

▲ Trip

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reasons. Each group has a higher staff-to-participant ratio – one to three on the Asperger's trip, for example, compared with one to 20 for regular Birthright trips.

In addition, some groups need specific and sometimes expensive facilities. Mobile-impaired groups need special buses that can accommodate more than 20 people in wheelchairs, and organizers have to scout every destination to make sure they are wheelchair accessible.

Laura Siegel, who went on a trip for the hearing impaired two summers ago, said the experience was transformative.

"I feel that this trip would leave a long-lasting impression for every deaf Jewish young adult out there in the United States, as it did for me," Siegel wrote JTA in an e-mail.

"We started out as strangers and ended up almost feeling like a family, and all it took was 10 days up close and personal sharing this amazing journey."

Lior Baruch, an Israeli special-needs teacher who has escorted three Asperger's trips and will take part in the one in December, said one moment during his last trip sticks out in his mind.

"A few hours after the group landed in Israel, they stood on the Armon Hanatziv promenade overlooking this view of Jerusalem," Baruch recalled. "You could see

the excitement in their eyes. Some took nonstop pictures. Others called their parents. It was a touching moment."

Rabbi Elsy Winick, associate director of Koach and one of the organizers of the Asperger's trip, said that one of the most powerful moments on past trips came when her group met Israelis with Asperger's.

"It was an eye-opening experience," Winick said. "It was an experience to realize that on the other side of the world there were people just like them."

Jeffery Odols, who is deaf and took part in a Birthright trip for the hearing impaired, raves about the experience. He said it included many memorable moments such as visiting the Bedouin in the Negev Desert and savoring the "wonderful shwarma and falafel."

But the 22-year-old from Rochester, N.Y., said the trip's highlight was the friendships he forged with other deaf and hearing-impaired participants.

"We learned so much from each other – our backgrounds, our struggles, our identities and our aspirations," Odols wrote. "It was interesting observing personalities blend in together."

After returning from the trip, Odols was inspired to enroll in a course in Middle Eastern studies. He said he hopes one day to help Israel improve its ties with its neighbors.

"Going on the Birthright trip actually opened my eyes," he said.

Obituary Page

SHELDON, LAWRENCE M.

Sheldon, Lawrence M., 63, of Atlantic City passed away on Nov. 7 at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, City Division, after a short illness. He is survived and will be deeply missed by his wife, Jane, his son, Robert Sheldon and his wife, Veronika, his son, Clifford Sheldon and his wife, Tia, and his daughters Jennifer Panchesine and her husband, Mike, his parents, Joseph and Sylvia Sheldon, and his sister, Marcia Tzioutziouklaris and her husband, Konstantinos.

Lawrence is also survived by his grandchildren, Joseph, Emily, Karina, Lauren, and Macy Sheldon and his nieces, Athina and Athanasia Tzioutziouklaris.

Being a partial owner of the family business, Sheldon's Foot Comfort Shop, he helped many people with his skills, knowledge, and talent. Larry was born May 12, 1946 in Atlantic City and graduated Atlantic City High School and became an orthopedist.

He loved traveling, watching the Discovery Channel, grocery

shopping, and most of all, playing with his grandchildren. He will be deeply missed by everyone who knew him.

Funeral services were held, Thursday, at ROTH-GOLDSTEINS' MEMORIAL CHAPEL, Pacific and New Hampshire Aves, Atlantic City. Interment followed at the Beth Kehillah Cemetery, Egg Harbor Township. Contributions in his memory can be made to the charity of the donor's choice.

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