

Dear NFTY-MAR,

“Wherever you go there's always someone Jewish. You're never alone when you say you're a Jew.” MAR, I don't want any of you to ever be alone. Let's work together to open our gates, meet each other wherever we are, and welcome a new generation of MARites to ensure there is never a Jew in MAR who feels they are alone. **With great excitement, I announce my candidacy for NFTY-MAR 5779-5780 Regional President.**

When I came to my first event, I was only there because a friend at my TYG told me to sign up and I hated it. Begrudgingly I came back and MAR clicked for me, I was still a shy and somewhat isolated freshman, but I felt the magic and made lifelong friends. It was the leaders of the time that made MAR what it is for me, who invited me to sit with them and asked me about myself, they're who inspired me to become a leader. I set out to find out what it meant to be a leader. I learned what it meant to give and take for two years at the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington's Jteen philanthropy program as a student and a mentor. Being a Juror and Bailiff for Montgomery County Teen Court, a criminal diversionary program for teens, the last three years, has taught me about justice and equality. Serving as the Head of Operations for my school stage crew and re-founding our school photo club showed me what it means to lead a team as opposed to being the team. All of these skills have come into play for me this semester at URJ Heller High in Israel. With no defined teen leaders, I have had to learn when it is appropriate to step up and lead and when it is better to let others take the driver's seat. This experience has also shown me how much I truly miss you MAR, and I am counting down the days until I get to see you again. **When I get back I want to help grow MAR through a three step process built around TYG engagement, emphasis on the first event, and a revamped committee system.**

Our journey starts at the TYG level. I hope that every TYG feels like they are supported with what they need to thrive. After spending three terms on my TYG board as our Junior Youth Group Liaison, then MVP, and this year PVP, I know firsthand that sometimes, a TYG just needs a little push to blossom. One of my ideas is assigning each board member a group of TYGs so they have a central resource with more knowledge to help them succeed, and in turn, help MAR succeed. I would also like to work with the PVP and MVP to send sample programs to TYGs to allow their members to experience a little of the energy we all feel every time we step off the bus.

Our journey builds at the first event. The first event is where a new member gets to be part of the magic for the very first time. They may be there because of a camp, school, or temple friend, an older sibling, or maybe a temple advisor. Once they get off that bus, it is up to us to open the gates because the first event truly dictates if someone will come back again. I will work with the rest of the board to create an environment where everyone will feel comfortable. This

means integrating - not isolating - the board, and having some of our younger members take the reins during opening mixers. It also means working with the board to create a big/little or family style program to give new members a NFTY veteran friend. It was the NFTY veterans I met at a family program my second event that made me want to stay at MAR. I would love to give that chance to all of our newest members.

Our journey culminates with a revamped committee system. After overseeing the 678 committee as a 678 Co-Chair this year, I recognize that the committee system is broken. The committee is the first chance many MARites have for leadership. This makes it the true voice of the people and it should be serving as a formative leadership opportunity for our members. I want to start helping our committee members become the future leaders they desire to be by teaching them to write programs and letting them run various activities throughout the event. I will work with the board and cabinet to create meaningful committees that result in a tangible impact within MAR.

I envision MAR as a region where every member, from the first event 8th grader to the last event senior, feels like they have a voice. I envision MAR as a region where nobody worries about where to sit for a meal. I envision MAR as a region becoming the national model for unique programming and events. I envision MAR as a region that everyone loves as much as I do. **NFTY-MAR, I would be honored to give back to you the magic you have given me and serve you as your 5779-5780 Regional President.**

B'ahava,
Brandon Schoenfeld