



HILLEL

The Star



WASHINGTON AND LEE HILLEL NEWSLETTER
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DECEMBER 2010

THE DEDICATION OF THE HILLEL HOUSE

By Joan Robins

It was such a pleasure to see so many alumni, students, local residents, faculty and friends at the dedication of our beautiful Hillel House on September 25. As I spoke from the podium, I noticed smiles and also tears of pride. The entire weekend was filled with significance and celebration.

Hank Dobin, Dean of the College, gave the invocation, including the Shehechianu; President Ruscio spoke of the way that W&L's traditions of community and respect match those of Hillel; Brian Cherry, a student co-president of Hillel, talked about the meaning of the Hillel House for Jewish

students on campus; and Deb Geiger of Hillel International congratulated W&L for investing in Jewish student life. Finally, Mark Grunewald, Interim Dean of the Law School, made heartfelt remarks on the meaning of the Hillel House for the local Jewish Community.

More than 200 alumni, students and friends attended the celebration, and many alumni who viewed the formal dedication online sent heartfelt notes. Words written to describe the weekend were: fabulous, beautiful, meaningful, warm, inviting, tasteful, spiritual, a gigantic MAZEL TOV! I hope you enjoy the emails from three of the many alumni who sent their



Cutting the Ribbon: President Ruscio, Steve Marks '59, Graham Sheridan '11, Dean Dobin, Dean Grunewald, Joan Robins and others officially dedicate the Hillel House.

thoughts about attending the Hillel House dedication.

I will cherish the dedication for years to come. The building of the Hillel House was a community effort, and it is already benefiting the entire campus and Lexington communities.

Email from . . .

David Friedfeld '83L

. . . Hearing Professor Grunewald talk about "connectedness" gave me a different understanding of various life experiences I have had. Throughout the weekend I observed tears of pride from older Jewish and non-Jewish alumni, and numerous community members. The unwavering support for this project is obvious. I also enjoyed the perspective of the current Jewish students on the campus. I think by now, we can all see that Hillel House is more than a physical plant; it indeed is a spiritual part of the campus. . .

Dan Einstein '83

I am still processing all of the Hillel events from the past two days.

Attending Shabbat services on campus in Lexington remains an amazing experience and moment for me. Over the past two days I have thought much about my college years, remain grateful for the Jewish presence that existed then and yet am thrilled that W&L and Lexington now have the opportunity for Jews and others to gather in a place of our own.

Though I have followed the developments as they occurred, it remains a comforting fact

Nick Cohen '64

. . . From the exterior, the house, located just east of the R.E. Lee Episcopal Church (Mrs. Fletcher's Church), appears to be just another 1930s era building. When you enter the front door, you find warmth and an environment in which immediately you feel very comfortable.

Imagine Friday evening services attended by over 150 people. (Jewish students make up 4.5% of the enrollment, and approximately twenty Professors are Jewish.) Jewish alumni, including members of the ZBT Classes of 1943 & 1945 were

Continued from page 1

Dan Einstein '83 (cont.)

that members of our Board of Trustees have been such stalwart supporters of the strategy to increase Jewish enrollment and to follow through with such strong participation and leadership in the fundraising efforts. Given the world in which we live, it is a comfort to know that our W&L continues to shine as a beacon of hope and promise and that our leadership is willing to take the risks that are inherent in an initiative such as ours. In an odd play on the University motto, it is clear that those who are ever mindful of the future also remain mindful of our past.

I share in your deserved and just pride in all that has led to this weekend and remain grateful for your individual and collective leadership and commitment to see this through. Mazel Tov...and thank you.

Nick Cohen '64 (cont.)

present, as well as members of the greater Lexington community. Students led the Services - very Reform.

Imagine attending a Dedication Ceremony where two of the speakers are Jewish Deans: Dean of the College, and the Interim Dean of the Law School. I don't

believe we had a single Jewish professor at W&L during our tenure there.

Imagine W&L actively recruiting outstanding Jewish students.

It was a great weekend; if you return to Lexington, you'll be surprised.

Imagine a kosher corned beef sandwich or nova on a New York bagel. The snack bar/restaurant (E. Café) is open to all students and has been a two-meal a day hit.

Don't mean to ramble, but I was mesmerized by this weekend.

More than 100 alumni attended the dedication of the Hillel House. Left to right: Nick Cohen '64, Barry Levin '68, Max Shapira '65, Jim Sagner '62



Students meet with Ruth Messinger, President of the American Jewish World Service. Messinger's talk, co-sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellows Program, was in honor of the dedication of the Hillel House.



Hanukah in the Hillel House.



