

The Star



Jordan Goldstein '18, leading a song at the Passover seder.

PASSOVER 2018

by Alex Meilech

I think my favorite part of Passover at Hillel may not even be the Seder. This year, Maggie generously stocked the Hillel kitchen with kosher-for-Passover ingredients, and a metric ton of matzah. Passover this year fell right before finals week, and I took advantage of the hush that falls over Hillel with the E-Cafe closed to write my capstone in Hillel. And because I was there all day (and a lot of the night), I got to see everyone come by. It was like I was sitting outside my family's kitchen back home — without fail, someone would pop in every few hours for leftover matzah ball soup from the Seder, to whip up some matzah brei or matzah pizza, or just take a box of matzah back

to their dorm. I enjoyed being interrupted by friendly faces.

At the Seder, I was reminded of the community that Hillel brings together. We're lucky at W&L Hillel to not be just a student organization; we get to interact with the greater Lexington community. My table at the Seder had Jewish students, non-Jewish students, and professors and their spouses. It is a privilege to be able to get to know professors outside of class, especially in such a familial setting as celebrating the holidays together.

My favorite part of the Seder was a reading I led. Maggie added a reading called Miriam's Cup to the Seder. The idea behind honoring Miriam is to recognize

the people who are left out of the main roles of the Passover story — the unsung heroes. Originally a feminist idea meant to recognize women's contributions, the idea now is to recognize all the unrecognized, regardless of gender. As the reading says, none of Miriam's contributions "are glamorous, or a central part of the traditional Exodus story, but without them, there would be no story, and no Jewish people. Every community needs its strong charismatic leaders — its Moses' — but it also needs all the people who work behind the scenes, doing the small critical tasks that the whole group relies on for success, day in and day out." I really appreciate the commitment Hillel shows to inclusiveness, and that inspires me.

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Maggie Shapiro Haskett poses for her official picture on the Colonnade.

Dear Friends of W&L Hillel,

No doubt many of you have picked up at least a handful of words and phrases in Modern Hebrew, along with whatever liturgical Hebrew you know, so I'm confident many of you know how to say "thank you" – "todah rabah." But did you know there are a wealth of ways to express gratitude in Hebrew? My favorite is the expression תודה אסור /'asir todah,' which literally translated means "bound by thanks."

I like that image, being bound, tied or connected to those we're grateful to, and it's an image I think is quite accurate. With a full year behind me as director of Jewish life at Washington and Lee, I find myself connected by and woven into a web of gratitude.

One of the most compelling ties of gratitude I feel is to the class of 2018. In many ways, they were my best and most conscientious teachers as I learned how to navigate a new job and a new community. Their lessons ranged from the quotidian to the philosophical, and I know I will continue to think of "my first seniors" often as the years come and go. Yet there is one Hillel senior who is most present in my mind as I write to you: Hannah Falchuk.

For those of you who haven't had the good fortune of meeting Hannah, she was one of two recipients of the Algernon Sidney Sullivan medallion awarded by the faculty to two outstanding graduating students in the class of 2018. She now teaches English in Slovakia after receiving a Fulbright Fellowship. Hannah is clearly a woman of many talents, but the achievement that stands out most to me is her project "The Dining Services Thank-You Event."

Never heard of it? That's probably the way Hannah would want it, but I'm too impressed – and too grateful – to keep her fantastic work under wraps. For the past three years, Hannah set a date, recruited friends and fellow students, bought a huge stack of note cards, and sat down to write a thank-you note to each and every Dining Services staff person on our campus. The notes were personalized and hand-delivered by students. I'm sure you can imagine the tremendous impact they had on these unsung and indispensable heroes of our campus. What's more, the project was entirely Hannah's undertaking, from inspiration to execution; she neither asked for nor received support from any office on campus.

