

# Hillel

TOWSON UNIVERSITY

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2021-2022**



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## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### What an exceptional year for Towson University Hillel!

We returned to campus at the beginning of the school year wearing masks with our largest ever engagement of freshman and sophomores! Those sophomores sure celebrated being in person for the first time!

Starting with our largest welcome-back bagel brunch ever, our engagement and student participation soared. With an exceptional Student Leadership Executive Board team and phenomenal staff to support their vision and ideas, our program is on record to hit an all-time high in engagement numbers.



AND...we opened our brand-new space (TU@TheCommons) after 2 years of research and development. Towson Hillel now has a home on campus and off campus! We are grateful to our stakeholders, donors, and leadership for making this happen! The Commons was officially opened with a kick-off celebration on March 15th when over 150 community members, students, and lay leaders gathered two evenings before Purim. With an open concept space featuring a fully equipped kosher kitchen, designated office, and conference room, the Commons provides endless opportunities for learning and engagement.



Towson University is the fastest growing university in the Maryland system—that means a fast-growing Jewish population as well. We eagerly anticipate welcoming the next cohort of incoming students along with their fellow returning Tigers.

We hope you enjoy this annual report and feel as proud as we do!

Sincerely,  
Matt Lipsky,  
Towson University Hillel,  
Board Chair

Lisa Bodziner,  
Towson University Hillel,  
Executive Director



# OUR LEADERSHIP



## LISA BODZINER | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lisa Bodziner grew up in Savannah, GA and then graduated from the University of Wisconsin—Madison for her undergraduate degree. She lived in Israel for four years where she attended the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and received her Master’s Degree in Jewish Education. After leaving Israel, Lisa taught 6th-12th grade for three years in California and then moved to Reisterstown, MD to work at the Pearlstone Center as an experiential educator and signature program coordinator where she also met her, now, husband (he talked about Towson a lot on their first date). Lisa became the Director of Educational Engagement at the Macks Center for Jewish Education and received a certificate in experiential Jewish education from the Yeshiva University. Lisa has now been the Executive Director of Towson University-Hillel since 2017 and has loved every moment. She is currently completing a fundraising intensive facilitated by Hillel international. Lisa also participates in community service work, loves hosting Shabbat meals, and adores being with her husband, son and daughter.



## LEORA MATCH | PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Leora is in her fourth year as Program Director of Towson Hillel. Throughout this time, Leora has enjoyed being a Friedman Fellow, learning at Hadar, participating in the Rising Song Intensive, and recording backing vocals for several Jewish musicians. Before working at Hillel, Leora was in a nationally touring indie-pop band, served as a literacy tutor in a school in East Baltimore through AmeriCorps, and worked on an urban farm in California. When not staffing events or leading the Jewish Learning Fellowship, you can find Leora running, blues dancing, hiking, camping, jamming with friends, or catching live shows in the city! Leora currently lives in Charles Village with her partner Rob, a linguist and musician.



## JAKE CAMPBELL | DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Jake comes from “across the pond” in sunny Sydney. An Australian trying to live the American dream, he was previously the Executive Director of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, the Jewish Student Life Coordinator of Hillel at Florida State University, and before that, a Mentor team leader and high school English and History teacher. Jake has an MBA in Social Impact, Graduate Certificate in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Masters in Gifted Education, Bachelor of Liberal Arts with a double major in English and History, and a Bachelor of Education majoring in Secondary Education. Jake loves to cook and makes the best matzah ball soup—guaranteed (except for maybe your mother’s) Jake loves getting lost in the bush, making cocktails, and watching rugby, but his number one hobby is Jewish communal organizing and for that he is so lucky to have made his passion his career.



## MCKENNA BATES | ISRAEL ENGAGEMENT ASSOCIATE

McKenna Bates grew up in Chesapeake Virginia, just a few minutes drive from sunny Virginia Beach. A lifelong Girl Scout and Jewish activist, McKenna combines the lessons she learned from her Gold Award project, her extensive leadership training, and long history of community service work to better her communities. She has been to Israel over five times, both to visit family and to live for a short time in Jerusalem, and loves to ramble about it! During her undergraduate studies at George Mason University, McKenna was highly involved in leadership in the Jewish community and was President of the Israel advocacy group for two years. McKenna has a B.A. in Government and International Politics, Honors College, with a Double Concentration in Comparative Politics and International Relations, a minor in International Security, and a focus in Middle Eastern Politics, specifically the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Outside of her academic studies, McKenna is learning to cook without using Google and how to win her friends’ annual four-day Catan Championship. McKenna has multiple hobbies and little interests, but her biggest passion point is connecting Jews to Israel, and she is so happy to have found her niche.





