

# Hillel

TOWSON UNIVERSITY

ANNUAL REPORT  
2022-2023



# CONTENTS

Welcome Letter.....	03
Our Leadership .....	04
Student Leadership.....	06
Student Programs .....	08
Leadership Circle.....	10
Board of Directors .....	11
Community Partnerships .....	12
TU Hillel @ The Commons .....	13
Our Mission .....	14
Our Impact.....	16



## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This was a year of new beginnings, in which we have laid the foundation which will support our Hillel in the years to come. Our first full year without Covid restrictions since 2018-2019, Towson University Hillel started the year with three brand new staff members (Rabbi Alex Salzberg, Jamie Aaron, and Lexi Dockman) and a new space that was full of potential (TU@TheCommons). There was a lot of learning to be done, but our students and community stakeholders supported us as we continued beloved traditions and developed new ones for this new era.

Our incredible student leaders took ownership of our Hillel program and community. They made sure that beloved traditions continued and led the transition into this new era of our community. The new staff’s top priority was to build relationships with our students, both the returning students who could help us learn about Towson Hillel, and the new students who were learning campus along with us. Those relationships developed into

deep commitments. They allowed us to try new things, succeeding more often than we stumbled. We deepened our partnerships with Greek life on campus and set the stage for deeper collaborations next year. As a Hillel community, we participated in the High Holiday services at 5 different area synagogues, experiencing the diversity of Jewish life in Baltimore. We provided the most comprehensive Passover offerings ever, hosting two seders and serving more than 200 meals over the course of the week – all free for the students. This was made possible through the generosity of our donors, who demonstrated a deep commitment to Jewish life on campus.

This year marks the end of Matt’s tenure as Board Chair. He has been a steady presence on the board and for the staff, leading our community through significant changes that have laid the groundwork for years to come. We know that he will remain engaged as a member of the Board and TU alum and thank him for all that he has done on behalf of our community.

With hope for the future,

Matt Lipsky, Board Chair  
Rabbi Alex Salzberg, Executive Director

# OUR LEADERSHIP



## RABBI ALEX SALZBERG — EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Alex Salzberg (MA '11) is excited to be back on campus as the new Executive Director of Towson Hillel. He grew up in Baltimore, about 15 minutes from TU's campus. He left to spend a gap year in Israel and earn an undergraduate degree from Wesleyan University. He then came back to Baltimore and began his relationship with Towson University. After earning his master's degree in Jewish Education from the Baltimore Hebrew Institute at Towson University, he was ordained a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary. For the next six years, he was the rabbi of the Pelham Jewish Center in New York, where he focused on education for all ages and building relationships within the synagogue and between the synagogue and the wider community. Ten years away from Baltimore was enough, and Rabbi Alex and his family decided that it was time to come home. Rabbi Alex believes that community is the essence of Jewish life and sees his role at TU Hillel as helping students find their place in the Jewish community, both on campus and for the rest of their lives. When not on campus, Rabbi Alex is home with his spouse and 3 children, baking bread, or woodworking.



## MCKENNA BATES — ISRAEL ENGAGEMENT ASSOCIATE

McKenna Bates grew up in southern 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 eight times and loves to talk about it- so much so, she's currently pursuing a Masters in Israel Education through the iCenter via George Washington University! During her undergraduate studies at George Mason University, McKenna was highly involved in leadership in the Jewish community and studied the Israeli Palestinian Conflict. Throughout her time at Towson Hillel, McKenna has enjoyed being a Friedman Fellow, a Katz Innovation Fellow, a Jewish Changemaker, and a member of Masterclass Israel. When not creating programs, recruiting for Birthright, meeting students for coffee, or leading the Israel Learning Fellowship, you can find McKenna drawing, arguing about why Star Wars isn't actually sci-fi, or schmoozing in full costume at the Maryland Renaissance Festival!