Needless to say, I was blown away when I learned about the project. How many of us can honestly say we are as sensitive and compassionate as Hannah, and as willing to put in the hard work to honor the bonds of gratitude that connect us with the people all around us? For that matter, how many of us can say we've never neglected to send a thank-you note for a gift received? But what moved me most about Hannah's project was not just the sheer volume of thank-you notes she endeavored to write, but the deep sensitivity she has for the relationships and connections that create a community. Hannah seemed to intuit the interconnectedness of all people in our community and wanted to be sure to honor those connections. We should all be so lucky as to even

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occasionally tap into that same sense of connection.

I now find myself again and again noticing the many moments in which I say thanks; a note to my mom in response to a gift, a kind text to my husband when he's taken the time to re-set the coffee pot after leaving the house before dawn so I have a fresh cup when I wake up, and the many casual "thanks!" I offer to folks I encounter day in and day out. A deeper awareness comes when I pause and reflect on the bond, the connection, I have with all of those people, and with all of you. Far from just being a social nicety,

expressions of gratitude can be an invitation to reflect on our connections with each other, and the myriad relationships that support and sustain our work and our lives. I'm grateful to Hannah for teaching me this profound lesson by her gentle example.

So I say to all of you, **אסורת תודה**, I am bound by thanks. Over the past year you have strengthened our community in so many ways; you've written checks, donated everything from glass Kiddush cups to *tallitot* to books, and you've given generously of your time and talents, helped to lead services, spent time getting to know our Hillel students,

or simply reached out to me with newsy and encouraging emails. We are truly woven together, and I'm grateful for the strong network of relationships upon which our Hillel community rests.

B'vracha, with blessings,

Maggie

PS: If you're a campus community member, be on the lookout for the next evolution of Hannah's project, brought to you by W&L Hillel as part of our new initiative, General Gratitude!

CONNECTING TO JEWISH LIFE... THANKS TO VMI AND HILLEL

By Aaron Kubat '20 VMI

For as long as I can remember, Judaism has been a huge part of my life, but not because I went to Synagogue every week... I didn't. It just had always been part of my family history; after all, it is hard to forget that one is Jewish when one's grandfather survived the Holocaust and one's father has become an amateur historian in an attempt to record the story of the family.

But as Jewish as I was, I never really had the opportunity to express my faith. My dad isn't particularly religious (even though every time he talks about Judaism he sounds like he's in love) and my mom, being a Brooklyn Jew who was heavily involved in Hillel at U.Va., stopped regularly attending services when she came to Hampton Roads. As a result, I was never Bar Mitzvahed, I don't know Hebrew, and don't know the Torah nearly as well as I would like to.

Being at VMI gave me a chance to change that. As strange as it may sound to an outsider, VMI is a place that has incredible opportunities for cadets to worship the way they want, even if they are not a member of a sect

of Christianity. The simple fact of the matter is that were it not for VMI, I probably wouldn't have fallen in love with Judaism in the way that I have. I simply wouldn't have had the same opportunities. For the first time in my life, I regularly attend services, thanks to VMI and Hillel. That wouldn't have happened if I had stayed in Virginia Beach or gone to another college, because I'm sure that there would be a million other things to do besides go to services on a Friday night. This experience has brought me closer to my faith in a way that I never really thought possible. I will never forget the feeling that I got listening to Jordan Lynn Goldstein '18 sing the Shabbat prayers and play her guitar. It brought me to tears.

Judaism brought me closer to my Dyke, and even to the institute. My Dykeline (the line of succession of Dykes and Rats, or freshmen and seniors, as they are called at other schools) has been Jewish since the very first Jew, Moses Jacob Ezekiel, attended VMI before the Civil War. It was by sheer luck that I became a part of this Dykeline but I am proud of it all the same. It makes

me feel connected to VMI in a much deeper way. I feel its history, which is appropriate since I am a history major.

Being Jewish helped connect me to my Dyke, David Pody, too. We already had a lot going for us. We are both nerds, somewhat odd, and have similar features (except for the fact that he was part of the tallest company at VMI and I am part of the shortest). But my being Jewish is what I think sealed the deal when he was picking his Rats. Like him, I am the Cadet in Charge of Jewish Activities at VMI, and like him, being at VMI brought me closer to my faith. Being his Jewish Rat is one of the things that I will most cherish when I look back at my time at VMI.

