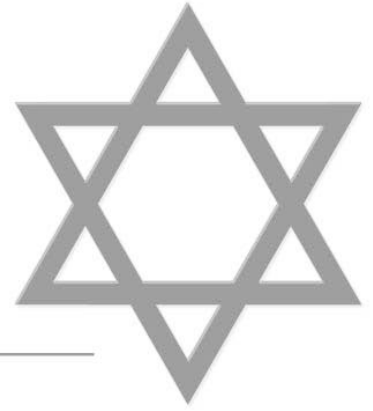




**HILLEL**

# The Star



WASHINGTON AND LEE HILLEL NEWSLETTER  
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DECEMBER 2008

## ZBT Class of 1959 Makes a Leadership Gift to the Hillel House



*Bottom Row (L) to (R): Jerry Sklar, Steve Friedlander, (middle) Arnold Steiner, Donald W. Sigmund, Steve Marks, (top row) Tony Frank, Ralph Evans, Ed Levy.*

Thanks to the '59 ZBTs, we are within sight of breaking ground by September 2009.

In this issue of *The Star*, we recognize and thank the great guys in the ZBT class of '59. These alumni are helping to shape an exciting vision of Jewish community life at W&L. We are grateful for their support, and we hope that, like us, you will be inspired and entertained by their reflections.

An emeritus member of the W&L Board of Trustees, Steve Marks is a private investor in Houston, Texas. He believes that it is important to support the W&L Hillel House "because it will in part, fulfill the 'hole' left when the two Jewish fraternities left campus." He believes that the new facility "will provide a place for Jewish students to meet, socialize, and identify with their heritage."

Donald W. Sigmund, an avid Redskins fan, started in the insurance business in 1964, and is currently associated with The Meltzer Group in Washington DC. He believes that the new facility "will enrich all aspects of campus life for generations to come." He hopes that the Hillel House will be a "vibrant, exciting addition to the cultural life of the university."

"My generosity in part, has to do with my 50th reunion, but mostly it is in honor of my lifelong fraternity friends and in memory of those who are gone," said Ralph Evans, who is retired from the NY Stock Exchange. He is pleased that the Hillel House project crossed his path this year.

Steve Friedlander is a retired managing partner of Friedlander Mislser law firm. He will be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



### Childress Challenge Grant

Don Childress, the Rector of the Board of Trustees, has been an advocate for the Washington and Lee Hillel House from the beginning. He strongly supports the goal of enrolling more Jewish students at W&L and realizes that the Hillel House is crucial to achieving the goal. Now, as part of his commitment to W&L's new campaign, Don Childress has committed a \$500,000 matching challenge grant. Knowing that we need to raise \$1.5 million to complete successfully our \$4 million goal for the Hillel House, beginning September 24, 2008, Don Childress will give \$1 up to \$500,000 for every \$2 in new gifts and pledges contributed to the Hillel House. The Rector desires that we meet his challenge in gifts and pledges by the early part of 2009 so that we can begin construction of the Hillel House in the summer of 2009.

50th reunions are a time to leave your mark on a place. The ZBT class of 1959 is ready to do just that. Their big anniversary is coming up in spring of 2009, and the brothers wanted to mark the occasion by doing something that would make a difference at W&L.

The '59 ZBTs were inspired by W&L's plans to build a facility for Hillel. They knew that it was important for the University in recruiting Jewish students, so a core of interested members of the class worked tirelessly to discuss what they and their classmates might do. The group included Steve Marks, Ralph Evans, Don Sigmund, Steve Friedlander, and Ed Levy. The result of those efforts today is \$1.1 million, including an endowment for long term maintenance. This wonderful leadership gift has brought us more than three fourths of the way towards our fundraising goal of \$4 million.

# W&L Hillel Invited to Join Seven-College Initiative

This article was written by Jeff Hanna, Executive Director of Communications and Public Affairs. It was featured on the W&L website the week of November 17th.

Washington and Lee is among a group of seven national liberal arts colleges included in a pilot initiative being undertaken by Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, the largest Jewish campus organization in the world, to enhance the experience for Jewish students on smaller campuses.

Joan Robins, the director of Washington and Lee Hillel, attended a training seminar in October as part of the initiative.

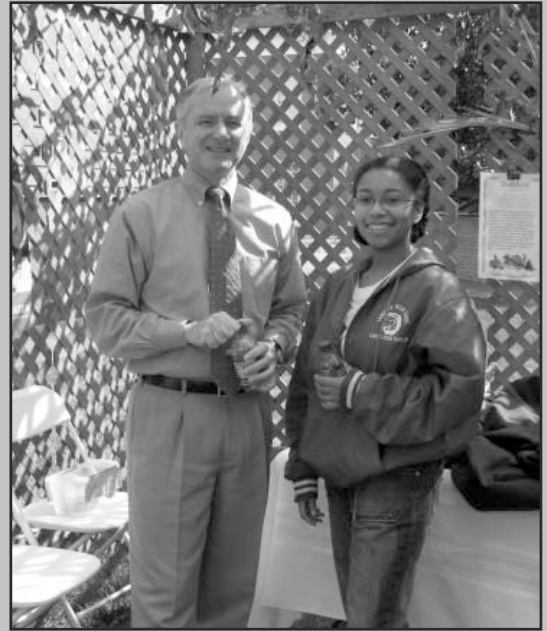
“The first training seminar offered a wonderful opportunity to meet colleagues and exchange ideas,” said Robins. “While I am familiar with Hillel’s mission and values, it was helpful to discuss ways to apply these values to my work with students. The goal is to enrich the lives of Jewish students on campus. I am already feeling the support from the cohort: W&L is going to be able to send four students on the birthright Israel program this winter.”