## JAMIE AARON — ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Jamie Aaron (she/her) is thrilled to join the Towson Hillel team as the new Assistant Director. Jamie comes to Towson Hillel from Beth Am Synagogue where she spent the last three years as the Director of Congregational Engagement and Programming. Prior to her time at Beth Am, Jamie spent five-and-a-half years in Houston, Texas, where she worked to engage youth and teens throughout the Jewish community. Within her various roles, Jamie oversaw the middle school day camp experience at the Evelyn Rubenstein JCC, the experiential education initiatives at Congregation Emanu El, spearheaded the organization of the Houston Jewish Youth Professionals Network (a community of practice that brings together the professionals working to engage youth and teens in greater Houston), and other programs which helped shape her understanding of community engagement. A native of Montgomery County, Jamie is a proud product of congregational education (Kehilat Shalom in Gaithersburg and Congregation B'nai Tzedek in Potomac), youth group (DC Council BBYO and Seaboard USY), and camp (Capital Camps, summers 1998-2009). These foundational experiences led Jamie to pursue her passion for Jewish education and engagement after earning her bachelor's in History and Historic Preservation at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC. Jamie is so grateful to be building upon her own treasured experiences in the Jewish community as she finds new and exciting ways to engage, build community with, and support students through TU Hillel. Jamie loves being back in her home state and when she's not at Hillel, you'll be able to find her enjoying the changing seasons, rooting for the Orioles and the Capitals, reading her latest BookTok find, and spending time with her family.



## LEXI DOCKMAN — PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Born and raised in Minnesota, Lexi can't wait to head East to join the Towson University Hillel team. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with minors in Spanish, Sociology, and Women & Gender Studies from Bradley University where she served as President of her sorority and as an Engagement Intern for Hillel. Following her time as an undergraduate student, she made her way back to Minnesota to receive her Master's Degree in Counseling and Psychological Services from St. Mary's University of MN. In between school years, she spent 8 incredible summers working at a Jewish overnight camp as a counselor, supervisor, and most recently as the Staff-in-Training Director. Lexi is eager to begin connecting with students and looks forward to being a part of an amazing Jewish community on campus. In her free time, Lexi is looking forward to exploring her new home state, baking, reading and listening to musicals.



# 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.



## MAKAYLA BERNSTEIN — PRESIDENT

Hi! I'm Makayla Bernstein and I will be President of Towson Hillel for 2023. I am from Ambler, Pennsylvania and cannot wait to serve on the Executive Board for another year! I am looking forward to creating a Rosh Chodesh Society at our Hillel, to begin or further the connections that students have within in our organization and make lasting impacts on our Towson community.!



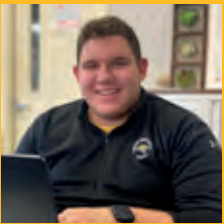
## SOPHIE COHEN — VICE-PRESIDENT

Hey there! My name is Sophie and I am the Vice President of Towson Hillel. Originally, I'm from New Haven, Connecticut and moved with my parents to Queens, New York a few years ago. My major is Political Science! I look forward to continuing meaningful engagements with current and new students!



## TILLIE KRAUS — JEWISH LIFE INTERN

Hi, My name is Tillie Kraus and I am the Jewish Life Intern. I am from Cincinnati Ohio and I am most looking forward to getting to work with the board and planning programs that lots of people are excited about!



## ARTIE MACKEY — ISRAEL CONNECTION INTERN

My name is Artie Mackey and I am from Bethesda, Maryland, and I am a freshman. I am the 2023 Israel Connection Intern! I can't wait to work with this amazing new student E-board to bring more Israel education to Towson Hillel!



## SHIRA GOLDSTEIN — FIRST-YEAR ENGAGEMENT INTERN

Hi Everyone! My name is Shira Goldstein and I will be the First Year Engagement Intern in 2023. I am from Arlington, Virginia and I am looking forward to creating fun events for first year students and getting more people involved with Hillel at Towson!



## SHAYNA ROGOFSKY — COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INTERN

Hi my name is Shayna Rogofsky and I'm from Columbia, MD. I'm majoring in Psychology and minoring in Environmental Studies. I am also Diversity chair for my sorority Delta Phi Epsilon, Stewardship chair for TigerTHON, and senior student energy analyst for Towson University's Energy Office

# COMMUNITY BUILDERS

JACOB RHEINGOLD — TRANSFER STUDENT  
COMMUNITY BUILDER

ADINA NAFTALIN — GREEK LIFE COMMUNITY BUILDER

TAMIR KRIEF — GREEK LIFE COMMUNITY BUILDER

DOV TUCHMAN — JEWISH LIFE COMMUNITY BUILDER

# 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. 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..

## ISRAEL LEARNING FELLOWSHIP

Towson University Hillel continues to offer the Israel Learning Fellowship (ILF). 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.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

TU Hillel students are deeply committed to making a positive impact on the world around them. They have worked with children at Save a Child’s Heart, raised funds for multiple Israeli charities, and baked countless challahs as part of Nazun (formerly Challah for Hunger).