I love the relationship that VMI has with Washington and Lee University. Hillel brings together two groups of people, which are otherwise only linked by geography, in a deep and meaningful way. The faith that I share with my fellow cadets and Washington and Lee students has brought me closer to them, to the institution and to my tradition. For that, I am incredibly thankful.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Lee Bernstein '20

I am honored to serve as Hillel's president for the 2018-2019 year. For the past two years Hillel has been a large part of my college experience, as I served as the communications chair. Since day one, Hillel has always been a place that I could count on. I wanted to be president in order to continue making Hillel a great place where all students can gather, both Jewish and non-Jewish. I am excited to be able to work with the rest of the board on new ways to expand our campus' Hillel.

Looking ahead, I plan to work on growing the number of students that come to our events. At the start of the summer we released a survey to all W&L and VMI students and recent graduates. We asked questions about what type of events they typically attend and what else they would like to see from Hillel. Our goal is to make sure that Hillel remains unmistakably and

enthusiastically Jewish while meeting the needs and desires of the whole student body and continuing to be a welcoming place for all students.

I am also excited to work with different board members to expand Hillel. This includes bringing more Israel programming and education to campus. We also hope to engage more of our alumni and keep them connected with our Hillel community.

I wouldn't have considered becoming president of Hillel if I hadn't had such supportive role models within the organization. Past President Shlomo Honig '18 and the rest of the seniors on the executive board have set a high bar. We are also lucky to have the guidance of Maggie as our Hillel director! I look forward to an exciting year.

TU B'SHEVAT CELEBRATION

By Becca Telese '20



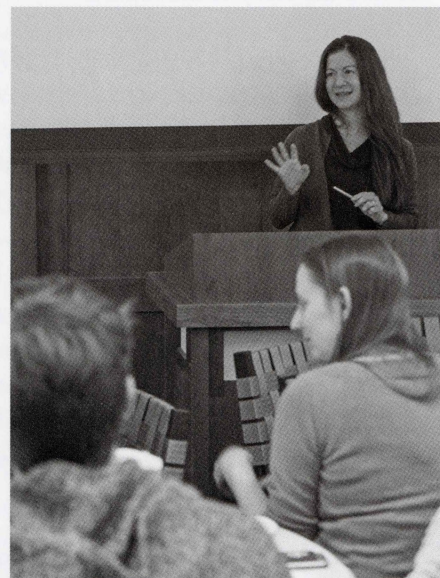
Boxerwood gardener Ben Eland talks about sustainable local agriculture during W&L Hillel's Tu B'Shevot celebration.

On February 2, Washington and Lee Hillel celebrated the Jewish holiday of Tu B'Shevot with the local community, and everyone left the seder feeling ready to, in the words of the Lorax, speak for the trees. The seder was a joint effort hosted by Hillel, the Student Environmental Action League (SEAL) and the Office of Sustainability. Tu B'Shevot is the new

year of the trees, so the holiday is marked by eating fruit — particularly grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates — and by planting trees or donating money to environmental groups.

Our Hillel set each table with beautiful seder plates containing all the traditional fruits, as well as wildflower seed paper to be taken home and planted! Tu B'Shevot themed artwork, created by local children from the Hebrew Tots group, made the room feel more festive and bright. Ben Eland, a community member and head gardener at Boxerwood (Lexington's very own nature preserve), shared stories about feeding his family and friends from his extensive sustainable garden, and about his commitment to seasonal and local foodways. Poet and W&L professor Leah Green read a handful of her environmental poems inspired by life in rural Rockbridge County. The evening's program culminated in an innovative Tu B'Shevot seder crafted by Maggie Shapiro Haskett, our Hillel director, and lead by students and community members. Everyone enjoyed a fabulous organic and locally sourced meal presented by Jenny Elmes of Full Circle Catering to cap off the evening.

Our Tu B'Shevot brought a diverse group of people together to celebrate and think about our impact on the environment we live in. Washington and Lee Hillel, SEAL and the Office of Sustainability hope that this year will be a good one for the trees — though they can't tell us themselves, for the trees have no tongues.