The other colleges in the pilot cohort are Bowdoin College, Colgate University, Franklin and Marshall College, Lehigh University, Middlebury College, and Williams College. The campuses were selected on the basis of having one paid professional dedicated to Jewish life on campus, high alumni involvement, an open relationship with Hillel, and high academic rankings.

According to Deb Geiger, Hillel International’s Assistant Director of the Soref Initiative for Emerging Campuses, the goal is to increase student engagement and to double the number of Jewish students who participate in immersion experiences such as Alternative Break and Taglit-Birthright Israel.

“There is tremendous potential to develop the Jewish student populations on these campuses by applying a more strategic and focused effort,” explained Geiger. “We want to ensure that despite the small population, Jewish students feel engaged in Jewish life and have access to the same opportunities, like Taglit-Birthright Israel, as do campuses with large Jewish student populations.”

Hillel has committed to the seven-institution cohort for two years and will not only work to get students in more meaningful Jewish experience on and off campus but also to provide the professional with more skills, knowledge and resources.



*Sukkot: President Ruscio, Christine Robinson, and other guests join Hillel for “Pizza in the Hut.” This year, the sukkah was built in front of the Commons.*

ZBT '59 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

celebrating his 50th wedding anniversary and 50th reunion in May at Washington and Lee! Steve feels that “the new Hillel House will be a drawing card for prospective Jewish students and their parents.” He hopes that it will send the message that the university is an inclusive and embracing campus.

“My college friendships were invaluable to me,” said Ed Levy, a retired psychiatrist from New Orleans. “It was most important for me to commemorate this 50th reunion with the gift to the Hillel House.”

Jerry Sklar is supporting the Hillel House because of his interest in furthering something distinctly Jewish at W&L. For many years Jerry has been active in the Memphis Jewish community, serving on many boards, including the Federation which funds Hillel at the University of Memphis. “It has been extremely gratifying to observe and measure how Hillel has enriched the college experience of Jewish students on that campus. I can only hope that W&L does as well.”

Tony Frank retired in February, 2004 from RBC Dain Rauscher, after 44 years in the investment business. Like his classmates, Tony believes that W&L would greatly benefit from a tangible presence of Jewish life on campus.

Arnold Steiner, retired from the banking business, is living in Birmingham. He is pleased that the Hillel House will allow Jewish students to have a place to celebrate holidays on campus, rather than have to travel out of town.

We eagerly anticipate groundbreaking day, and thank all those who are helping to bring this vision to life.

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# Shabbat with the Ruscios

By Josh Posner '12

For Shabbat tonight, President Ruscio and his wife invited several students from the Hillel to join them in a delicious dinner in their home, the Lee House, which was the home of Robert E. Lee in the final year of his presidency at the school, before he passed away. There were 9 or 10 students who attended the intimate occasion. Our wonderful director of Hillel, Mrs. Joan Robins, helped coordinate the dinner.

From the moment I walked in, I felt truly welcomed by President and Mrs. Ruscio. The Lee house is full of history, from the priceless portraits on the wall to the furniture that the Lee family once used everyday. Mrs. Ruscio kindly gave us a tour of their home, which is probably almost too close to the boisterous freshman dorms. There's a piano in the living room that was personally made for Robert E. Lee. You could feel the history and see the progression of time in the house as it has been maintained to its modern condition. It was an honor to explore the Lee house, and even more special that our current President showed us around.

Then came the dinner. Of course, we needed to say the prayers for Shabbat, the prayer for the candles, the kiddush and the Ha-motzi. Traditionally, the woman of the household says the prayer for the candles, and then the man of the household blesses the bread. We do attend Washington and Lee University, so we respect our traditions. Mrs. Ruscio confidently lit the candles and President Ruscio helped us bless the Challah. I have to say, seeing the Ruscios participate in our Shabbat dinner with such respect and interest for Judaism really made me feel that my religion was fully supported by the university. We might not have the numbers

like some schools have, but I bet I would not be celebrating Shabbat in the President's home anywhere else. Dennis Cross, the Vice President for University Advancement, whom I sat next to and had a very interesting conversation about the population in South Florida, later gave a great speech about the Hillel's progress in terms of its fundraising for the Center for Jewish Life, and its dedication to the cause.



