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CDO junior heading to Israel



By Erin Schmidt, ESchmidt@ExplorerNews.com

October 12, 2005 - Alli Coritz always dreams big. To achieve her dreams she realizes she must work hard and be open to new experiences. And when the 16-year-old student heard of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to Israel she immediately jumped at the chance.

"It's amazing to even fathom going to Israel," said Coritz, a junior at Canyon Del Oro High School. "I would be stupid not to apply."

Stupid is a word that Coritz isn't used to hearing. Since entering high school she has taken numerous advanced placement classes and she is ranked 17th out of 450 students in her class.

In order to get what she wants, she realizes there is no other way than by working hard.

So when her older sister came home from school and tossed an application for the America-Israel Friendship League Youth at her feet she immediately stepped into gear and began to fill it out. It was Friday and the application was due on Monday, an application that could take weeks to fill out, she said. It required doctor's notes, an essay and teacher recommendations. Coritz was undaunted. She was up for the challenge.

"I like the stress," she said.

[The America-Israel Friendship League is a national organization with a Tucson Chapter, 4560 E. Broadway Blvd. The league promotes dialogue and awareness about different cultures and values between citizens of Israel and the United States, according to the Tucson chapter's Web site.](#)

Part of enhancing the dialogue between the two countries is done by a three-week student exchange.

After some last-minute scrambling mixed with a lot of nerves, Coritz was chosen to take the November trip to Israel.

Each year students are selected to make the trip. One hundred twenty-five students from the United States will make the overseas voyage. From Tucson, five students were selected. Coritz is the only student selected that is not from a Tucson Unified School District school, she said.

Coritz said being able to take three weeks and travel to Israel will be the trip of a lifetime.

"I need to get out," she said. "I need to see the world. I can't sit here anymore."

However, Coritz must sit and wait for clearance that it is safe to travel to Israel. If it is decided nationally that it would not be safe for the trip, the selected students will be given a trip to New York City to meet and discuss Israeli culture and beliefs.

Even though that trip would be nice, it doesn't compare to Israel and she hopes it doesn't come to that, she said.

"I'm just so grateful to be going," she said.

CDO Principal Michael Gemma said he is proud of Coritz, one of CDO's star students.

"Alli is an excellent student," Gemma wrote in an e-mail interview. "She has increased her participation in advanced

placement classes each year she has attended CDO."

It is obvious Coritz wants to broaden her knowledge of other cultures and learn from their experiences, Gemma said. And obtaining that knowledge can only help her fellow CDO students.

"The benefits for both our students and our visitors are an increased appreciation of our diversity and a better understanding of our similarities," Gemma said