Poet and Professor Leah Green reads a selection of her poetry during our Tu B'Shevot seder.

“KOSHER/SOUL?”: A VISIT FROM MICHAEL TWITTY

by Jake Sirota '19



Culinary historian and author Michael Twitty prepares black-eyed pea hummus while sharing his “Kosher/Soul?” presentation in the Hillel Multipurpose Room.

Watching Michael Twitty work—and for him this includes speaking—particularly as a Jew, is akin to a religious experience in itself. There’s a moment that occurs while watching someone doing crowd

work and knife work simultaneously (each deftly enough to make you forget about the other, should you be sucked into it, only to shock you all the more once you remember its presence) that feels almost transcendental in a way. Not in the divine sense, but more in that “no one should be doing these things so well at the same time and I’m worried for his fingertips” way.

Known as an historical interpreter, Twitty visited Washington and Lee early in the spring to speak about his new book, “The Cooking Gene,” as well as demonstrate a recipe for black-eyed-pea hummus. The talk recounted his personal navigation of being a black Jewish convert as well as the connections that black and Jewish Americans share in this country, all tied together through a love of cooking and eating. Disarmingly jovial, Twitty made his first appearance on campus in Professor T.J. Tallie’s

“Queering Colonialism” course, where he discussed the interweaving influences of settler colonialism on black and Jewish communities in the early stages of U.S. history, and how that influence brought those communities together with a woven history unlike any other American cultural groups. This was a theme that he maintained at Hillel House, where he and a small group of students talked over Thai food about the experience of being a student of color, LGBTQ+, or religious minority in the South, and more specifically at Washington and Lee.

The evening was capped by a full-house talk at Hillel titled “Kosher/Soul?,” during which the demonstration occurred. Twitty’s account of his non-Jewish childhood and gradual move into the Jewish community was quite moving, and had much of the audience in laughter. The black-eyed pea hummus was subsequently devoured by attendees.

THE AIPAC CONFERENCE

By Jenna Marvet '21

In March, I was able to spend three days learning from scholars, activists, politicians and fellow students regarding American-Israeli policy at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Policy Conference in Washington, D.C.. I had been hearing about the AIPAC Policy Conference in my synagogue’s congregation since I was young, and was excited to have the chance to experience it myself on a trip with Washington and Lee Hillel.

AIPAC focuses on a bipartisan approach to championing pro-Israel policies, and brings in speakers and presenters from a plethora of industries, organizations and professions to speak about topics across the spectrum. Students spoke about their challenges and accomplishments promoting pro-Israel policy on campus. We even got to hear the founder of J-Swipe, a Jewish dating app, talk about millennials, Judaism and Israel.



Meeting Virginia Congressman Bob Goodlatte '77L was an AIPAC trip highlight for Alex Meilech '18, Allie Lefkowitz '20 and Jenna Marvet '21.

think about my relationship with the country. The AIPAC Policy Conference gave me the foundation to bring my love for Israel back to my communities. I am so grateful to Washington and Lee Hillel for providing me with such an educational and meaningful experience.

As an intended politics major, I was most excited to hear from the politicians who were slated to speak. Among them were Vice President Mike Pence, Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, Senator Chuck Schumer and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi. My fellow W&L Generals and I were able to end the conference by talking with Congressman Bob Goodlatte '77L and Senator Mark Warner about AIPAC-endorsed policy.

Even though I visited Israel when I was younger, I had never taken the time to seriously and thoroughly

ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK: NEW YORK CITY AND IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCES

by Isaac Rosenthal '19



L-R: Director of Student Activities Kelsey Goodwin, Virginia Kettles '19, Fon Teawdawan '19, Temi Adeyanju '21, Anthony Wong '21, Director of Jewish Life Maggie Shapiro Haskett, Isaac Rosenthal '19, Lev Raslin '12, Abhi Jha '21, Felix LeRoux '19

Late-night rooftop talks. Amazing bakeries and delis, not to mention a smorgasbord of Jewish comfort food. History and cultural extravaganzas at the Jewish Museum and the Tenement Museum, and Ellis Island, too. Human connections through days of service at a food pantry serving a Chinese immigrant community and hard, muddy work at an urban sustainable garden. Alumni visits and a dash of networking. A vanload of energetic students and two lovely chaperones. What do all these things add up to? A fun excursion (read: romp) through New York City for Spring Break!

