

Words of Reflection from a Broward Shinshin Shira Tal, 18

In August of this year, Broward County welcomed one young Israel emissary to our community thanks to the Jewish Agency Shinshinim program. Shinshinim are 18-year-old high school graduates from all over Israel who complete a year of service in Jewish communities around the world, fostering a connection to Israel for community members of all ages.

Shira Tal, who has not yet started her duty in the IDF, lives in our community. She will remain here for one year, during which she brings the culture of Israel to Broward County.

Here is a reflection from Shira, age 18, on how she is coping with the war in Israel.

Throughout eleventh grade, Shira knew that she wanted to do something meaningful before her army service. When she heard about the Jewish Agency for Israel's Shinshinim program, she knew this would be a rare opportunity for her to push out of her comfort zone, live in the US, work with kids, meet new people and gain one-of-a-kind experiences that would have lasting impact.

Shira's first two months on the job in Broward County were seamless. And then, on the evening of Oct 6th, she was with friends in DC on a quick vacation. They were filming videos documenting their joy and happiness, and then they got a call from a friend to say that something was happening in Israel. All through the night and early morning hours, Shira and her friends heard more and more shocking and disturbing news about the heinous attack that was unfolding in her beloved country.

Like so many of the shinshinim in the States, Shira immediately thought she needed to return home to be with her family. Her friends were being called up to serve, and she felt that to do her part, she must return to Israel. A few days later, the Broward County Federation sponsored a Solidarity Vigil for Israel with more than 1,200 people in attendance. In Israel, you often hear how the US is an ally and strong supporter of Israel, but seeing first-hand the outpouring of love and support was incredible to see, hear and feel.

In the days that followed, Shira returned to her work in Broward with children from the community. She facilitated activities about Israel and got to share her love of her country through song, games, and creative play. Each day, she gets to share with the children how Israelis are coming together to support each other and how they are experiencing a sense of unity like never before. During such a dark time, Shira has come to realize that she is a light, shining bright in the community and therefore believes she is exactly where she is supposed to be; she hopes they come to see Israel through her and, as a result, feel more closely connected to our homeland.