# STUDENT LEADERS

Hillel as a global organization would not be what it is without its students. We invest tremendous resources in cultivating student leaders who learn the tools and values of Jewish leadership while planning and implementing programs for their friends and allies on campus, cultivating meaningful relationships with their peers by engaging them over coffee, regular Jewish text study, and at the Shabbat table, to name just a few examples. We thank them for all of their work over the past year and look forward to a larger group next year.



## JENNA HEISMAN | PRESIDENT

My name is Jenna Heisman, and I am Hillel’s President! I am a Psychology major with a minor in Sociology. I am a sister of Delta Phi Epsilon and I love going on new adventures!



## MAKAYLA BERNSTEIN | VICE PRESIDENT

My name is Makayla Bernstein and I am the Vice President of Hillel! I am an Early Childhood and Special Education major. I am a long time camp person and spend my summers as a counselor at an overnight camp. I enjoy spending time with friends and exploring my new Maryland home!



## NATE DONNELLY | RITUAL CHAIR

My name is Nate Donnelly and I’m the Ritual Chair for Towson Hillel! I’m a Biology major with a concentration in Cell and Molecular Biology. I love working with kids and playing music with them on Sundays at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation’s Hebrew School!



## ADINA NAFTALIN | ISRAEL CHAIR

Hi! I am Hillel’s Israel Chair. I’m a sophomore currently majoring in Digital Art and Design. I am very adventurous and creative and love traveling to many places, including the holy state of Israel. I’d love to get to know you, so be sure to say hi!



## ALEEZA KERBEL | SOCIAL CHAIR

Hi! My name is Aleeza Kerbel and I am the Social Chair! I am majoring in Psychology. I love reading and am a big fan of photography. Let’s get coffee sometime!



## ALLIE KASHAN | SOCIAL JUSTICE CHAIR

Hi! I’m a freshman majoring in Criminal Justice with a minor in Political Science. In my spare time, I’m probably dancing! I am so excited to be the social justice chair this year!



## ARI RUBIN | COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

I am the Fundraising Chair. I am a junior here at Towson University, currently majoring in Information Technology. In addition to my involvement with Towson Hillel, I am a brother of the Sigma Pi fraternity, a creative writer for EDM blog Heard It Here First, and a part time help desk support engineer. Hillel has given me so much, and I’m excited to give back to this amazing organization!



# STUDENT PROGRAMS

## JEWISH LEARNING FELLOWSHIP

The Jewish Learning Fellowship (JLF) is a 10-week experiential, conversational seminar for Towson students who are looking to deepen their understanding of Judaism on their own terms. Together, we ask big questions—Who am I? What kind of friends do I want to have? How do I bring balance to my life? We don’t purport to have any of the answers! We make no claims about the “right” way to practice or not to practice Judaism. JLF is a place to explore the tradition in a safe space and to find your own place, on your terms, in Judaism’s great conversation. Each week, we break bread together, read Jewish text and talk. JLF Fellows also have the opportunity to reflect on their own big questions over coffee with staff educators and spend Shabbat together.



## ISRAEL LEARNING FELLOWSHIP

For the second year Towson University Hillel launched the Israel Learning Fellowship. This 10-week course offers a deep dive into the social, political and complex climate of the Middle East and Israel. Students explore their relationship with Israel and challenge each other over complex content and diverse perspectives among their peers.



## KIBBUTZ URBAN FARM DAYS

For the second year Towson University Hillel ran our Kibbutz Urban Farm Days. With the support of Hillel International and their generous grant our Hillel is now working in partnership with the urban farm on campus to plant, farm and harvest lush produce and beautify the garden beds. We were grateful to launch this program in the spring and have in-person programming this year.

## EXECUTIVE STUDENT BOARD

The E-Board is an elite group of student leaders who have a passion for bringing their ideas to life. E-Board is designed for any student who is driven, creative, outgoing, and innovative. All E-Board students receive seed funding for their projects, networking opportunities, professional coaching, and a connection to a diverse cohort of students seeking professional growth.



## SHABBAT SHALOM

“Big Shabbats On Campus” are one of the most exciting monthly programs we offer to students on campus. Our dynamic staff and students decorate, plan, lead and experience Shabbat services and dinner together as a community. Hillel is an inclusive organization and our professionals create an open environment and welcome anyone and everyone interested in exploring how Shabbat looks, feels, and tastes!