*Shabbat at the Lee House: Kim Ruscio talks to students about the history of the Lee House before dinner.*

We are getting very close to reaching the \$4 million goal, and are on track to begin construction sometime around the summer of 2009. It's really a very exciting time to be a Jewish student at W&L. The university, true to its motto-Non Incautus Futuri (Not Unmindful of the Future)-, is trying to embrace different cultures and lifestyles. I am really excited to see a physical presence of Jewish life, and with pride and dedication, we will have a center in just a couple of years. The passion for progress and diversity here makes me proud to be a student at such a historic liberal arts university.

On behalf of the students of Hillel, I want to thank President and Mrs. Ruscio for opening up their home to us for this special Shabbat. It was truly an honor to dine (the chicken was delish!) with them. Our Jewish family is small here in Lexington, but our support is strong, and that is what makes a this university a great one.

Shabbat Shalom!

FOR MORE OF JOSH'S BLOG PLEASE SEE HILLEL'S WEBSITE AT [HILLEL.WLU.EDU](http://HILLEL.WLU.EDU)



*Parents' and Family Weekend: Parents and family members enjoyed two Hillel events: "First Friday at Five Shabbat services and dinner, and a bagel brunch on Sunday.*



*Birthright Israel: Four students who will be traveling to Israel during Winter Break met recently for orientation to the trip. They socialized, learned about what to expect in Israel, and sampled falafel, Israeli "fast food". (right to left: Graham Sheridan '11, Hugo Clifford '09, and Brian Cherry '11. Not shown, Jessie Brenner '10)*

## Very Interesting Professors

*By Alex Flaster '09*

The start of Hillel's Very Interesting Professor series this year began in September with a lovely dinner with Professor David Novack and his wife. Professor Novack, head of the Sociology and Anthropology department, and his wife told a large gathering of students about the charity fund they set up for underprivileged children in the local community. It was a great way to start off the year and it was the VIP series' largest collection of students to date.

In October, Professor Nathaniel Goldberg, new to the W&L community, came and enjoyed a pleasant lunch at the Sheridan Livery. He talked about his previous teaching job as well as the Jewish community at Ohio University. Professor Goldberg was especially curious to see what students thought of Lexington, Virginia and how it felt to be Jewish at a small southern school.

The November VIP was quite a treat because Hillel was invited to dine at the Lee House with President Ruscio and his wife for Shabbat. The evening was a success and everyone who came was treated to a great meal and a fun time. Students were given a tour of the Lee House by Mrs. Ruscio, who invited us to sit at the piano which was especially made for Robert E. Lee. We also heard from Dennis Cross, VP for Advancement, about how close W&L is to raising enough money to build the W&L Hillel House. Hillel's VIP series has been fantastic so far and we hope that next year's events will be just as enjoyable.



"Very Interesting Professors" lunch featuring Philosophy Professor Nathaniel Goldberg.

## Graham Sheridan Appointed to the Hillel International Board of Directors

*By Joan Robins*



*Graham Sheridan '11 has been appointed to the Hillel International Board of Directors in Washington, DC.*

W&L Hillel is pleased to announce that Graham Sheridan '11 has been appointed to the International Board of Directors for Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. The Board is a diverse body made up of individuals committed to furthering Jewish campus life and is representative of a broad group of community leaders, Hillel professionals and stakeholders. Board members include individuals who are active in local Hillels, Community Jewish Federations,

United Jewish Communities, B'nai B'rith, and other partner agencies. Members represent many campus constituencies including ten students, Hillel professionals, faculty, and the community at large.

Hillel seeks a geographic, gender, and age balance with individuals from across North America, as well as international delegates. Student members of the Board are selected based on their campus involvement, understanding of Hillel's work, commitment to Hillel's values, as well as type and size of the university.

I nominated Graham because he has been actively involved in Hillel since his first year at W&L. A natural leader, Graham has helped to develop an exciting program for Hillel, and to sustain a Jewish presence on campus. He enthusiastically shares his passion for Jewish living which engages many students, including those not typically involved in Jewish life. I believe Graham will be a real asset to the Hillel Board during his two-year term.

Graham expresses much excitement about his appointment, saying "I look forward to meeting and working with Jewish students and community leaders from across the nation. I am honored to represent Washington and Lee in the Jewish community at large."



# The Star



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## Jew Crew '08-'09



**President:** Hila Yashar '09, Julia Spieler '09  
**VP:** Stephanie Dultz '10, Emily Martin '10  
**Secretary/Treasurer:** Dinah Danforth '10

### VP Chairs:

**Shabbat and Holidays:** Graham Sheridan '11  
and Brian Cherry '11  
**Alumni Liaison:** John Ackerman '10

**Community Service:** Josh Posner '12,  
Lev Raslin '12, David Margolies '12  
**Speakers/VIP series:** Alex Flaster '09

### Diversity:

Miles Martin '11  
**Holocaust Remembrance:**  
Tracy Richardson '11  
**Publicity:** Greg Zimmerman '09

## Advisory Board '08-'09

**Prof. Mark Grunewald, *Chair***

**Joan Robins, *Director***

**Prof. Marcia France**

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**Julia Spieler '09**

**Hila Yashar '09**