## WELLNESS PROGRAMMING

Towson Hillel continues to create and facilitate new initiatives on campus to address the growing mental health and wellness needs of college students. At the end of each semester students plan a DeStress Fest which provides them with opportunities to relax and practice self-care in the context of Jewish wisdom and spirituality. In partnership with the other Hillels of Maryland, Towson students

participated in a Shabbaton at Pearlstone with a focus on mental wellness. As part of Jewish Disabilities Awareness Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) we hosted a JDAIM Coffee House where students and staff shared their experiences with disabilities and mental health issues.

## STUDENT EXECUTIVE 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. Each member of the E-Board chooses an area of student life to be their focus and plans engaging and meaningful events and programs for the Hillel community.



## SHABBAT

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!



## HOLIDAYS

The Jewish holidays are essential guideposts over the course of the year. At Towson University, they are a time for Hillel students to come together and be a part of creating their own religious experience. At times we collaborate with local synagogues, other times we create our own traditional and innovative observances, respecting all students’ beliefs and practices.



## SOCIAL PROGRAMMING

Hillel is a space for students to relax, encouraged by regular social programming. Students gather every Friday to watch a movie together in the Lounge before Shabbat, build community around our monthly bagel brunch, and find connections in smaller sub-groups that make use of the Hillel spaces.

## GREEK LIFE

Towson University provides a large extra-curricular community in which several Jewish heritage fraternities and sororities thrive. Many students who belong to these organizations find meaning as active members and leaders of our Hillel. Formal partnerships deepen our relationships and expand our reach into the TU community.

## ISRAEL CONNECTION

Towson Hillel works to promote a positive image of Israel on Towson University’s campus and connects students from diverse backgrounds to Israeli life and culture. Birthright trips are a major piece of this work, and TU Hillel strives to fill every seat that we are allocated for both winter and summer trips. Passionate staff and student leaders host programs that share Israel with the Hillel and wider community throughout campus, including our second-annual Israel Fest on Yom Ha’atzmaut.



# Leadership Circle

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

Baltimore Hebrew Congregation – Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund

Beth El Congergation – Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund

Beth Tfiloh Congregation – Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund

Chizuk Amuno Congregation – Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund

Larry and Naomi Amsterdam

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Deena and Jay Dermer

Jonathan and Jayne Havens

Judy and Herschel (z’l) Langenthal

Emily and Scott Levin

Matthew and Elysa Lipsky

Harvey and Linda Litofsky

Darren Margolis

Jack and Marti Nebb

Sybil Rosenberg

Ronnie H. and Alli Russel Charitable Foundation

Steve and Ginny Salzberg

Jacob E. Simone

Ellen Kahan Zager and Jack Zager

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## BOARD CHAIR

Matthew Lipsky '96

## VICE CHAIR

Emily Levin P'22

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Neal Shaivitz '96

## SECRETARY

Dr. Sheryl Cooper  
(faculty - retired)

## IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR

Adam Baumwald '00

## BOARD MEMBERS

Zachary Ament '12

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Natasha Baum '19

Michelle Damareck '97

Deena Dermer

Abram Fox

Brett Gelfand '22

Barry Gittlen (faculty - retired)

Jonathan Havens Esq.

Judy Macks (faculty)

Sydney Marantz '21

Michael Schwartzberg '94 P'22

Diane Seegull (BHI Staff)

Jacob Simone '11

Jodi Teitelman ‘20

Jacob Wolf

Ellen Kahan Zager

## STUDENT REPS

Makayla Bernstein '25

Jenna Heisman '23

Ari Rubin '23

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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

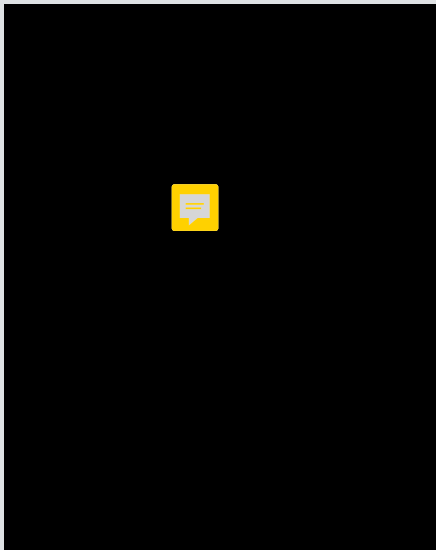


Towson University Hillel relies on its relationships with the wider Baltimore Jewish Community. These relationships diversify the opportunities available to Hillel students. With 90% of Towson alumni settling within an hour of the university, relationships that begin in college can continue into adulthood. Many Hillel alumni become Jewish professionals, working at the Associated, local synagogues, and other institutions.

