth trips, summer programs and gap year programs are admissible, while family missions and vacations are not for the purposes of the Federation's program. As recent studies show, participants in formal, peer-

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group programs like the above forge lifelong relationships with other young Jews and develop meaningful connections to Judaism and Israel, increasing the chances that they continue to choose to live Jewishly long after the programs end.

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“The connection between a love of Israel and maintaining one’s commitment to Judaism is unequivocal, backed by years of academic research. We’re dedicated to making sure every teen can go to Israel and obtain that kind of formative Jewish experience for themselves,” said Daniel Snyder, Chair of the Federation’s Israel Scholarships program.

The Federation and Foundation believe that cost shouldn’t be a barrier to forging a deep connection to Judaism, and offer financial assistance in order to bring travel to Israel within reach for all local teens. Combining Passport to Israel savings and matching funds with Israel Scholarship program funding can make a trip to Israel for teens and young adults affordable and possible.

The Jewish Community Foundation, the planned-giving arm of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, enables donors to create permanent endowment funds that address community needs in perpetuity. Total Foundation assets currently stand at over \$210 million. The Foundation helps bring to fruition the philanthropic goals and dreams of more than 1,000 individuals, families and organizations.

For more information about Israel Scholarships, Passport to Israel and the Federation’s Israel programs, visit [www.jfedpgh.org/israel](http://www.jfedpgh.org/israel). For information about enrolling in Passport to Israel or applying for an Israel Scholarship, contact Debbie Swartz, Overseas Planning Associate, Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, at [dswartz@jfedpgh.org](mailto:dswartz@jfedpgh.org) or 412.992.5208.

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