## JEWISH TIGERS ALUMNI ALLIANCE

The Jewish Tigers Alumni Alliance (JTAA) focuses on keeping young alumni engaged. Events that have taken place include happy hours, hosted Shabbat dinners, and Chanukah cooking demonstrations with Huppit Bartov Miller.



## SCHWIPE

Schwipe is an event check-in and engagement tracking system created by Scott Black (who had been on the TU Hillel staff until 2018). Using Schwipe has streamlined our data analysis and enabled us to strategically engage students based on their interests.



## GREEK LIFE

Towson University provides a large extra-curricular community in which several Jewish heritage fraternities and sororities such as AEPi, AEPi, and ZBT thrive. Many students who belong to these organizations also thrive as active members, mentors, and leaders of our Hillel.



## TIGERS FOR ISRAEL

Tigers for Israel is a group of pro-Israel students at Towson University. Their mission is to advocate for and educate about the Jewish homeland. Students do so by promoting a positive image of Israel on Towson University’s campus and connecting students from diverse backgrounds to Israeli culture.





# DONOR RECOGNITION

## THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO MADE A CONTRIBUTION TO TU HILLEL @ THE COMMONS

### \$50,000+

Becky Brenner and the Ronnie H. and Alli Russel Charitable Foundation

### \$25,000+

Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds

### \$10,000+

The Harvey and Linda Litofsky Family Foundation  
Hirschorn Foundation

### \$1,800–4,999

Larry Amsterdam  
Adam and Allison Baumwald  
Steven and Brooke Bernstein  
Jackie Cohen  
Deena and Jay Dermer  
Jeff Rosen, RSF&J  
The Smolarz/Sanders Family  
Christopher Steele  
Harel Turkel



### \$1,000–1,799

Lisa Bodziner and Kenny Goldberg  
Myrna Cardin  
Dan Elice  
Ann H. Kahan  
Andy Pollakoff and Evolution Electric  
Lewis and Sandy Schneider  
Skip Vichness  
Ellen Kahan Zager and Jack Zager  
David Zager and Maurice Electric

### Students \$100–180

Yoni Aharon  
Natasha Baum  
Sydney Marantz  
Jodi Teitelman

### Special Signage

The Litofsky Lounge (TV Wall in Lounge)

Ronnie H. & Alli Russel Charitable Foundation  
(Front Window)



# TU HILLEL @ THE COMMONS

## TOWSON UNIVERSITY HILLEL OPENS NEW SPACE

By Courtney Cohn | Jewish Times  
April 1, 2022

Towson University Hillel has a new space at the Towson Commons building. The 2,500-square-foot Commons space features a full kitchen, a large multipurpose room, workspaces, conference rooms, private offices and lounge areas. It opened on March 15. Lisa Bodziner, the executive director of the Towson University Hillel, said that for the last two and a half years, in addition to their main lounge space in Newell Dining Hall, the Hillel also had a house on Chesapeake Avenue, which was donated to them. “It was a sweet home and that was really our pilot, but it wasn’t big enough to do the mass programming that we were looking to do,” Bodziner said. To find a larger space, Hillel put together a task force to research what students, staff, alumni and community members wanted. One of the most important aspects was the location. “Being in the heart of Towson, it’s walking distance from campus and also convenient for students living off campus,” said Matthew Lipsky, chair of the Towson University Hillel governing board. “When polled by our students, they hands down love the location.” The Towson Commons space is also significantly larger than the lounge, allowing the Hillel to hold multiple events at one time. Hillel staff and students are also excited about the kosher full-sized kitchen since their lounge space did not have that. Jenna Heisman, the president of the Towson Hillel executive student board, is looking forward to bringing



people together with cooking events. Leora Match, the program director of the Towson University Hillel, would love to have challah-baking events as well. “Food is a huge way to show love, share community, and it’s an instant way to get people together,” Match said. Match believes it is much more rewarding for students to cook their own Shabbat dinners, instead of having catered kosher food as they did in the past. Additionally, Towson University is the fastest-growing university in Maryland, and the Jewish community is expanding along with the campus. “Towson University’s footprint is also growing beyond the traditional map, so it really fits nicely with where we’re located,” Bodziner said. The Hillel will still keep its lounge space, but this new space will provide an opportunity for the Jewish community to keep growing in the coming years. Towson Hillel is an agency of The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, which provides funding for the Hillel. “As Towson University’s Jewish student population continues to grow, this new communal space will offer Towson University Hillel a chance to expand its programming to meet the needs of a growing and diverse