W&L Hillel, the Office of Student Activities and the Nabors Service League hosted a service/learning trip to NYC, exploring some of the many experiences immigrants have had in that magnificent city. Students from all corners of campus came together for this jam-packed trip full of fun and unique adventures that go far beyond an average campus program. What made it most special is that we were exposed to so many different things: There was the fun of exploring and vacationing in a new city, bonding with a new group of students, and the rewarding opportunities of helping

through volunteer work and learning so much about others' stories and cultures.

If you're still reading, now to the nitty-gritty details! This special trip was organized by two amazing individuals: Director of Student Activities Kelsey Goodwin and Director of Jewish Life Maggie Shapiro Haskett. I will admit, the majority of the staff at W&L are open-minded, humorous, kind and helpful. Even so, almost none of the staff can compete with these two. Maggie and Kelsey are unique for their dedication to the students. They always make time for us, whether it's to talk about work, fun or personal issues—they are willing to listen to anything and everything. As a product of that, a lot of fantastic events are hosted every year by Student Activities and Hillel, and this trip is a prime example. If you don't believe me, you can ask any of us who were on that eight-hour drive to New York: the marathons of Disney songs, 70s and 80s music, musical soundtracks, and plenty of other music created quite the soundtrack. Some of the songs probably shouldn't be mentioned on a university-sanctioned journal, but you can bet Kelsey and Maggie took that all in stride and had plenty of quality

musical suggestions for us young-uns too! Suffice it to say, if you want to go on a trip, have fun and make the trip more meaningful, you also add a certain level of structure to ensure plenty of unique and thought-provoking opportunities. Kelsey and Maggie achieved all these things and more, per usual.

Have I spent too much time praising our support staff? What about the students? Well, I think service trips have a tendency to attract a certain audience; common criteria I've noticed are a strong sense of caring, adventurousness, a willingness to get dirty (more important than you might believe on a trip to New York!), and a positive attitude. In short, delightful people to be around, and our group certainly checked all the boxes.

To wrap things up, this service trip could be thought of like a food pyramid. A nice



Anthony Wong '21, Fon Teawdatwan '19, Abhi Jha '21 and Isaac Rosenthal '19 (l-r, foreground) work to prepare beds for planting at the Battery Urban Farm in Battery Park, at the southern tip of Manhattan. Battery Urban Farm works closely with nearby immigrant communities to provide hands-on educational opportunities for school children and fresh produce for food pantries.

blend of service, adventure, delectable cuisines, education and bonding. If any particular portion has less appeal to you than the others, simply take a taste and then pick a different dish to sample! With such an opportunity available at minimal cost, I am baffled this trip doesn't fill the moment it's posted.

THE LATKE-HAMENTASCHEN DEBATE

By Lee Bernstein '20



Left: The evening's big winner? The audience, which was treated to latkes and hamentaschen hand-crafted by Hillel student leaders. Hillel Advisory Board Member Annette Green and Caroline Deloren '21 sample the latkes post-debate.

Top-right Team Latke, Professor Andrew Hess and Professor Molly Michelmore, talk strategy.

Bottom-right: Team Hamentaschen, Professor Marcia France and Professor Bill Hamilton, look confident heading into the debate.

On the evening of February 28 one of the most anticipated events of the year finally arrived: the Latke-Hamentaschen debate! This annual debates pits professors against each other to figure out which is the superior Jewish food. This year, Team Latke was represented by professors Molly Michelmore and Drew Hess and was coached by Caroline Deloren '21. On the opposing side, professors Marcia France and Bill Hamilton argued for Team Hamentaschen. They were coached by Ben Zeman '21.

