

Students of Distinction

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Our October honorees are two HAFTR High School students. Jonathan (Yoni) Kastner and Justin Lish are two of 16,000 students nationwide designated National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists. The nationwide pool of semifinalists for this prestigious honor, representing less than 1% of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest scoring entrants in each state.

Justin Lish October 2015 HAFTR High School

Justin Lish is an exceptional young man of many gifts and talents. Commitment to his studies – particularly the sciences, mathematics, and the law – has resulted in several honors and inclusion on the Principal's Honor Roll.

Among the many awards and honors Justin has earned are: Regional Finalist for the Siemens Competition in Math, Science, and Technology, 2014; Gold Medal Winner and Finalist, International Sustainable World Energy, Engineering, and Environment Project (ISWEEP) 2015; Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony Award for Commitment to Social Justice, 2015; International Energy and Sustainability Conference, 2nd place, 2014; New York State Mock Trial 2013 Tournament, Final Four; and HAFTR Math & Engineering Fair – Highest Honors with Distinction – 1st place 2013-2015.

As Regional Finalist in the Siemens Competition, Justin presented the group's paper at Carnegie Mellon University in 2014. He also gave a poster presentation at the Material Research Society Symposium in December 2014. During this past summer, Justin participated at Rockefeller University Summer Science Research Program. Last summer, he was a student in Garcia Materials Research Science and Engineering Center Summer Scholar program at Stony Brook University. To round out his science experience, Justin participated in Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory-DNA Science Workshop, Recombinant DNA Technology.

Volunteering opportunities draw out additional strengths. Justin is Student Board Leader of Medical Clowning Troupe, Lev Leytzan. The troupe visits sick children and adults at area hospitals to the patients' delight. For Gift of Life Bone Marrow Foundation, he is Team Captain, "Walk for Life," which is dedicated to raising money and awareness for bone marrow and blood stem



(Left to right) Rabbi Gedaliah Oppen - HAFTR HS Judaic Studies Principal, Jonathan (Yoni) Kastner, Justin Lish, Ms. Naomi Lippman - HAFTR HS General Studies Principal

cell transplants. During June 2014 and 2015 he was Student Coordinator for Gift of Life's Senior Dinner donor drive. Justin has been a peer tutor since 2012.

Because all work and no play would make for a narrow and dull life, Justin is a voracious participant on several fields of play. Teams include Varsity Basketball Team, JV Basketball Team, JV Hockey Team, Tennis Team, and Softball Team. He is also a member of the Science Research Institute, Math Research Institute, Math Team, Debate and Mock Trial Teams, and Community Service Club. A thespian with dramatic interests, Justin was student spokesman for the documentary project, *Names Not Numbers*. He also had leading roles in the school's productions of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* and *The Corpse Bride*.

Jonathan (Yoni) Kastner October 2015 HAFTR High School

Yoni participates in a wide gamut of academic teams at HAFTR. These include Mock Trial and College Bowl Teams. At Rambam High School he was a member of Debate and Mathematics teams, and the Accelerated Science Program. Also at Rambam, Yoni took part in the Political Action Committee and the Human Rights Committee.

Regarding Human Right, Jonathan has strong beliefs. "All people must be given a chance. People should view others with only good intent, and strive to prevent any individual from feeling uncomfortable or sad. While this may seem simplistic, I believe that that is what matters," he explains.

During the summers Yoni is active honing skills and knowledge. He was enrolled in C++ program at Columbia University, in Game Design at New York University Summer Program, and Applications at Adelphia University. His interest in the sciences resulted in performing research at MIT Biology Laboratory under the direction of Dr. Lior Nissim.

Extracurricular activities include interning at Strategic Hebrew Inc. During his internship, Yoni helped design and develop an educational course for children to learn Hebrew effectively. Currently he is working on the program's first event for children. As an intern at Right This Way Tickets, which sells tickets via the secondary market, he performed data input and website application design.

A lover of film, Jonathan was a source of information for "Reverence," a documentary. He was interviewed on camera by Dr. Collin Kornfeind, the film's director and producer. Out of the spotlight and on the field, Yoni is a member of HAFTR's Basketball and Softball Teams.

Ms Joan Parmet, Director of College Guidance, enthuses, "Not only is Yoni smart, but he is intellectually curious, hard-working, analytical, creative, and unafraid to take risks. He is quite active in a myriad of school and community activities. In all of them, Yoni has demonstrated incredible leadership."

Congratulations to both young men on their impressive achievements!

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