Jewish student body,” said Marc B. Terrill, the president of The Associated. For this project specifically, the Hillel received funding from multiple donors, but the most notable donation was a \$50,000 grant from Becky Brenner and the Ronnie H. and Alli Russel Charitable Foundation. “We’re very lucky that we have so many people that are so generous and see the goodness of having a strong and thriving Hillel in Towson and in Baltimore,” Lipsky said. Towson Hillel has created a “safe space” for Jewish students on campus, and Match hopes the new space can continue to do that. “You can come by the Commons to drink coffee in the morning before class or you can stop by on your way home to have a conversation with a staff member before going out in Uptown,” Match said. In addition to being a home for students, the Hillel hopes that Commons can be a space for the Towson Jewish community in general. This space will be able to benefit Towson University alumni, many of whom stay within the Baltimore metro area after graduation. As many young Jewish families move into Towson, this space can serve them, too. “Families and community members, who might have been a little bit outside of the Baltimore Jewish bubble, now have a place to gather and a place to build community as well,” Match said. The Towson Commons area will also be available to rent out for local businesses, work events, community gatherings and other events, according to the website.

# Leadership Circle

Special thanks to our donors who contributed \$1,000 or more and are a part of our Leadership Circle.

Zachary Ament

The Harvey & Linda Litofsky Family Foundation

Larry and Naomi Amsterdam

Darren Margolis

Jared and Nicole Bates

Leora Match

Adam and Allison Baumwald

Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds

Steven and Brooke Bernstein

Israel and Mollie Myers Foundation, Inc.

Richard and Merry Bodziner

Meredith Moss

Lisa Bodziner and Kenneth Goldberg

Jeff Rosen

Senator Benjamin and Myrna Cardin

Ronnie H. and Alli Russel Charitable Foundation

Irv and Jackie Cohen

Sheryl B. Cooper

Lewis and Sandra Schneider

Jay and Deena Dermer

Schusterman International Center

Larry and Lara Franks

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Jonathan and Jayne Havens

Max and Sara Shapiro

David & Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation

Jacob Simone

Herschel and Judith Langenthal

The Smolarz/Sanders Family

Craig and Allyson Lestner

Christopher Steele

Scott and Emily Levin

Daniel and Andrea Suissa

Matthew and Elysa Lipsky

Harel and Randi Turkel

Ellen Kahan Zager and Jack Zager

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## BOARD CHAIR

Matthew Lipsky '96

## BOARD MEMBERS

Zachary Ament '12

Larry Amsterdam

Michelle Damareck '97

Deena Dermer

Abram Fox (faculty)

Barry Gittlen (faculty)

Jonathan Havens Esq.

Dov Hoffman '10

Judy Macks (faculty)

Austin Nusbaum '08

Michael Schwartzberg '94

Diane Seegull

Jacob Simone '11

Jodi Teitelman '20

Jacob Wolf '09

Ellen Kahan Zager

## STUDENT REPS

Brett Gelfand

Jenna Heisman

Sydney Marantz

Aliya Smelkinson

Chad Suissa

## VICE CHAIR

Emily Levin

## TREASURER

Neal Shaivitz '96

## SECRETARY

Dr. Sheryl Cooper

## IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR

Adam Baumwald '00

## PAST CHAIR

Craig Lestner '99



# OUR IMPACT

We envision a world where every student is inspired to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning and Israelgrateful to launch this program in the spring and have in-person programming this year.

We are nurturing the next generation of lay and professional leaders for Baltimore’s metropolitan area—city, counties; Jewish communal institutions; and beyond.

The investment in our students’ Jewish growth, personal or professional—connections to JTAA; alumni and Young Adult Jewish programming; connection to BHI and local graduate programs—all enhance the impact on them and their desire to make their marks on our world—by staying here, in Baltimore.

90% of the Towson student body graduate and stay within a hour radius of Baltimore.

We are diversifying on campus and off campus offerings to meet all our students and community members where they are

- The investment in our students:
- Personal Jewish growth
  - Professional development
  - Connections to JTAA, alumni and Young Adult Jewish programming
  - Connections to the Associated
  - Connections to BHI and local graduate programs

All enhance the impact in which our students stay local and become the Jewish leaders of the present community .



