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## Youth Find Common Ground on Sukkot ■ Students of Different Faiths Come Together for Summit

BY AMY LYONS

Three dozen students – some wearing yarmulkes, others dressed in plaid skirts of the Catholic school tradition – gathered inside a traditional Jewish sukkah on Wilshire Boulevard Tuesday morning to talk about hunger. The daylong seminar at the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles headquarters was organized by the Board of Rabbis of Southern California as part of the Federation’s “Fed Up with Hunger” initiative. The initiative seeks to involve the entire community in the



photo by Amy Lyons

Senior Megan MacDonald and 10th grader Noah Scheindlin were two of the participants in the Interfaith Summit.

work of eradicating hunger and its causes in Los Angeles. photo by Amy Lyons Senior Megan MacDonald and 10th grader Noah Scheindlin were two of the participants in the Interfaith Summit. Students Work Together at Summit From page 1 photo by Amy Lyons Allison Lee, associate director for the Western Region of American Jewish World Service, discussed the issue of hunger with the students.

“The sukkah is a powerful symbol of the bounty of the harvest, as well as the ephemeral, fragile nature of our lives,” said Rabbi Mark S. Diamond, executive vice president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California. “Los Angeles has been called the ‘hunger capital’ of the nation, and I can think of no better setting for people of faith to address this critical issue.”

The student gathering kicked off in the morning, when high schoolers from Milken Community High School and Santa Margarita Catholic High School gathered in the sukkah for a discussion about world hunger and political action. The initial discussion was led in part by Allison Lee, associate director for the Western region of American Jewish World Service. Lee gave students an overview of the hunger issue, citing the United Nation’s Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right, which states that access to adequate food is a universal human right.

“One of the questions we are here to ask today is why are eight hundred and fifty million of our fellow human beings undernourished?” Lee asked.

The students then broke into small groups for discussions about taking action to eradicate hunger. Lee handed out cards with a list of action items, such as creating community gardens to give people access to fresh produce, organizing food drives, and writing letters to elected officials.

Anthony Ferman, a senior at Santa Margarita Catholic High School, stood out as a leader

within his small group, asking his peers about their knowledge of political action. He talked about his participation in Catholic Lobby Day, an annual statewide event in April hosted by the California Catholic Conference. The day finds Catholics from all over California traveling to Sacramento to lobby on behalf of the poor and otherwise under-represented people.

“We went to Sacramento and spoke with elected officials about laws and the things we really care about...if our politicians are not working for us, we need to do something about that,” Ferman said, adding that the experience of lobbying taught him that it was not as hard as he thought to communicate with lawmakers about pressing issues.

Noah Scheindlin, a 10th grader at Milken Community High School, talked eloquently about what he learned from the day’s small group discussions.

“There are so many different ways to advocate for hungry people and to solve the problem of hunger in Los Ange-

les,” Scheindlin said. “Many different neighborhoods and areas are impacted and we have councilmen that we have elected, but they need to be made aware that hunger is a human problem, not just a statistical one.”

Megan MacDonald, a senior at Santa Margarita Catholic High School, said she is interested in finding out more about advocating for the hungry.

“I’m really interested in politics, so my teacher chose me to come and be part of this discussion on hunger,” MacDonald said. “I learned that it is not as difficult as you think to go to your legislators and tell them how you

**“I learned that it is not as difficult as you think to go to your legislators and tell them how you want to change things.”**

*-Megan MacDonald, a senior at Santa Margarita Catholic High School*

want to change things. As long as you come up with a good presentation, it’s pretty simple to at least get your voice heard.”

The timing of the summit coincided with the fourth day of Sukkot, a sacred

holiday in the Jewish tradition. Throughout the day, leaders from the Muslim and Buddhist faith communities also joined the summit, as did non-faithbased advocates for the hungry, including representatives from the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. At the end of the student

portion of the day, Lee pointed out that motivating students to act on the hunger issue, not simply accept it, was a key goal.

“Motivating young people to be agents of change is something that is very important if we want to see an end to poverty in our lifetime,” Lee said.

For more information on the “Fed up With Hunger” campaign, visit [www.givelifemeaning.org](http://www.givelifemeaning.org).



photo by Amy Lyons

Allison Lee, associate director for the Western Region of American Jewish World Service, discussed the issue of hunger with the students.