



Gratz Insider, Summer 2014 - Story Continuation

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The Cohen Sisters: Poster Children for Jewish Education

Gratz connections abound on the Cohen girls' family tree, with grandmother, father and aunts all Gratz alumni, and mother an alumna of the Gratz Hebrew High School Summer in Israel program and current Gratz employee. Nevertheless, there was no parental mandate for the girls to pursue their Jewish education at the Gratz Jewish Community High School. On the contrary, the decision was their own. In ninth grade, the sisters decided to attend JCHS because they perceived it as a place where they could study and learn about Judaism with other students who shared their same level of commitment.

At Gratz, Emmy and Julie took full advantage of everything JCHS had to offer, such as pursuing college-credit classes, attending an AIPAC summit and earning teaching certificates. Socially and academically, JCHS provided a sense of continuity for the girls from their Jewish-oriented summers, spent at camp or in Israel. In addition, when it was finally time for JCHS commencement, the sisters were recognized for their achievements: Julie with the Award for Outstanding Future Jewish Educators and Emmy with both the Prize for Excellence in Hebrew Language and the Award for Commitment to Israel.

The education and leadership classes the girls took at Gratz helped prepare them for their summer jobs. Julie is a counselor at Camp Ramah, and Emmy is a counselor at Eden Village, a Jewish organic farming camp in Upstate New York.

For Emmy, her work at Eden Village is not just an opportunity to apply the teaching and leadership skills she acquired at JCHS. As she explains below, her decision to work at this *particular* camp reflects something deeper that she gained from her experience at Gratz:

Gratz has absolutely shaped who I am as a world citizen and a Jew. Never would I have had the courage or thought to work at a Jewish organic farm camp before. Gratz has helped me to better understand the Jewish world, and it has allowed me to find my role in that world.

As Emmy and Julie move forward into the next phase of their lives, they will bring their understanding of the Jewish world with them and continue to carve out their individual Jewish roles.