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AICE Announces First Winners of Schusterman Israel Scholar Awards

CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND — The American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) today announced the first recipients of the newly established Schusterman Israel Scholar Awards. These prestigious awards are designed to encourage students to seek graduate degrees in Israel-related fields.

Four scholars have been chosen to launch the program. All of them have outstanding academic records, speak Hebrew and have special strengths and talents. The winners, who will each receive \$10,000, are Ariel Beery from Columbia University, Aaron Bernay from Harvard University, Ofer Sharone from the University of California, Berkeley, and Stephanie Wilson from Brandeis University.

Universities throughout the country need more scholars to teach courses about Israel so students can gain an accurate and balanced view of Israel's history and culture. Many students, however, do not pursue degrees in Israel studies because few opportunities exist for young scholars to teach the subject. AICE established the Israel Scholar Development Fund to promote Israel scholarship in the United States by providing awards to encourage students interested in academic careers to pursue graduate study in Israel-related fields. The Fund also supports the establishing of visiting Israel scholar programs at select universities.

"We are thrilled to be able to help young scholars pursue their interests," said AICE President Howard Rosenbloom. "We believe each of these students has great potential for making important contributions to the field of Israel studies, and we're grateful to the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation for taking a lead in our effort to create a cadre of future scholars."

"We are proud to support this important project to help inspire a new generation of students to engage in

writing, research and teaching about Israel,” said Lynn Schusterman, President of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. The Foundation has been at the forefront of efforts to foster understanding and support for Israel on college campuses.

Ariel Beery is the only undergraduate chosen for the award. An economics and political science major at Columbia, Beery received top marks from the award’s panel of faculty judges. In addition to Hebrew, he is studying Arabic and, as student body president, Beery is very active in the effort to improve the university. One judge said Beery had “superb qualifications” and “great potential.”

Aaron Bernay is currently pursuing a master’s degree in Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard and planning to pursue a Ph.D. in History and Middle Eastern Studies. He is the head teaching fellow for the course, “Tel Aviv: Urban Culture in Another Zion,” for which he won a Presidential Instructional Technology Fellowship from Harvard. He received his B.A. from George Washington University and also studied at Hebrew University. One judge called his research topic on early tourism and the formation of attitudes “clever and intriguing.”

Ofer Sharone has a B.A. from the University of Illinois, a J.D. from Harvard Law School, and is now working on Ph.D. in sociology at Berkeley. Sharone is writing a dissertation related to unemployment and the comparative methods of searching for jobs in Israel and the United States. Sharone was born in Israel and is active in promoting dialogue with Arab students. One judge said Sharone is “extremely promising as an academic sociologist” and “obviously a star among graduate students at Berkeley.” A second judge agreed that he is a “high flyer” who is “likely to make his mark as an academic.”

Stephanie Wilson is currently working on a Ph.D. at Brandeis in Middle East/Israel Studies. She has an M.A. in the same field from Brandeis and a B.A. in Jewish/Israel Studies and History from Claremont McKenna. Wilson began a career in public relations, but decided to return to school to become a teacher. In addition to her studies, she works with a Brandeis Center that has a partnership with Al-Quds University. Her research is on the creation of the Tower of David Museum in Jerusalem. “Her dissertation,” one judge noted, “is a well-executed marriage of cultural studies and Israel studies as we are developing it.”

The Israel Scholar Development Fund is a project of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization created in 1993.

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