

Yachad Announces Its New Daner Communal Fellows For 2015-16, Program Begins Late July

OU Staff

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Yachad's Daner Communal Fellowship has selected three outstanding recent college graduates to serve as Fellows for the 2015-2016 programmatic year, beginning in late July. They are Amanda Parker from Englewood, New Jersey, graduate of New York University; Rachel Samuels from Roslyn Heights, New York, graduate of Binghamton University; and Yossi Szpigiel of West Hempstead, New York, graduate of Macaulay's Honors College of Queens College. The Fellows were chosen from 30 applicants from across North America.

Yachad, the flagship program of the Orthodox Union's National Jewish Council for Disabilities (NJCD), provides unique social, educational and recreational programs for individuals with learning, developmental and physical disabilities with the goal of promoting their *Inclusion* in the total life of the Jewish community.

“The program, now in its second year, is named in memory of the late Jewish community professional and lay leader Joel Daner, *a”h*, who truly exemplified what it meant to be a leader in the Jewish community,” explained Eli Hagler, Associate Director of Yachad.

“We expect our Fellows to be hard-working and interested in being a part of the Jewish communal work force with the hope of making a difference. They emerge feeling empowered by their experience working for Yachad and continuing to promote Yachad’s mission of *Inclusion*.”

The Fellowship will support the Fellows’ professional development as part of Yachad’s mission to meet the social and inclusive needs of Jewish individuals with diverse disabilities. This includes, but is not limited to, Autism Spectrum Disorder, developmental challenges, deaf and hard of hearing, physical disabilities, and medical health and mental health needs.

The Fellows will function as full members of Yachad’s staff, working out of its national headquarters in lower Manhattan and will be assigned a primary mentor — a staff member under whose tutelage and guidance they will directly carry out their diverse range of duties within the agency. Additional mentors will provide integrated training and experiential opportunities in other areas as needed. Together, the mentoring team will offer opportunities for the Fellows to acquire proficiency in disability culture and Jewish organizational leadership. Each Fellow, with supervisory support, will be responsible to begin or continue a special project, or to research a topic of interest. The Fellowship will be supervised by Mr. Hagler and Becca Zebovitz, Yachad’s Office Manager.

Dr. Jeffrey Lichtman, International Director of Yachad, explained, “Yachad has been at the forefront of educating and facilitating today’s youth to become tomorrow’s leaders, ensuring that all individuals are included in the Jewish community. We hope that our Daner Fellows will quickly become an integral part of the Yachad team going into the 2015-2016 programmatic year. We are hopeful that the Fellows will go on to successful careers and will always remember their time at Yachad as an important step in their professional advancement and development.”

Rachel Samuels was raised in Roslyn Heights, NY, and majored in Human Development and double minored in Education and Judaic Studies at Binghamton. She was involved in campus life, including being a peer advisor and participated in both Binghamton’s Hillel and Chabad. “I applied for the Joel Daner Fellowship because I have always been passionate about inclusion,” said Rachel. “I accepted the Fellowship because I felt it was



Rachel Samuels.

the perfect opportunity for me to weave my Jewish beliefs and values with my passion for advocating and providing resources for people with special needs.”

Amanda Parker double majored in Applied Psychology and Global Public Health with a minor in Hebrew and Judaic Studies at NYU. Originally from Los Angeles, she has been

living in Englewood since she was eight years old. Amanda was active in both the Hillel and the OU’s Seif Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC) at NYU, as well as being involved in her academic department particularly as a peer mentor. In her spare moments she enjoys spending time with friends, exploring New York City, and traveling.



Amanda Parker.



Yossi Szpigiel.

Yossi Szpigiel majored in Chemistry as a Pre-Med student with a double minor in Math and Media Studies at Macaulay Honors College at Queens College. Yossi served as the JLIC intern at Queens for the past two years and was involved in the Jewish community on campus. He plans on attending medical school after the Fellowship.

For more information about Yachad's Daner Communal

Fellowship please visit www.yachad.org/Fellowship, call 212-613-8299 or email at YachadFellowship@ou.org.

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