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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

By Joan Robins

In this season's newsletter we are thrilled to bring you reports of wonderful new initiatives and opportunities to celebrate. We opened our doors to the Washington and Lee Hillel House on Labor Day. The facility has been a vital part of campus ever since, just as we intended it to be. High Holidays were observed on campus led by a student rabbi. The Torah was dedicated on Rosh Hashanah. The formal dedication of the Hillel House was held in September. Students celebrate Shabbat each Friday. University departments (including the President!) and student organizations hold meetings at Hillel. The E. Café is a fun and lively place to eat breakfast and lunch. Many milestones have been reached, as well as many opportunities to recite the Shehechianu.

As Hanukah approaches and students are preparing for finals, we can all take pride as we reflect upon this first semester in the new W&L Hillel House. Our activities are providing students with the opportunity to explore their Jewish identities during this important period in their lives. Whether they are attending services, socializing with professors, eating deli at the E. Café, or doing a community service project, students are engaged in Jewish life in a way that's comfortable and on their own terms. We enthusiastically give thanks to all who provide support to Washington and Lee Hillel.



Havdalah services on Yom Kippur. High Holiday services were attended by W&L and VMI students, members of the local Jewish community, and W&L faculty and staff.

HIGH HOLIDAYS IN THE HILLEL HOUSE

By Max Chapnick '13

For Washington and Lee Hillel 5771 has been a year of firsts. Hillel, the Jewish students of Washington and Lee and VMI, and the greater Lexington Jewish community began the inaugural year of the Hillel House with the first ever High Holiday services held on campus.

Hillel invited Student Rabbi Aaron Meyer, a fifth year rabbinical student at the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, to lead the services. The machzor, or prayer book used on high holidays, was written and donated by former Stanford Hillel Executive Director and father of sophomore Rimona Cartun, Rabbi Ari Cartun.

Hillel hosted the evening and morning service for the first day of Rosh Hashanah followed by a short Tashlich service near Washington and Lee's Woods Creek. Yom Kippur services consisted of Kol Nidre, a morning service, a musaf, or afternoon service, and finally a closing N'ilah service.

Rabbi Meyer wrote in an email to students a few weeks before the High

Holidays, "It is a unique opportunity to craft an experience that will be meaningful for all." And there is no doubt that for all who attended, the holidays were just that.

The services, though led by Rabbi Meyer, were conducted with heavy student involvement and behind-the-scenes organization. For example, both of the Hillel Co-Presidents, senior Brian Cherry and junior Lev Raslin, gave remarks, and many students and community members led prayers or were honored with Aliyot.

The few days were jam-packed with inspiring moments. On Rosh Hashanah, Washington and Lee Hillel's first ever Torah was dedicated, in a short emotional ceremony to honor Lexington community members Betty Kahn Taylor and Dr. Joseph Goldsten. Rabbi Meyer's second sermon found him getting choked up as he spoke of our duty to question, but always stand with, Israel.

The students of Washington and Lee left the High Holidays feeling proud of their small but mighty Jewish community and glad that they didn't have to drive an hour to Roanoke for services.



Shabbat Shalom: Students meet each Friday evening to light candles have kiddush, motzi and dinner.

A FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE

By Samantha Rosier '14

Coming from a large Jewish community, I was a bit nervous to see what Hillel would be like in the tiny town of Lexington, VA. Rosh HaShanah was during the first week of classes, so I didn't wait long to find out. As I entered the new beautiful Hillel House I was greeted by smiles from classmates, faculty, and other Lexington Jews. A student Rabbi was brought in to lead the services in the multi-purpose room of the House. The services were wonderful, obviously different than what I was used to but the simple fact that we were saying the same prayers from my hometown made my first week of school a little less crazy and made me feel more at home here in Lexington.

The transition to college is a time of constant changes. Washington and Lee is an entirely new culture, even the weather is different than my warm and humid South Florida home. Hillel gives me a place where I can have some

sense of normalcy while meeting other amazing students who have some of the same background as me. I have enjoyed the First Friday at Five services and the simple Shabbat Shalom dinners we have every week. Building a Sukkah right in the middle of the House's parking lot was an adventure that made me realize that I do not mix very well with power tools.

One of my favorite experiences so far with Hillel though, was spending time with the other Community Service Vice President and picking out clothes for two under-privileged boys in the area. The mitzvah of Tzedakah, helping others and its meaning rang clear and true that afternoon; giving is more fun than receiving. I feel like that is one of the main points of Hillel.

I cannot describe how much Hillel has helped me transition into W&L life. I've made new friends, helped other people, learned a bit more about the school and myself, all the while having a great time and feeling a little bit more at home here in Lexington.