These relationships also increase our profile within the Baltimore Jewish community, which increases our opportunities for contributions, partnerships, and grants. Consistently, when individuals and organizations learn about our students and programs, they are enthusiastic supporters.

# TU HILLEL @ THE COMMONS

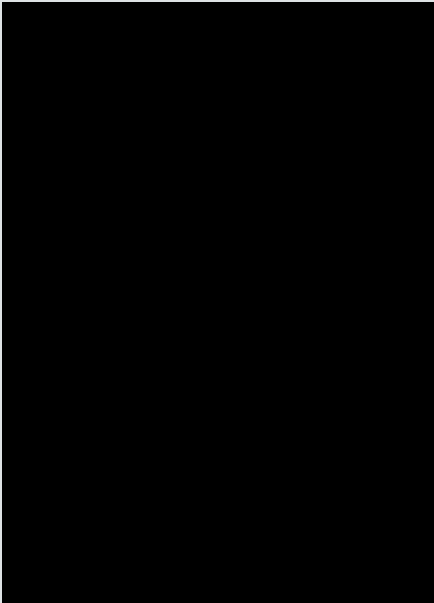
Towson University Hillel has a new space at the Towson Commons building. The 2,500-square-foot Commons space features a full kitchen, a large multipurpose room. This year, we have been able to take full advantage of our new space in Towson Commons. The location is spacious, allowing us to easily accommodate students for Shabbat meals and programs. The kitchen gives us the opportunity to create home-cooked dishes for Shabbat and holidays as well as facilitate cooking-centered programs. The layout and design makes the space welcoming, as it is decorated with high-end Jewish and local art. The small conference room in the back allows for private conversations and meetings during programs and events.



The cornerstone event at the Commons is always Shabbat dinner. The space allows us to offer a meaningful and reflective service in a space that feels designed for the purpose. We are then able to transition to Shabbat dinner (with food kept warm in our kitchen's oven and warming drawers) without having to ask everyone to reset the room completely. After dinner, the students transition to the Big Joe beanbag chairs to talk or gather around a table to play a game. Students are often there for more than 4 hours – and have to be sent home at the end of the night! The space is designed for and used primarily by our Towson students. It also presents a perfect opportunity for community collaboration and engagement. Since the start of the academic year, we have hosted a comedy night with UMBC and Goucher Hillels, meetings with

the Na'aleh's Friedman Fellows and Kolot Fellowship, and a JTAA volunteer event in collaboration with the MCJC. We also held our first-ever camp staff fair at the Commons, which brought together more than a dozen Jewish day and overnight camps to recruit college aged students for the summer.

Looking to the future, we have collaborations and rentals planned with the Macks Center for Jewish Connection, Congregation Kol HaLev, and 4Front. We are organizing a Graduate Student Shabbat dinner open to all the local universities and expect to offer it once a semester starting next year. The Associated is also launching a rental landing page, which will feature the Commons and give us the opportunity to rent the space for private events.



# OUR MISSION

Hillel's mission is to enrich the lives of Jewish students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world.

Because 90% of Towson University alumni stay within an hour of Baltimore, we have the opportunity to see this impact directly, as TU Hillel alumni become the lay and professional leaders in The Associated and Baltimore's Jewish schools, synagogues, and community organizations.

Our investment in our students' Jewish growth, through educational programs, religious experiences, and community building activities, strengthens their sense of Jewish identity and peoplehood. Our deep connections to the wider Baltimore Jewish community facilitate transforming that identity into professional and personal connections, with organizations such as JTAA and The Associated's YAD and graduate opportunities at BHI and other local institutions.

The work of Towson Hillel not only enriches the lives of TU students, it also leads to a more vibrant Jewish Baltimore, ensuring an engaged group of leaders, donors, and volunteers both now and in the future.



