

The Opening Activity This year's opening activity, held on Rosh Chodesh Nisan over teleconference, featured

presentation of a special theme song and a special address by Mrs. Shifra Rabenstein, a teacher at Bais Yaakov and popular speaker, who spoke to the girls on the theme of "Once Upon a Time." A week later, another special event

was held in which a panel of twelfth-graders encouraged the girls to participate, building up

the momentum by relating how the program has impacted them over the

past few years.

instead being more present." "I pushed myself and I didn't realize how much I could achieve! This year during the technology program I switched to a dumb phone because I realized how little I need my smart phone! You've changed my life!"

"This experience opened up

my eyes, showing me that when-

ever I'm bored, I use technology.

I feel accomplished knowing how

many times I didn't use technology,

These were just some of the comments received from students at Bais Yaakov High School of Baltimore, after participating in the school's recent technology program.

For the past five years, Bais Yaakov's acclaimed Discovery Program, under the leadership of Mrs. Yehudis Feldman, has featured a special technology program during Chodesh Nisan.

Discovery is a highly successful extracurricular program at Bais Yaakov High School. Each year, a fundamental theme is chosen, which is developed with special lectures, programs and activities throughout the year. This year's theme was "Vih'iyisem li segulah mikol ha'amim": the theme for the technology program was "Once Upon a Time," with an emphasis on the value of time and the importance of using one's time properly.

"This year was definitely more challenging to run the program, but all the more necessary," explained Mrs. Feldman. "We also know how much the girls wait anxiously for the program. They crave guidelines and boundaries, and here, we are handing them over on a silver platter. We are saying, 'We are giving you the opportunity to grow; we are showing you how to do it."

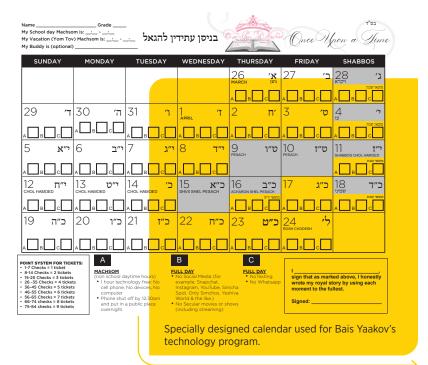
Specially designed calendars were distributed to all the students, with a checklist of certain suggested kabbalos. Each day, the girls chose from one or more of the kabbalos, and different kabbalos could be tried each day. These included a machsom, with one hour free from technology and turning off of the phones by 12:30 a.m.; a full day of no social media or secular movies; or a full day with no texting or WhatsApp. For each kabbalah successfully completed, the girls gave themselves a check on that day on the calendar. Students earned raffle tickets based on the number of checks received for entry into an end-of-year raffle for a free final.

A View From the Discovery Heads

The program was coordinated by the four student heads of Discovery, Miri Neuberger, Chana Fraida Berger, Sora Traub and Tirtzah Sondhelm, who worked tirelessly on developing it. They described the impact of the program.

"This program really brings out the idea that with small manageable steps, great accomplishments can happen," said Miri Neuberger. "As I once read, 'True life is lived when tiny changes occur.""

Chana Fraida Berger shared, "Although challenging, this program leaves a long-lasting impact on all who participate. The students walk away with tremendous tools for life, and much to think about. It is not uncommon for girls to continue to implement the technology guidelines, or some takeoff of them, long after the program has officially ended."



"This program took place during the height of the restrictions," noted Sara Traub, "and so although it was even harder this year, everyone rose to the challenge. Girls have told us how much this program has changed their lives. Many girls are continuing their technology machsom, even after Nisan is over. Others have made their own charts for the following month, and [still] others have deleted their social media accounts or even gotten rid of their smartphones."

Tirtzah Sondhelm similarly remarked, "It is really amazing to see how everyone can participate in this program in some kind of way, no matter what kind of devices they or their family [have]. This program is really helpful because it shows the girls how to take advantage of their time. Especially this year, we were shown how to [ensure] that the extra moments don't just slip away."

The Grand Finale

During most years, girls who receive at least 20 checks for the months qualify for a special trip. However, this year the directors had to come up with something else. Ultimately, it was decided to create sweatshirts, designed with a customized logo reading, "Once Upon a

Time - I Did It!"

Distribution of the sweatshirts took place during a drive-through event on Monday, June 8. Teachers were present to hand out the sweatshirts and wave to the girls. Amazingly, over 95% of the students participated in the program on some level, and over 75% (310 girls) received sweatshirts.

"The girls were super excited about the sweatshirts," Mrs. Feldman emphasized. "They felt proud that they had earned them; they accomplished something very special."

Mrs. Feldman also commented on the program's long-lasting impact and shared that post-seminary girls have called her and described its continuing impact on their lives.

Rabbi Yechezkel Zweig, Menahel of Bais Yaakov High School, described the success of the program. "We are amazed at the remarkable ruach of our students! So many participated in this program, thus expressing their desire to improve in the area of technology use.

"Ashreinu to have such wonderful bnos Torah in our midst. And thank vou to Mrs. Feldman's wonderful Bais Yaakov Discovery team for working so hard to produce such a vibrant program!"