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**TEAM ANN ARBOR**

***PARENT HANDBOOK***

**JCC MACCABI GAMES: THE BASICS**

The Games are a unique experience for Jewish teenagers, and we can assure you that, whatever the results are on the field, your teen will make new friends from across the country and around the world in addition to being filled with positive Jewish memories.

The purpose of this handbook is to help parents understands what happens both before and during the Games, what their role is, and to offer a few helpful hints to maximize the experience for their athletes. Whether you are sitting on the sidelines cheering for your athletes, or standing proud at the Opening Ceremonies Celebration, we consider you part of our team! Parents of athletes play a major role in the success of the JCC Maccabi Games experience.

**JCC MACCABI GAMES 101**

The JCC Maccabi Games is an Olympic-style sporting competition held each summer in North America, and is the largest organized sports program for Jewish teenagers in the world. The first North American JCC Maccabi Games was held in 1982 with 300 athletes. Today, over 5,000 teens, ranging from 13-16 years of age, participate in the JCC Maccabi Games each summer. The Games are co-sponsored by the Jewish Community Center Association of North America, Maccabi World Union, Maccabi Canada, and Maccabi USA/Sport for Israel.

**GETTING READY FOR THE GAMES**

The Games are a product of a year of hard work. The amount of information needed on each athlete is extensive. Parents can ease the burden on the Ann Arbor staff by submitting materials by the deadlines specified as well as understanding the commitment involved in participating in the Games. Please note that the Ann Arbor JCC is charged late fees by JCC Association if information is not turned in on time. This fee will be charged back to the individual.

**Eligibility Requirements**

The mission of the JCC Maccabi Games states that the program is a Jewish event for Jewish teenagers with the intent to foster long-standing memories and identification with organized Jewish community groups as well as identification with Israel. The JCC Maccabi Games aim to foster a strong Jewish identity among all of its participants.

All athletes must be Jewish, which is defined as follows: one of the athlete’s parents is Jewish and the athlete is being raised Jewish, or, is a Jew by choice and is being raised Jewish. In the spirit of the Games, if the parent or teenager does not believe they are Jewish on a year-round basis, then the child should not participate in the JCC Maccabi Games. Athletes must be 13 and cannot be 17 as of July 31 in any given year.

**HOST FAMILIES**

Home hospitality is an integral part of the JCC Maccabi Games experience, creating bonds between teens and local Jewish families. More than just providing a bed, host families make visiting athletes feel at home.

During the week of the Games, host families:

* Provide sleeping arrangements for at least two visiting athletes
* Provide breakfast every day and dinner when not provided by the host community (allergies are taken in to consideration)
* Drop off an pick up participants daily either from events or the JCC
* Entertain participants on Host Family Night (where host families take their athletes out for dinner and fun on the town)
* Get involved in the experience-often attending Opening Ceremonies, and cheering on your athlete at their events

**JCC CARES**

Since 1982, the JCC Maccabi Games have always been more than an athletic competition. The JCC Cares program is an opportunity for athletes to enhance their experience at the Games by taking a few hours out of their competition schedule to participate in a community service project with teammates. The basic American concept of community service is closely tied to the basic Jewish value of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), which urges us to make a difference in the lives of others who may be less fortunate.

Examples of past projects:

* Packing school supply kits for family centers and Israeli children
* Visiting sick children and teenagers at local hospitals
* Spending time with older adults in nursing homes
* Improving neighbors or local facilities (i.e. Habitat for Humanity)

**SAMPLE SCHEDULE**

Sunday – Delegation travel and Opening Ceremonies

Monday – Athletic competition, JCC Cares & evening activity either at JCC or downtown

Tuesday – Athletic competition, JCC Cares, & Host Family Night

Wednesday – Athletic competition, JCC Cares & evening activity either at JCC or downtown

Thursday – Athletic competition/Closing Ceremonies

Friday – Delegation Travel

\*Travel is sometimes granted for delegations on Thursday after Closing Ceremonies who live close, but not often. This would only be the case if we were in Detroit or Toledo.

**JCC MACCABI GAMES**

**RACHMANUS RULE**

What distinguishes the JCC Maccabi Games from all other athletic competitions? Is it simply the fact that the Games are made up of Jewish athletes. Or, is there something *Jewish* about the Games themselves? If we begin to infuse the Games with Jewish values, then we can make them a more meaningful experience for our athletes and their families.

Sometimes, though, Jewish values conflict with other values. We want our athletes to strive for excellence, yet we also want them to have compassion for their teammates and their opponents. What takes precedence? How should they act?

Judaism has always viewed compassion, or **RACHMANUS**, as a definitive value. The Talmud goes so far as to say that one can identify a Jew by observing whether they are compassionate or not. As Jews, we seek to emulate G-d. As one of G-ds defining characteristics is compassion, so too must we be compassionate.

**RACHMANUS** plays a key role in athletics and the JCC Maccabi Games. The level of competition at the Games varies considerably due to delegations from varying city, size, and delegations fielding teams with younger players. Although several sports have mercy rules, blowing out a much weaker team for the sake of scoring po9ints or getting runs across the plate is contrary to the spirit of the Games and shows a lack of **RACHMANUS**.

Athletes and spectators are not exempt from the **RACHMANUS RULE**. Lashon Harah, (slander, gossip, trash track), putting down opposing players, making fun of a weaker team or athletes shows a lack of **RACHMANUS**.

The atmosphere of the JCC Maccabi Games and their significance as a truly *Jewish* event can be enhanced if participants and spectators have an understanding and commitment to following the **RACHMANUS RULE**. Let’s win one for the Jewish people!

**THE TRYOUT PROCESS**

Team Ann Arbor will be comprised of teams and individual sports. Since we are one of the smallest delegations, we will not hold try-outs and accept all those interested and within the correct age bracket of 13-16 years of age, but request individuals put down their first, second, and third choices for sports they would like to participate in (please see registration forms). Athletes will only be allowed to compete in **one** sport at the Games.

If we do have enough players to field our own team for a certain sports, we will have our own coach, uniforms, etc. Coaches will then schedule practices at their own discretion throughout the spring and summer. Athletes are encouraged to attend as many practices as their schedule affords them. All athletes participating in team sports **must** attend the practices scheduled the week before the Games.

**MIXED TEAMS**

If we do have the majority of players for a certain sport, we will be able to have our own team with uniforms, coach, etc.  For those who pick a sport where we are not the majority, they will automatically get to play on what is called a “mixed team” in which our player will play with a different city, wear (and keep) their uniform, who has the majority of players (ex. soccer needs 10.  If Ann Arbor has 6 players, the Ann Arbor Team becomes the majority, and will take in 4 other players from other cities.  If Ann Arbor has 4-5 players, those players will get placed with another city, say Chicago, for example).

**AVAILABLE SPORTS**

**Athlete Fees**

Included in Your Registration:

JCCA registration fees, travel, uniforms, warm-up gear, t-shirts, trading pins. Financial assistance available.