

## Sam Elwood--Letter of Intent

**Who I Am:** My name is Sam Elwood. I like music, reading, and cats, but Judaism and everything it offers is my favorite part of my life. I am running to be your next Religious and Cultural Vice President.



*Left: The person who introduced me to NFTY, my sister Sophie, to whom I will be eternally grateful.*

**What I've Done:** I have been RCVP of SPORTY board for the past year and it has quickly become one of the best experiences I've ever had. I look forward to the board meetings each week, and not just to hear iconic quotes like "Every time I wear pants I fall asleep" from our PVP, Sam Weber. Every event is a lesson and an opportunity to make the next one better.

Through all of the planning, program writing, and phone banking our board put into each event we learned about ourselves as leaders and became better ones. When I planned our Teen Service I learned how to take the format of a traditional service and make it engaging and enjoyable for teens, and to use the skills of the amazing teens I'm friends with to make it happen.



*Right: One example of an amazing SPORTY teen.*

**Why I'm Running:** "Turn it over, turn it over, for all is therein." This my favorite quote from the Talmud because it encompasses why I love Judaism: if you continue to search our traditions and our texts, you can discover endless meaning. The culture and religion are both so rich and varied that everyone can find something Jewish that speaks directly to them. I want to help all NFTY-ites find the part of Judaism that they connect with.



*For example, I strongly connect with making and eating Challah.*

**What I Want to Do:** Each program at NFTY-NO events has a goal. Since NFTY is Jewish organization, I think it's important that we keep Judaism in mind when we set these goals. This could be political, like learning about the Israeli government; religious, like discussing a Torah story; or cultural, like learning how to fold

Hamentashen. Judaism's religious and cultural aspects have a lot to teach in an endless variety of fields. I think our programming could be enhanced by including more Jewish aspects to stay connected to the roots of NFTY. When writing a service or program, I would think of a Jewish experience or piece of knowledge that I want people to take away from the occasion and keep that goal in mind while creating activities. I would encourage my fellow board members to do the same.

I would like to continue our tradition of having a variety of service options at our NFTY-NO Kallot--a music service, a meditation service, an arts and crafts service--so that everyone can be engaged. Regardless of your religious views services are a time to connect with your community and feel a sense of belonging. Being surrounded by fellow Jews participating in a common tradition always makes me feel accepted. That feeling is one of the best parts of NFTY and I want to help others feel it too. I hope to continue and enhance the services at NFTY to make it a meaningful time for everyone by thinking of the diverse types of people at events and coming up with a choice of services that might make each person feel at peace.



*Services should feel as wonderful and valuable as holding this giant rabbit.*

One of the many great things about the Jewish community is how incredibly diverse we are. I believe NFTY should make a more conscious effort to make all Jews feel welcome and included. This includes LGBT+ Jews, disabled Jews, Jews from Mizrahi, Sephardic, and Ashkenazic backgrounds, and more. We can become more inclusive by educating ourselves about different communities and tailoring programs to make sure everyone can participate and feels welcome. NFTY has made great strides towards inclusion, but there is always more to do. We must ensure that there is a space for minority groups in NFTY, and then go beyond and make it clear that they are welcome.

**In Conclusion:** Being among Jewish teens and traditions at NFTY events has helped me discover my Jewish identity and the endless passion I have for Judaism. There is a place in Judaism for everyone, and a Jewish part of everyone's identity. I love being Jewish, and I want to share that love with my fellow NFTY-ites as your RCVP.