Thinking back to the event, Deloren said, "During the debate, I thought it was really cool how the professors played to their strengths while keeping the tone light and funny. Each professor clearly put a lot of work into their arguments, and, of course, the snacks at the end were awesome."

The arguments were heated. Professors France and Hamilton used their background in science to make their point about why hamentaschen is the superior Jewish food. While they may not have had science on their side, professors Michelmore and Hess showed that history had played out in favor of the

latke with a documentary-style video and arguments mirroring Washington and Lee's latest strategic plan.

When asked about the event, Balen Essak '20 said, "The professors were absolutely amazing! They went above and beyond all my expectations and made the event a huge success." Balen served as the Hillel Speakers Chair this year and was in charge of organizing the debate.

After a heated argument, President Dudley, our emcee for the evening, drew the debate to a close. After a failed attempt to decide a winner based on the cheers of the audience, President Dudley left everyone to decide for themselves by sampling both latkes and hamentaschens made by our talented team of Hillel chefs and bakers.

While no definitive conclusions were made and all the experts are still at odds as to which food is best, latke and hamentaschen lovers from all around look forward to next year's debate!



SPRING SHABBATON

By Alex Meilech '18

One of the highlights of Hillel for me this year was having a Shabbaton, or student retreat, each term. We got to light candles, say kiddush, and do motzi in beautiful settings in rural Virginia. We played games, roasted s'mores around the fire, had fun cooking together, and talked late into the night. Jenna Marvet '21 had great ideas for activities at our second Shabbaton, including Jewish celebrity Heads Up, which was a hit. After the fall Shabbaton, we hiked Spy Rock. It was my first time doing the hike, and I loved it. It's not too long, but was great exercise on a crisp fall morning. Shlomo Honig '18 knew the way, so we didn't wander off the mountain. The leaves were changing color, so the view from the top was breathtaking. I'm from Arizona, so there's a lot about the Virginia climate that amazes me, but the woods in the fall are something else entirely. The fiery colors are projected onto the calm landscape of thousands of trees, and we had such a great view from the top of Spy Rock.

After the winter Shabbaton, we went to IHOP, which is one of my favorite breakfast food chains. I always love IHOP, but I

especially enjoyed being there with my Hillel friends. Also, on that trip, I ended up driving a 12-passenger rental van for the first time, and even though I was driving, we made it back to Lexington in one piece — a real-life miracle. Some of that may be due to the fact that Steve Reibach '18 VMI was coaching me every time I had to reverse, but I am still proud of myself.

One of the things I like about Shabbat is taking the time out of the week to have a special meal with friends, where we can relax and enjoy each other's company. But on a Shabbaton, we take that spiritual separation from the rest of the week and make it a spatial separation, as well, moving ourselves out of our normal lives. This makes for a great bonding experience. Being away from our normal routines lets people get to know each other in a different way. I made new friends and I got a lot closer to people that I had seen at many other Hillel events over the years. I hope that the Shabbatons continue for many years as a new Hillel tradition, and that they just get bigger and better!



Members of the Class of 2018 gather with the director of Jewish life before Hillel's Senior Send-off Dinner during Commencement weekend.

Front, L-R: Hannah Falchuk '18, Jordan Goldstein '18, Rachel Reibach '18 and Shlomo Honig '18

Back, L-R: Maggie Shapiro Haskett, director of Jewish life; Keith Denning '18; Stephen Reibach '18 VMI; Alex Meilech '18

Opposite page: Left – Early morning light outside Blacksburg, Virginia, on the spring Hillel Shabbaton.

*Top-right: Hillel students from W&L and VMI enjoy Shabbaton breakfast at IHOP!
L-R: Jenna Marvet '21, Sam Bouis '20 VMI, Will Soldow '20 VMI, Aaron Kubat '20 VMI, Ethan Heatwole '20 VMI, Alicia Martinez '18, Stephen Reibach '18 VMI, Allie Lefkowitz '20*

Bottom-right: Jenna Marvet '20 and Alex Meilech '18 are all smiles during Shabbaton!

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