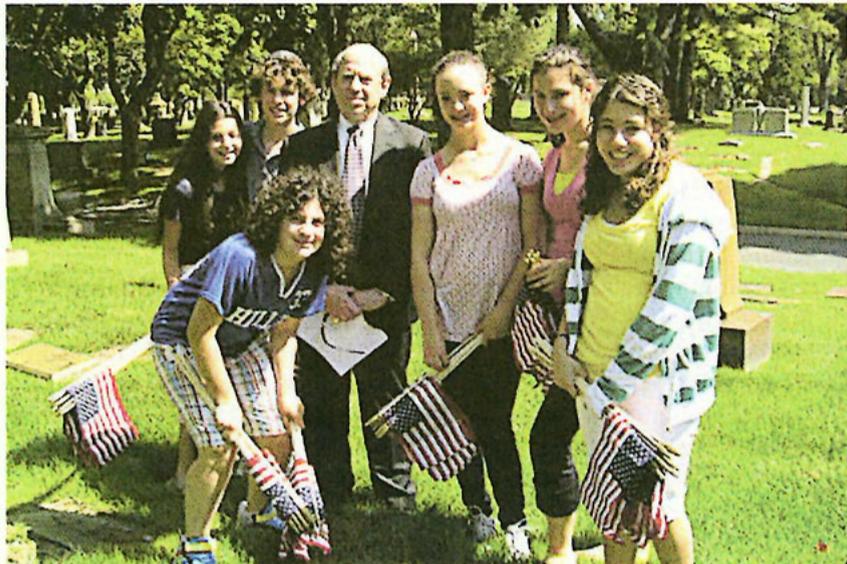


## Lessons Of Service

Hillel students learn from war veterans.



Hillel students Claire Yerman, center, Autumn Jacob, Aidan Folbe, Leah Reed, Erin Graub and Shayni Shecter with Ralph Zuckman of Clover Hill Cemetery.

On Monday, May 24, a group of students from Hillel Day School of Metropolitan Detroit commemorated Memorial Day by gathering around Rabbi Adler's grave in Clover Hill Park Cemetery in Birmingham, listening to local Jewish war veterans speak about their experiences.

The veterans shared stories of courage and sacrifice, and explained the honor of laying flags on the graves of Jewish veterans. We would soon understand how meaningful the next couple of hours would be.

As with most field trips from our Farmington Hills schools, we boarded the bus laughing and joking around, looking forward to spending the day outdoors. The full weight of the responsibility for this task had not yet been considered.

The somber atmosphere of the cemetery and the solemn words of the veterans prepared us to begin our work. The power of this day was evident on our faces as a flag was placed on the first grave and the inscription on the headstone was read aloud. We began to realize that some of these men and women were only a little older than we were at the time of their passing. We looked to each other and acknowledged that there was a serious job that needed to be done.

Many of the students, who are either members of Student Congress or are Student Ambassadors, came not only to see soldiers' graves, but the graves

of their family members as well.

Eighth-grader Jesse Adler said, "I stand there and before me is the grave of my Aunt Esther. Today, like most days, I am wearing the necklace that was hers. I kiss my hand then touch her grave, the same for my other relatives. Today is my birthday, and I am glad to have spent it with my relatives who are no longer here. It meant that much more to know that I was sharing this special day with the Jewish veterans who gave so much so I could celebrate this and many more birthdays to come."

Claire Yerman, another eighth-grader, said, "Every time I pass Clover Hill Cemetery in the car, I hear my mother say, 'Hi Mom.' Today I had the chance to see my Bubbie and great-grandparents. I took a couple moments to read the gravestone. Following my mothers lead, I said, 'Hi, Bubbie.' Not only do I feel connected to my family, but also to those who I have had the chance to place flags on their graves — my adopted family."

Even though the day was scorching hot, no one wanted to leave. We were eager to read more names and think about the countless stories of those laid to rest. We climbed back our bus, hot, tired and filled with a deep sense of respect and awe for those who gave so much for our country. □

*Jesse Adler, Claire Yerman and Leah Reed are eighth-graders at Hillel Day School in Farmington Hills who all contributed to this story.*

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