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### ICJA: Giving Back Through Chesed

Every few months, high school students need a day to spend time outside of the classroom to help the people in the community who need it most. *Chesed* trips give the students time to be with their friends to learn and build off of each other's strengths and weaknesses in order to be better Jews and use their power to do *Chesed* for people in need.

The two main characteristics that build a student into a *Talmud Chacham* are learning *Torah* and doing *Chesed*. That is why it is Ida Crown's mission to focus on scholarship in the classroom, but also scholarship, in the form of *Chesed* in the community. ICJA student David Holman says that *Chesed* trips give him an opportunity to be creative with the ways he gives back to the community. "Instead of just giving the regular *Tzedakah* and not making it personal and meaningful, *Chesed* trips make me feel like I am making a real difference and helping someone in need," he said.

The options of *Chesed* trips the students go on are many. One of those opportunities is helping at the Chicago *Chesed* Fund. Students pack food and organize clothing for people in need to eventually pick up and take home. To help children in particular, Cradles to Crayons is a fan favorite among Ida Crown students. There students can help with the essentials that children need in order to thrive and grow to the best of their abilities. School supplies, clothes, and food give children their resources to develop and prosper. Wings is another great place for students to

use their time wisely to help women suffering from domestic violence. Students help victims find safe housing, counseling, and mentoring programs.

Being in school and learning *Torah* provides ICJA students with a backbone of knowledge but *Chesed* trips give students strength. We learn to follow Jewish laws and practices, but when it comes to lifting up other people and picking up a community, it takes a lot of power and durability. When David Gaffen first went on an Ida Crown *Chesed* trip, he thought it would just be a day off from school to hang out with friends. He said, “Once that first *Chesed* trip was over, I realized what it truly meant to use my privilege for good. Seeing people in need happy from the work that the *Chesed* organizations and Ida Crown students have done gave my life a new meaning and a better outlook.”