

**March of the Living  
Anshai Students Marching for Memory and a Future**

*by Deb Silverthorn*

"Never Again," is the message, and it is a message that Congregation Anshai Torah's Rabbi Michael Kushnick and 2018 participating students Ashley Grossman, Kayanna Klein, Nathan Mandell, and Sydney Wigder, take to heart and intend to carry forth. Marching alongside 15,000 other participants, they carried the souls of the millions killed during the Holocaust.

"The testimony is important for the world to know – not only to hear the stories of the survivors, but for the next generations to hear and see for themselves, and for them to carry on the voices," said Rabbi Kushnick. He chaperoned Anshai Torah's first sponsored MOL tour and who



absolutely became witnesses of the Shoah, bearing responsibility."

"In Warsaw our students added song and ruach and helped fill a city that was empty," said Rabbi Kushnick, "and in Israel their voices also rang loud, excited with the fresh air and the absolute feeling of freedom and hope."

In this year of *chai* (18) – 2018, also the thirtieth March of the Living, Rabbi Kushnick and the four high school seniors walked the tracks of concentration camps, stood in a crematorium, hiked green hills of Israel and stood by the seas. . . the message of our heritage's past and the future that became the State of the Jewish People was received loud and clear.

Yom Hashoa—Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom Hazikaron—Israel Memorial Day, and Yom Haatzmaut—Israel Independence Day—were all commemorated and celebrated during the tour. From the march between Auschwitz and Birkenau to a second in Jerusalem, symbolizing and celebrating all that has come since the Holocaust, the students saw hardship and tragedy, potential and hope for the Jewish People.

Nathan Mandell joined his J.J. Pearce High School classmates Grossman and Wigder, and while the threesome only somewhat knew each other at school, there is now a bond that connects them – an experience and lasting memories.

"I absolutely believe our students will use their experience in Poland to hold onto the treasure of life and their memories of Israel to live daily," said Rabbi Kushnick, "to really live each day strongly."

The life-altering trip is, for these students, significant both in their understanding of their own Jewish history and in their identity as Jews going forward.

For information on participating in the 2019 MOL with the synagogue, email [Rabbi.Kushnick@anshaitorah.org](mailto:Rabbi.Kushnick@anshaitorah.org).

"I had to go because I wanted to honor those who were killed and to educate myself about how to share what happened in their memories. I've grown up at Anshai and going with Rabbi Kushnick was comforting and I'm so grateful," said Sydney Wigder. Soon bound for the University of Maryland, Wigder takes the responsibility she feels very personally, already sharing at a Shabbat service and with students at her elementary school alma mater. "After visiting the places of horror and death I looked forward to the time in Israel which gave us the feeling of survival."



"I've heard survivors talk and studied some, but my family has no immediate connection to the Holocaust and I wanted to connect with my heritage," said Ashley Grossman, who will head to UT Austin in the fall. "Nothing could have prepared me for the reality; it's a different level of ... I don't even have the words... but it was impactful – both of the marches, to stand with blue and white flags around us where so many suffered but from where we could walk out to the feeling of overwhelming support in the streets of Israel where it all felt like a party and the symbol of life."

For Kayanna Klein, a recent McKinney Boyd High School graduate who is looking forward to a gap year, missing two weeks of school wasn't easy, but worth the while. "My teachers were very understanding and it did take time to catch up, but I wouldn't have missed it," she said. "This was my first trip out of the U.S. and I'd never been to a Jewish summer camp so it was a lot of new all at once. For me, visiting with the survivors and hearing their stories meant a lot.

"I made friends from around the world and we've stayed in touch; I think because we shared the highs and lows we'll always be connected," said Klein, whose grandmother z'l had shared some of her own history when Klein was young. "The classes and information that Rabbi gave us before we left were really important and helped us get through it."