



MASON HILLEL

2022-
2023



**ANNUAL
REPORT**



MISSION

Enrich the lives of George Mason University Jewish undergraduate and graduate students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world.

VISION

Serving the Jewish educational, religious, cultural, recreational, communal, social, and emotional needs of Jewish students attending Mason.





MEET OUR TEAM



**RABBI DANIEL
NOVICK**
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



LIAT FRIEDMAN
DIRECTOR OF
JEWISH STUDENT
LIFE



LUISA MOSS
COMMUNICATIONS
& DEVELOPMENT
COORDINATOR



**BERYL TRAUTH-
JURMAN**
RABBINIC INTERN



SYDNEY SPANIER
SPRINGBOARD
INNOVATION
FELLOW



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Friends,

As I begin my role of being the president of the community board, I feel like I am standing on the shoulders of a giant. We are so very grateful for the work of Allon Shiff who in partnership with Rabbi Daniel Novick and all of you for continuing to create a dynamic Hillel at GMU.

Having been associated with Mason Hillel since it was a Jewish Student Association, I have watched the Hillel grow and become a dynamic force on campus. We recently had our opening Community Board retreat and I was inspired by the energy and devotion of our current board and the creative leadership of Rabbi Daniel.

As he and his wife, Sarah, have ushered in a new life over the summer, celebrating the birth of their son, Asher, Rabbi Daniel has breathed new life into an organization that continues to make a difference in the lives of so many students as you can see in his report. As we welcomed back Na'ama Gold, our previous director and her family at the dinner following the retreat, we are living out the prayer which says "from generation to generation we declare G-d's praise". We are lighting the path of our students, faculty, and members of our Northern VA Jewish community and beyond.

We are excited to welcome Liat Friedman, the Director of Jewish Student Life and Sydney Spanier, the Springboard Innovation Fellow to Hillel who are part of a great staff team including Beryl Trauth-Jurman and Luisa Moss.

Together with our student board, we are embarking on wonderful new journeys which we will be sharing with you. In order to realize our dreams, we will continue to need your involvement and will be informing you about exciting ways in which you can support our innovative approach to building and sustaining Jewish life for all our students.

As we all continue to wrestle with Covid and an unsettled world, we are grateful that Hillel provides a safe place for students to support each other. As an adjunct professor in the Honors College and the Religious Studies Department, I have witnessed first hand the impact that Hillel has on enriching the lives of our students and providing mental health support during these challenging times.

We hope that as we approach the New Year, we will all continue to keep the light of Mason Hillel burning strongly and continue to spark more interest among those who are in our network.

May the new year bring hope, health, and happiness to all of us.

B'shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft



RABBI BRUCE AFT
COMMUNITY BOARD
PRESIDENT





EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dear Mason Hillel Family,

In the recent weeks, I have been meeting and talking with families of new incoming students and introducing them to the work of Mason Hillel and the Jewish community at George Mason University. Something that has stood out to me this year is the number of families and students saying that they have heard from current Mason students and families about how active and great the Jewish community is at GMU. The word is spreading- as the Mason Hillel community grows, expands, and evolves, prospective and incoming students are taking note and interested in seeing themselves as part of our special Jewish community. Nothing prides me more as Mason Hillel's Executive Director than hearing about the positive stories of impact community.

Some of these stories and highlights are shared within this Annual Report. Through our robust cohort programming or our one-on-one engagement work filled with lots and lots of coffee, Mason Hillel and its students are building a strong Jewish community. This year, we saw the opening of a Kosher Dining option on campus, the creation of an Engagement Internship program, trips to Israel, creative Shabbat meals, a redesigned office space focusing on student wellness and wellbeing, and more. Students are connecting with one another and finding their people and place on campus. Our work is continuously evolving and as each academic year ends, we look forward to new beginnings and opportunities in the future.

Of course, we don't do this work alone. Thanks to your support, Mason Hillel was able to do all of that and more. Your support helps us support each and every student we engage. Your support allows us to have an incredible team of professionals who were there for students throughout the year - my deepest gratitude goes out to Liat Friedman, Sydney Spanier, Luisa Moss, and Beryl Trauth-Jurman. Most importantly, your support also directly impacts our student leaders who planned initiatives and programs that were relevant and engaging and that touched hundreds of lives.

We would not be where we are today without the support and leadership of our Community Board and its President, Rabbi Bruce Aft. The Mason Hillel project is a community-inspired one, and we are grateful for the many hours of work the Community Board puts in to ensure we have a strong and stable organization.

