

Fellowship Presentation - Camp Tawonga

Excerpt from my blog piece....It's well known among Tawonga staff that something changes about campers when they enter the Farm and Garden. Even the most high-energy bunk will become calm and more attentive when they pass through the Garden gate or into the farm animal pen. I think campers can sense that they are entering a space where they have to be more aware of themselves and their impact; plants can get trampled if they don't look where they step, and animals can get spooked if campers move or talk too fast or loud. The act of entering these spaces serves as a beautiful metaphor for *Shomrei Adamah* – serving as keepers of the earth and remaining conscious of our relationships with the world around us.

The Garden is nestled in its own sunny, fertile niche within the Tawonga ecosystem, with willows to the East, the lower meadow to the South, the lake to the North and the mountain to the West. Surrounding the Garden is a fence that we lovingly call the *eruv*, or sacred boundary. When I first arrived at Camp for my six-month stay caring for the land, I walked the *eruv* and gave thanks for all the Garden has grown and will grow for the Tawonga community. As I circled the space, I remembered the words of one of the Garden alumna: “The Garden likes being here, it wants to grow things, you can tell.”

During my Fellowship, I led 100 blocks for mostly campers but some adults. My favorite by far was teaching 7 and 8 year old campers about feminine Jewish leadership styles and how Leah from the Torah is a role model for mothering leadership and how plants have mothering leaderships qualities - like protection and softness.

This Fellowship has had an impact on me, and through what I learned and utilizing my skills, I have had an impact on Tawonga. The impacts on me, or what I received, can be categorized in Learning, Community and Leadership. And, what I gave can be categorized in Systematizing, Networking and Strategizing.

As a JOFEE Fellow, my Jewish learning increased exponentially. I learned about Jewish agricultural laws, customs, rituals and cycles that all connect to my values of environmental and

social justice. I also learned about curriculum develop and implementation, which is something I'm sure I will use in my professional and academic life.

I also, received community through this fellowship. In college, I stayed away from Jewish sororities and professional groups, preferring instead the grungiest co-ops and leftist political activist circles, so it has been nice and different to be a part of this Jewish community of professionals. I'm also now a part of the year-round Tawonga staff community and will be continuing for another season.

Last, I received training in leadership and through the strengths finder learned that my leadership style is very different from the leadership at my organization - which will sometimes be an advantage because of opportunities to collaborate and sometimes be a challenge to grow and try different leadership styles.

As a Fellow, I was able to give to Tawonga in systematizing, networking and strategizing. Much of this work happened in the Fall, these past three months, when I had time to digest all I had learned about operating an educational garden, being a supervisor and learning about Tawonga systems + integrating my Jewish learning. Because I am continuing with Tawonga for another season, I will be able to see the results of my thought work in the tangible work.

I worked to systematize our harvest, animal care, farmer manual, a six month calendar with suggestions for what a Tawonga farmer should be doing and thinking about each day, and staff training for Wild and Teva staff so they are prepared to lead deeper and more complex conversations and activities about sustainability, social justice and judaism at Camp Tawonga.

As a fellow, I networked with other JOFEE orgs and learned about best practices that could be brought back to Tawonga as well as shared what I knew with other orgs. My role played a part in bringing Tawonga into the fold of the contemporary JOFEE movement. I researched Jewish-Farm-to-Table organizations and presented to my colleagues on inspiring programs. I shared and learned from other JOFEE orgs about animal care. And I'm currently in conversations with Bay Area JOFEE orgs about organizing a roundtable of Jewish Outdoor Youth Educators who value social justice.

Last, I was able to bring strategizing to Tawonga and worked to find the balance between honoring our organization's strength and its place as an older, legacy org and thinking about areas for growth and collaboration. I wrote a sustainability webpage so we can communicate to our community what valuing sustainability looks like at Tawonga. I wrote a blog post about my experience as a JOFEE Fellow and the impact the farm and garden has on campers. I expanded the garden so we can grow twice as much food and advocated for a second gardener. And I worked with the Teen Leadership Institute to do a service project at Tawonga - expanding the fence line of the garden - and learn about food system justice.

Thank you for listening, please let me know if you have any questions!"

Before leaving camp in mid October, I walked the *eruv* once more. As I walked slowly, I pictured a time lapse from seedlings to overgrown chard, intermingling tomatoes, and 15 foot tall sunflowers. I saw campers picking and eating food, the Teen Leadership Institute teens expanding the fence line, and counselors breathing a sigh of relief as their bunk calmed upon entering the Garden gate. I gave my gratitude and wished the Garden a restful, replenishing winter.