*Towson Hillel is the Jewish community I didn't know I needed*  
– Shayna '26

*I wish that I had found Hillel before my last semester!*  
– Owen '23



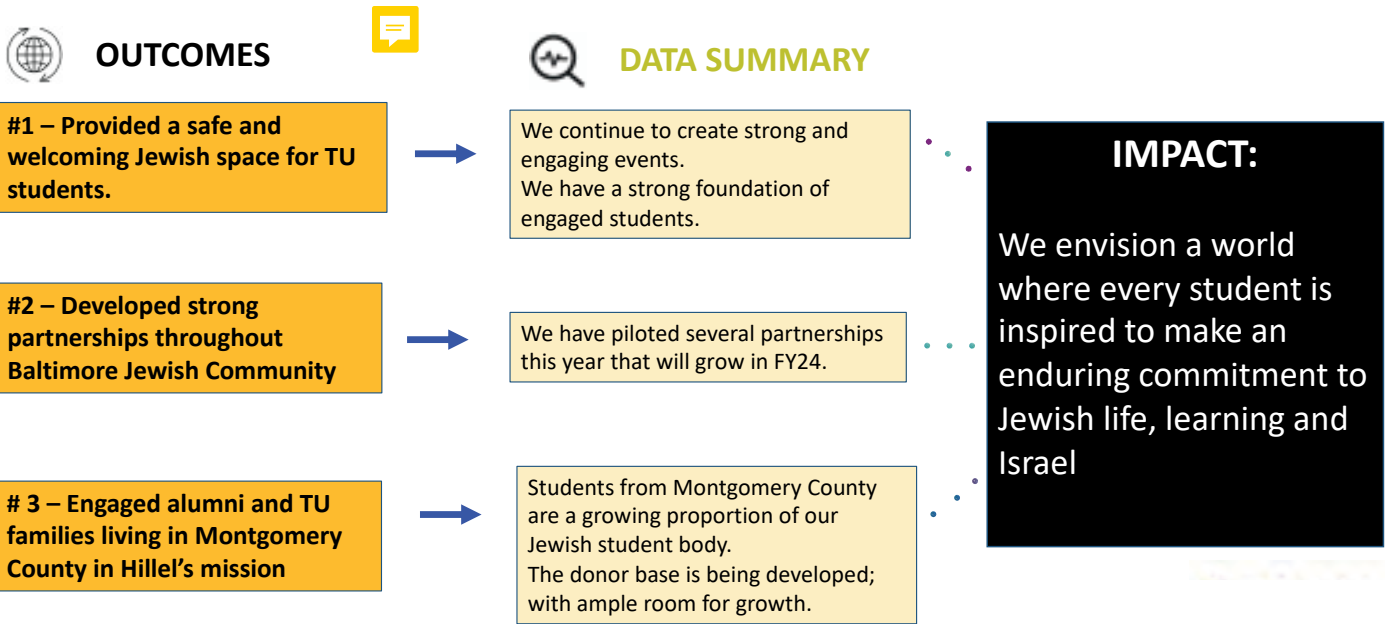
# OUR IMPACT

This year marked the beginning of a new era at Towson Hillel, with our new space at Towson Common and 75% staff turnover. We are laying the foundation for our future. We have focused on three specific outcomes that will support us as we work to make our vision a reality.

The heart of Hillel work will always be engaging students. TU Hillel provides both a physical space and a sense of community for all the Jewish students on Towson’s campus, regardless of background, knowledge, or identification.

One of the most compelling strengths of Towson Hillel is our place in the Baltimore Jewish community. As an agency of the Associated, we have strong working relationships with the entire Associated system. We quickly and easily connect our students with volunteer opportunities, internships, and job prospects. We have also been able to host outside organizations in our space, giving our students a taste of what Baltimore has to offer without asking them to leave campus.

Our third area of focus is in developing our relationships with families and alumni outside of Baltimore. Over the past several years, Towson has pulled a growing percentage of its student body from Montgomery County, home of the largest Jewish population in the state. Establishing and deepening relationships with these families and alumni is a top priority for the growth and sustainability of our Hillel.



## **CONTACT US**

### **Hillel Lounge**

Towson University  
Newell Dining Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Flr  
410-843-7471

### **Mailing Address**

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

### **Email Address**

For general inquiries:  
[info@towsonhillel.org](mailto:info@towsonhillel.org)

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

## **CONNECT WITH US**

### **Facebook**

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

### **Instagram**

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

### **TikTok**

[@towsonuniversityhillel](https://www.tiktok.com/@towsonuniversityhillel)

### **Website**

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

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

### **Mark Del Gallo**

Art Director/Designer