

# Soille Hebrew Day School

## Creating community leaders one service hour at a time

BY JACKIE COHEN



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One thousand eight hundred and forty five hours. That's how many hours of community service Soille Hebrew Day's middle school students completed this year.

Three years ago, the Achieving Chesed and Excellence (A.C.E) program was created at Hebrew Day to encourage middle school students to participate in community service and grow as community leaders.

"Middle school is the emerging age for kids to take on these responsibilities when they are old enough to go out in the community and do things," says Rabbi Simcha Weiser, headmaster of Hebrew Day.

Soille also holds A.C.E. Community Day, where middle school students spend their entire day volunteering at various organizations. This year, their volunteer work ranged from visiting senior centers and volunteering at the JCC preschool, to working at Jewish Family Service's Hand Up food pantry.

"It's not just that one day of the year, but kids are on a consistent basis either designing projects of their own and taking them on the leadership way or they're participating in other programs.

Throughout the course of the year, the A.C.E program requires that students complete a certain amount of community service hours (15 for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 20 for 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 30 for 8<sup>th</sup> grade), which can be completed through a variety of projects during evenings and weekends.

Another major new project at the Hebrew Day is modeled after Google's famed 80/20 program. Middle school students are given two hours per week to create an individual project. This can be anything that interests them, but many students choose to dedicate those hours to community service (the Google idea is that employees spend 80 percent of their time on Google work, and 20 percent of their time on personal projects).

"What we find most exciting is that most of the kids actually continue in high school working in these same projects, even though they graduated from our program," Rabbi Weiser says. ✪

*Learn more about Soille Hebrew Day school at [hebrewday.org](http://hebrewday.org).*