

NO ONES DREAM VACATION

most at home. Israel has a special place in Jack's heart, and his family's lives. After being in Colorado for the first semester of his junior year, Jack decided to take a three-month long semester as a transfer student in Israel, meeting friends, experiencing a whole new scheduled school system, living in a dorm with roommates, and getting to breathe in the sweet air he once knew when he traveled with his family when he was little. "We started the trip with two of the programs: Heller, the program that I was on, which was Reformed Judaism only, and Barrick, a private school from Philadelphia. We shared half the campus with an Israeli high school, and the classes I did were the same, like AP World. But there were few people, most had three or four people including me. We had three days on average of class a week because we'd have field trips where we'd go and we learned Israeli studies," Tal said. The classes consisted of the same core classes from the United States while also having Israeli studies after the short trips they would take. The fun came to a sudden end before the day the students were supposed to visit the Western Wall to celebrate Hav Torah. "The first time I heard it was when the sirens went off on October 7th. I was in Jerusalem to celebrate Hav Torah, which is the happiest day of the Jewish year. I was so excited to celebrate it for the first time. I was supposed to go to Wall that morning, but I decided to stay and sleep in. I was in bed and off. I thought it was an ambulance at first, then I looked outside and there was a commotion, the doorkeepers collected the students who were still at the hotel, and brought Jack and the others to an underground bunker below the hotel. "It was so crowded in the bunker. After a couple minutes we heard the first missile. We waited three or four hours in the shelter, just listening to the rockets outside every couple of minutes," Tal said. Jack's main concern was his friends and family. "Some of Jack's family living in Israel was murdered October 7th near the Gaza Strip. The ground invasion happened at the time was centered near the West Bank, where Jack's group was located. "Even with everything going on, my friends and I were still able to celebrate Hav Torah with a Jewish family that brought a small Torah with them. We danced around the sukkah and tried to cheer up my friends who were crying and had never visited Israel before," Tal said. The trip back to the United States after the program was cut short was a long and tiring process. Because of the mass booking of flights happening at the time, finding transfer flights was a struggle, but the students finally made a safe trip home. "No one should have to live their life like that. On playgrounds, there are bomb shelters. And when I was little, right next to my grandparents' house, there was a bomb shelter. Israel is such a peaceful place, like in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. But there's this constant little shadow of fear that something could happen at any moment. No one should have to live their life in fear," Tal said.

photos courtesy of Tal



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HOW HEALTHY IS TOO HEALTHY

finding what your true purpose is. Junior Ryan Palminteri found her purpose through dance and being in a positive environment with the support of her girls. "I just think it is fun. It's a nice way to move your body, and I love being flexible," Palminteri said. Her dance community is mostly just a group of girls working together, full of body positivity and self-love. Sports such as dance and gymnastics are known to tear down women's body images. Although Palminteri believes that Peak Academy of Dance, her studio, does a pretty good job of accepting all different body types, she admits there are faults. "I think my studio really tries to work on it and be all body positivity, but there's definitely a lot of negative self-talk," Palminteri said. She's glad that the teachers don't take weight too seriously. Through the years that she has been dancing, the Peak requirements

change for the students every year. In the past, they haven't been too serious, but recently Peak is implying that the girls need to have a healthy lifestyle and accept the possibility of starting diets if needed. "Sometimes, it's definitely something that just adds on to my life and it can be kind of stressful, but I really enjoy it," Palminteri said. She took the restrictions of weight her teachers suggested very seriously after the rules were implemented. Unfortunately, once she hit sixth grade, Palminteri developed anorexia from comparing herself to the women she was dancing with. "Looking at myself in the mirror all day at dance made me develop body dysmorphia as well. I thought I looked fatter than I was, and the pressure from teachers and social media always showing me what dancers should look like made it worse," Palminteri said. Dancers in society today are only thought of as tall, skinny, slim waisted women. That's the only way that they are shown and accepted on social media. Palminteri would look around at her dancing crew and feel as if she didn't fit in, because she thought she didn't have the same body type as them. "The mirror wall in the dance room and fliers posted on healthier lifestyles everywhere throughout the academy made Palminteri's sickness much worse. "In our studio they created a health dance class and it is all about eating healthy and taking care of your body. It was making me think 'why are they putting these up and do they think I am overweight or not good enough?'" Palminteri said. Even though it is important for any human to maintain a healthy lifestyle, having this suggestion all around you at every given moment will soon become degrading. Social media and the suggestion or words of others become very personal to lots of women all around because everyone knows being compared to someone is emotionally degrading. "We should have more awareness about and body dysmorphia," Palminteri said.



anorexia

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