

Dear NFTY-MAR,

This past year has arguably been the strangest year in NFTY-MAR history. When an organization that historically centered around large in-person gatherings is suddenly shut down and forced to do everything online, one could reasonably assume that the organization would die out and its members would lose interest. This, however, is not the case for NFTY-MAR. Over the past year, we have proven that if a deadly virus can't wipe out NFTY-MAR, then nothing can. Even through extreme isolation, MARites have managed to come together and form unbreakable friendships that will last a lifetime. NFTY-MAR is by far one of the strongest and most resilient communities I have ever seen and I am honored to call myself a MARite.

Over the past three years, NFTY has provided me and my peers with amazing leadership opportunities that are unlike any other organization. Whether we're leading a program, winning (or losing) grade wars, calling our state legislatures, reading the Torah, or gongashloshing, NFTY-MAR's engaged community of Jewish teens is the quirkiest and arguably best group of people I have ever met.

It is with this love of the NFTY-MAR community that I humbly declare my candidacy for Regional President for the 2021-2022 year.

With experience in all five realms of NFTY (Programming, Social Action, Religion/Culture, Communication, and Membership), I believe that I am uniquely qualified to be NFTY-MAR's next president. For programming, I have had the honor of being Programming Chair for the 2020-2021 school year and I also have experience writing and leading numerous programs throughout my years in NFTY. For Social Action, I served as NFTY-MAR's Social Action Chair from 2018-2020, I was a member of the NFTY-MAR food waste prevention task force, I participated in L'taken, and I have numerous other social action leadership experiences that can be found on my platform sheet. For religion/culture, I am the Vice President of Dominion High School's Jewish Student Union as well as a 7th-grade Madrich at Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation. For communication, I have managed the social media of Dominion JSU, Dominion XC/TF, and Global Online Aspiring Leaders for Sustainability. Lastly, for membership, I was one of the Western MSACS in 2020 and I also make very good reach-out memes (if you know you know). A full list of my relevant experience can be found on my platform sheet.

If my platform were to be summarized into one word, that word would be "**engagement**".

First and foremost, as President, I will work to engage MARites through programming. A NFTY Program cannot be impactful without being memorable, and it is nearly impossible for a program to be memorable if it is not interactive. Whether we're virtual or in-person, the best programs are those in which every participant is fully engaged. Some examples of engaging programs that MAR has done in the past include but are not limited to: "Fig Bun", the Social Action Auction, and Grade Wars. As President (or in my dropdown position of PVP), I will ensure that every program, whether it's virtual or in-person, is interactive and hands-on.

Secondly, I will work tirelessly to engage every MARite. With decreased regional engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important now than ever that every member of the MAR

community feels safe, welcome, and eager to come to future events. As President, I will work to maintain and improve NFTY-MAR's status as the most inclusive community I have ever had the privilege to be a part of. In order to do so, I will make Grade Chairs an official cabinet position that will have regular meetings with the President and MVP in order to ensure that every class has representation in MAR's leadership. Additionally, I will work closely with the Social Action Vice President and the Inclusion Chairs before, during, and after events to ensure that every aspect of MAR is inclusive of every MARite.

Lastly, as President, I will help MAR place a stronger emphasis on engaging TYGs. With decreased membership and diminishing URJ resources, this next year is crucial to NFTY's success and survival. Therefore, successful TYGs will play an instrumental role in rebuilding NFTY from the ground up. I will work directly with TYG boards and advisors in order to promote regional growth and push TYG advisors and boards to place a stronger emphasis on recruiting their members to come to regional events. Additionally, if and when it is safe to do so, I will push for more traditional in-person events. While the URJ only has enough funding for one joint in-person event with PAR and GER, I believe that as a NFTY-MAR community we can easily fundraise and raise enough money to plan our own events such as Winter Kallah (if safe).

While this past year of isolation may have prevented us from being together physically, no virus can keep MARites apart. Throughout these trying times, NFTY-MAR has found innovative ways to come together as a community and keep our traditions alive. No matter how long it takes us to get back to some semblance of normalcy, we will get through this and things can only get better. While it makes me extremely sad that I only have only one year left of NFTY-MAR and that this year's amazing class of seniors will be moving on, I can't wait to make this next year of NFTY the best it can possibly be.

B'ahava (with love),
Jacob Wesoky