*I loved JLF when I took it as a student. The second semester I got to be Leora’s intern and she let me lead one class. I was so excited when they pitched the idea to me to be a creative writing instructor for a class as a student. It’s already given me so much insight into who I am as a teacher, a Jewish person and what I want to do when I graduate. I am forever grateful in Towson Hillel investing in me, my past, current and future me.”*

- JLF Student

*“I love Hillel because it feels “serious and professional” while also fun. The staff are invested in our growth, professionalism and own personal Jewish stories.”*

- Current Student

*“When I was a director at Towson Hillel I had a hard time finding a kosher carrot. Truth be told, it is absolutely astounding to see the growth of this organization and institution and to think we just opened a 2500 square foot space for students to gather, have Shabbat and have their own conference room is truly a remarkable new chapter for us and our larger Jewish community.”*

- Lay Leader





# Year to Year ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

OUTCOME #1

Towson Hillel continues to support our engaged students (depth) while also reaching out to more students (breadth)

INDICATORS

Tracking number of student contacts using Schwipe: 1-5 touches (breadth) and 6+ touches or high impact activities (depth)

Student Engagement Tracking

Fiscal Year	Breadth (%)	Depth (%)
FY19	38%	5%
FY20	38%	9%
FY21	24%	11%
FY22*	40%	15%

\*FY22 - Forecasted impact. As of 4/7/22 breadth was 31.5% and depth was 14.1%

OUTCOME #2

Diversify student engagement opportunities

INDICATORS

Tracking student depth of engagement (6+ or high impact) after participating in cohort-learning program

Cohort Learning

Fiscal Year	Pre-depth (# students)	Post-depth (# students)
FY19	8	8
FY20	12	20
FY21	23	40
FY22**	28	51

\*\*FY22 - Partial data showing impact as of 4/7/22\*. Will increase.

OUTCOME #3

Shabbat is a central part of Jewish Towson students’ lives

INDICATORS

Tracking median community shabbat student participant numbers

Shabbat Dinner Median Participants

Fiscal Year	# of students
FY19	8
FY20	24
FY21	21
FY22	41

OUTCOME #4

Students are interested in traveling to Israel

INDICATORS

Tracking number of students registering for Birthright with Towson Hillel each semester

Birthright

Fiscal Year	winter (# students)	summer (# students)
FY19	15	0
FY20	15	5
FY21	0	2
FY22**	23	20

\*FY21 - Impacted by pandemic

STUDENTS

Depth & Breadth is significantly increasing, driven by cohort learning and relationship-based engagement strategy

ALUMNI

Over 50% of Jewish alumni become involved in lay or professional Jewish communal leadership

TOWSON COMMONS

We believe this space will increase participation in the student community by increasing capacity while also increasing participation from the greater Jewish community by providing a Jewish communal hub in a geographical area not yet serviced. Indicators for tracking have been developed

STATS

Increased Shabbat dinner offerings to average 34 (an increase of 79% from FY 21 and 14% from FY 20) students on bi-monthly basis, and looking to increase by at least a further 10% FY22) Re- Launched student led Homing Shabbat Innovator (HSI) and Shabbat Your Way on bi-weekly basis

For the 3rd year in a row we have recorded record depth of engagement of our students, increasing this indicator by over 300% since FY 19

Israel Learning Fellowship Participation increased by nearly 50% from 20 in FY 21 to 29 in FY22

Over 50% of Jewish Towson alumni become lay or professional leaders of their local Jewish community



## **CONTACT US**

### **Hillel Lounge**

Towson University  
Newell Dining Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Flr  
410.704.4671

### **Mailing Address**

Center for Student Diversity  
8000 York Rd, University Union  
Towson, MD 21252

### **Email Address**

For general inquiries:  
[tuhillel@gmail.com](mailto:tuhillel@gmail.com)

Executive Director:  
[lisa@towsonhillel.org](mailto:lisa@towsonhillel.org)

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

**Ellen Kahan Zager**

**David Zager and Maurice  
Electric**

**Andy Pollakoff and Evolution  
Electric**

## **CONNECT WITH US**

### **Facebook**

[/towson.university.hillel](https://www.facebook.com/towson.university.hillel)

### **Instagram**

[/towsonhillel](https://www.instagram.com/towsonhillel)

### **Twitter**

[/towsonhillel](https://twitter.com/towsonhillel)

### **Website**

[www.towsonhillel.org](http://www.towsonhillel.org)

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

### **Mark Del Gallo**

Art Director/Designer