

Information on Grants Funded by the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Provided at Overnight Jewish Camp and Israel Travel Fair

November 19th, 2014 | Section: [Local News](#)

By Beth Kotzin, Assistant Editor

Making a decision about summer camp and/or Israel travel for your children can be a daunting task – just trying to choose which program is the best fit is difficult enough. But with camping and travel grants through the Jewish Foundation and Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, at least one part of the process is much easier.

At the camp fair, held on Sunday, November 16, 2014, attendees had the chance to learn about the camp grant program, managed by the Federation, in which children in the Cincinnati Jewish community can receive up to \$1800 for their first year at a minimum of 3 weeks camp program, and up to \$900 for a two-week program at any of the approved camps on the Jewish Foundation for Camps list. Grants up to \$1000 are available for their second year in a minimum of 3 weeks program, and up to \$500 for a two-week session. Cincinnati is the only community that offers 2 years of camping grants, and these grants do not need to be used consecutively or at the same camp.

It's important to know that these grants are not need-based and are not contingent on other scholarship or financial aid dollars. In fact, additional need-based grants may be available for those who qualify, and information about those can be found from your congregational rabbi. Also, your "first year" does not necessarily mean your first year at a Jewish overnight camp; "first year" refers to the first time a camp grant is used. Applications for the camp grant program can be found online or at the Federation office.

High school students ages 16-18 as well as young adults ages 18-26 can take advantage of the Israel grant program. Thanks to The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati, this is the only community in the world that offers young people up to \$11,500 for two separate Israel travel opportunities: high schools students can receive one for up to \$6,500 and then another for up to \$5,000 once they graduate. Much like the camp grants, these grants are not need-based. In comparison, Memphis only offers up to a \$3500 grant, Columbus, provides awards up to \$1,500, and Pittsburgh only provides teens with \$750.

Israel travel grant applications are accepted year-round, but must be submitted at least two months before payment is due to the trip provider. The process for these grants is relatively simple: pick a trip, register with the trip provider and pay the needed deposits, then complete the application and pre-trip survey. Within 10 days of application submission, both the student traveler and one parent will receive an email notification indicating the traveler's eligibility for the grant. After that, there are a few forms to sign and agreements to return, and once that's done, the trip provider will be paid the amount granted (which depends on the cost of the trip chosen).

There were both overnight and day camps present at the fair, as well as booths showcasing Israel trip options that ranged from youth group and overnight camp-type trips to gap year programs. An Israeli-style dinner was provided, as well as a fruit smoothie bar and that old camp favorite – s'mores. The fair was well-attended, with all registrants receiving a camp/Israel fair insulated tumbler at check-in.

Aaron Slovin, Executive Director of Camp Livingston said "For our Cincinnati families, the camper grants make all the difference. Lowering the barrier of entry for Jewish Camp experiences makes the expense manageable, and it drastically increases the amount of interested families that reach out. These grants are setting the benchmark for the rest of the country."

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