PARENTS' WEEKEND

By Lizzie Engel '13

Over the first weekend in November, Washington and Lee students and faculty welcome parents and families of current students to campus for a weekend of meeting professors, eating great food, and enjoying the Lexington nightlife. Hillel celebrated Parents' Weekend with a special edition of First Fridays at Five and a Bagel Brunch Saturday morning.

Services on Friday night were led by Max Chapnick '13 and me. Instead of student-led Kiddush at the conclusion of services, we had a special guest lead us in the blessings. Rabbi Ari Cartun, father of Rimona Cartun '13, was visiting for the weekend and graciously agreed to participate in leading the Kiddush.

The very well-attended service was followed by a delicious dinner of beef tenderloin, roasted garlic mashed potatoes, roasted squash medley, mushroom caps, salad, and of course some delicious challah baked by our very own Director Joan Robins. There were also lots of yummy deserts. The families had a chance to mingle and meet and everyone enjoyed themselves.

Saturday morning Hillel hosted a Bagel Brunch for Jewish students and families. The brunch featured fresh bagels from the E. Café, spreads, a lox platter, a vegetable frittata and coffee. The multipurpose room was abuzz with families getting to know other families and enjoying some scrumptious bagels. The E. Café also opened on Saturday for regular business so all Washington and Lee students could show their parents W&L's newest dining option.

All around, Parents' Weekend was a great success for Washington and Lee Hillel! We've already marked our calendars for next year.

HILLEL HEADS TO THE BIG EASY

By Jared Hester '13

After a successful February Break trip to Montevideo, Uruguay in 2010, ten Hillel members will be packing their bags and heading south to New Orleans for this year's Hillel International ASB (Alternative Spring Break) trip. The ASB program is an alternative to the usual activities of February Break and allows students to do volunteer work in underprivileged communities in the U. S. and around the world.

With the help of a generous grant from Hillel International, students will have the opportunity to partake in a culturally, socially, and personally enriching experience that will benefit the lives of people in New Orleans affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Through a program run by Jewish Funds for Justice, we will participate in activities that include planting organic gardens to provide produce to local families, clearing vacant lots of debris, and rebuilding homes. The program includes celebrating Shabbat and Jewish study. Students will also be able to experience the culture of New Orleans's historic districts and will bond during their sleepless nights staying in a communal youth hostel. Joining them will be another Hillel organization from Detroit, allowing two groups from different parts of the country to come together for the same cause.

Although the trip will be partially funded by Hillel International, W&L Hillel is still busy planning fundraisers like last year's highly successful holiday raffle, which included prizes from local businesses and restaurants. One lucky winner even won two homemade challahs from Hillel Director Joan Robins. For more information about the trip or fundraising, or to provide a donation, please email Joan Robins at robinsj@wlu.edu.



Seniors Brian Cherry and Graham Sheridan hang one of the mezuzahs in the Hillel House.



Students hand out chocolate Hanukah gelt to local children during Lexington's Halloween trick-or-treat event.

HILLEL SOCIAL LIFE

By Lev Raslin '12

For what it's worth Bob Dylan may not have a great voice, but he is Jewish yet again. On November 10th, a group of Hillel students from the undergraduate college, the law school, faculty members, and friends embarked on a journey to the John Paul Jones Arena in Charlottesville, where the music-icon headlined. The car ride there was filled with jokes, and the concert gave us a lot more material for the ride back. Regardless, seeing the man in person was a spectacle and a moment I'll remember forever. All who went share this sentiment, which is perhaps the most important thing gained that night.

When we have social events at Hillel, the goal is to bring the Jews of Lexington, particularly the students, closer together. We come from all walks of life, belong to different organizations, and come in different molds. But it turns out that a lot of us have one thing in common, we love to watch Glee. For those who don't know, this musical television show airs weekly on Tuesdays, and is about a high school glee club facing a variety of pertinent social issues. Students of Hillel get together on this day weekly, either in the boardroom or the upstairs student lounge to watch this show. We have a lot of corny fun. We also hold holiday gatherings throughout the year. A popular event happens around the holiday season, some call it Hanukah, we call it the Festival of Lites. Jews and Gentiles alike come together to celebrate this jolly week with a night of dancing, dreidel games, and other revelry.

We're always open to more ideas and keep an open eye for events that Hillel might be interested in participating in. Communication between other Jewish organizations has also increased and will become a matter of increasing priority as we grow as a chapter and want to expand our friends-circle. If you can suggest a fun bonding activity or would like to invite us to your place of residence if we're passing through then L'Chaim! We are always looking for a fun time.



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and Lev Raslin '12

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Lev Raslin '12

Rimona Cartun '13

Stephanie Krasnov '13