

## ישראל (Israel)

*One Month at the Weizmann Institute of Science (and hiking in the desert, which is a lot more difficult than a lot of people realize)*

My name is Lyndsey Reich, and I have quite the story to tell. You see, my senior year was filled with a lot of really amazing and completely unexpected blessings. I have always been used to working hard in school and not really getting anything out of it besides the promise of long-term rewards. But in this past year, I have certainly been rewarded.

It started with the senior research project I conducted with my partner, Tamim Shaker, at the Macomb Math Science Technology Center. This project is especially important in senior year, so we worked very hard on it, and our efforts certainly paid off! Our project ended up winning not only the MMSTC Science Fair, but the team division of the Science & Engineering Fair of Metropolitan Detroit as well. This was a *huge* shock to us. Not that we didn't work very, very hard, but we certainly didn't have access to some of the equipment that the other students did. We didn't think we really had a chance; we just had a lot of curiosity about Biology, and loved to investigate our questions with research. But off we went to the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Reno, Nevada; where we had a blast! We met some fantastic people, received many positive comments from the judges (professors and scientists from around the world) about our project, and wondered around all the glitz and glamour of the fair in a bit of a dreamy haze. After all, how *lucky* were we??? How *cool* was this whole science thing?

And as if that wasn't enough, we were told by the directors of SEFMD, "While we're in Reno, the senior grand champions will be able to interview for the chance to go to Israel to study at the Weizmann Institute." I cannot describe the chills that I felt at just hearing about this incredible opportunity. As if I hadn't already gained so much knowledge and experience, met so many people, and had so much fun. As my senior year was coming to a close and graduation neared, receiving the Weizmann award was one of the last things on my mind. I was completely shocked, yet again, that simply working hard in school and loving science could get you so far at such an early age. And I am so grateful that I've been able to experience that.

I'm almost not sure where to begin about Israel. I was, again, so blessed in so many ways. I was blessed in that the Detroit Science Fair could give a scholarship to study in the International Summer Science Institute. I was also blessed in that I was placed on my top choice research project, CD4+ Memory T Cells in the Bone Marrow. I had an immediate interest in immunology, and I have learned so much. I have worked with laboratory equipment that I had never dreamed of using. I have worked closely with the most kind and patient mentor I could have asked for. I have formed lifelong friendships with my two lab partners, and I plan on taking trips to visit them when I have the time and the money.

The scientific aspect of ISSI, while intensive, was only the beginning of the program. Our research was conducted seven hours a day, five days a week. On weeknights, we had lectures before dinner and evening activities after dinner. The lectures again provided us with opportunities for scientific growth (that we sometimes

slept through) and the evening activities provided us with opportunities for personal growth. The activities, such as making balloon animals and juggling, encouraged us to step outside of our comfort zones and to try something that the 78 of us, being science nerds, might not have been very good at. I suppose this was the perfect way to “prepare” us for our week of hiking in the Judean Desert. Not that I was in any way prepared for the intense heat and difficult terrain. But hiking in the desert certainly taught me a lot about myself. I now have proof that I am capable of pulling through even the most difficult and dangerous of tasks through sheer force of will. It is this willpower that I will come to rely on in college, and like at the end of each desert hike, I will have the satisfaction of knowing that I have put in 100 percent.

Every once in a while, someone will say something that immediately takes me back to my month in Israel. Something that reminds me of the time we arrived in Jerusalem for the first time, of parasailing over the Red Sea, of swimming in the Dead Sea, of helping each other up 1300 feet of stairs on the way up to Masada, of eating shawarma in the bazaar, of camel riding, of eating sushi in Tel Aviv, or of the night we spent in the desert sleeping under the stars. These are all such vivid memories, and they make me want to go back so badly. But without taking all 78 of the students in the program, it just wouldn't be the same. These people have defined my experience in Israel, and we count down the moments until the next time we can cross oceans to see each other. Never before have I formed such bonds in a mere month.

Again, I have to thank the people at the Detroit Science Fair for opening up these fantastic opportunities for me. My experiences in Israel have opened my mind, strengthened my confidence in myself, and helped me make connections. I am currently investigating research possibilities at Wayne State University. Who knows, maybe someday I'll go back and study at the Weizmann Institute? Whatever happens, I know that these experiences have shaped me, and I am extremely grateful.