

Rabbi, youths leave for post-Katrina work

By **AARON MORRISON**
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TEANECK – The newly named regional director of an international Jewish youth leadership group will take students to New Orleans today as part of an ongoing enrichment project started after Hurricane Katrina.

Rabbi Ethan Katz, regional director of the New Jersey NCSY, a youth program of the Orthodox Union, will take 30 girls from area yeshiva and public schools to the Crescent City's Lower 9th Ward for five days of community service projects.

Katz said the trip is successful if the teenagers learn the gravity of natural disasters and experience "a change of mindset."

"You don't live in the United States of Bergen County," Katz said. "We exist in a much larger community. And these kids walk away with a very different feeling."

The girls will do physical and spiritual work, with visits to the local Jewish community and

a local Shabbat.

Past post-disaster trips have included similar work in Oak Island, Texas; Birmingham, Ala.; Nashville, Tenn.; Boulder, Colo.; and Rochester, Minn. After Superstorm Sandy, Katz took local youths to Hoboken for a service project.

Levi Rybalob, 19, a participant in one of Katz's post-tornado trips to Minnesota, said he vividly remembers helping a flood victim whose hoarding problem exacerbated a serious mold issue.

"It provided a way to appreciate helping people and understanding the need for helping people who slip through the cracks," said Rybalob, a Fair Lawn resident.

As the new regional director of New Jersey NCSY, formerly referred to as the National Council of Synagogue Youth, Katz will serve more than 1,500 Jewish teenagers across the state, including chapters in Englewood, Fair Lawn, Livingston and Teaneck.