There is more to come for Mason Hillel. For now, we reflect on the past year and have its stories inspire us to spread the story of Mason Hillel. I am grateful for your support and I look forward to working with you to ensure a bright future for Mason Hillel and the Northern Virginia Jewish community.



RABBI DANIEL NOVICK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Daniel





STUDENT PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi Mason Hillel Community!

I am beyond excited to be the 2023-2024 Hillel Student President. Hillel quickly became my home away from home upon arriving to the George Mason University campus. Since then, I've felt empowered and supported as I explored leadership roles within the organization on committees, as the Digital Engagement Chair, and an Engagement Intern and my ideas heard regarding restructuring student leadership. Outside of Hillel, I am a returning Freshman Resident Assistant, a member of the Peer Empowerment Program through Counseling and Psychological Services, and the Undergraduate Program Assistant for the Judaic Studies Program and Minor. While I love all of these roles, there is something special about Hillel that fills my heart more than anything else.

This past year we welcomed 2 new full-time staff members and rejuvenated the Engagement Internship Program. With this dedication and focus on reaching more students and fostering more connections, our community is flourishing. We've specifically increased our reach to commuters, contemporary students, and those currently enrolled at Northern Virginia Community College. Additionally, we've grown our engagement with college-age and college-stage Jews in the Northern Virginia area.

With all of this growth, it was time for the student leadership model to change too. We took the input and involvement from students who had a variety of leadership backgrounds to create and implement a new leadership model. This reimagined structure empowers students to work on the specific programming they want to see on their timeline. This model also puts a focus on student leader well-being and prioritizes leadership development through low barrier opportunities within the community.

There is so much to look forward to in the upcoming year. From meeting new students this Fall, watching how the new leadership model is embraced, and exciting new programs to the Spring Soiree. It is truly an honor and privilege to be on the front lines of this amazing organization and afforded the opportunity to give back to our community.

Ashleigh



ASHLEIGH TRUDELL
STUDENT PRESIDENT





A YEAR IN REVIEW



Shabbat Dinners



Israel Engagement



Jewish Learning Experiences



Diversity and Inclusion



Jewish Holiday Celebrations



**Community Outreach Initiatives
(Interfaith, Political,
& Social Justice)**





MEANINGFUL JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

By Luisa Moss

Leah Kundel got involved with Mason Hillel because she did not grow up surrounded by a Jewish community or any other Jewish people outside of her family. Her family had previously experienced a lot of antisemitism and to protect her from the same experience, she was instructed to keep her Judaism a secret. She grew to be embarrassed of being Jewish.



When Leah arrived at Mason, she wanted to be involved in Jewish life on campus but was cautious. She felt that she was not “Jewish enough” because she felt she did not know as much about her Judaism as her peers on campus. A member of Mason Hillel reached out to Leah about having a coffee chat. During this meeting, Leah discovered “I wasn’t alone. There were many with the same or similar stories to mine and there was a loving community ready to accept me and teach me.”

Leah is now involved in Mason Hillel and serves as an engagement intern. She meets with students one-on-one for coffee chats to get to know them and help find meaningful ways for them to connect with Hillel based on their interests. “To now have the opportunity to be on the other side of this story and connect new people into the community has been beyond rewarding.”



FINDING MY PLACE



CONNECTING WITH ISRAEL

By Amichai Levy

Having completed the Fact Finders trip through Mason Hillel, I feel extremely lucky and blessed to be able to have had the opportunity to participate in a trip like this one. Fact Finders was thoroughly illuminating, taking at its heart an ethos of understanding and conversation. The organization of the trip allowed for me to branch out of my comfort zone in discussing the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflicts with non-Jewish students. This is not something I typically enjoy doing in the US, where I cannot be sure of people's intentions or if they are speaking to me in good faith. Thanks to the hard work of Hillel staff and our wonderful tour guide, this trip allowed for me to engage with non-Jewish students meaningfully about the conflicts, increasing mutual understanding in a way I haven't ever experienced before.

Getting to go to Ramallah to hear directly from Palestinian leaders in the West Bank was such a unique and rewarding experience that I don't think I'd ever have gotten outside of this trip. I find that dialogue in the US about Israel-Palestine features a lot of talking about what some Palestinians or other Palestinians think, so getting to speak directly to people who live there and are affected by the situation there and understand why they view it the way they do was very valuable to me.

I can honestly say that trips like this are so important for building relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish communities. In a time where people are ostracized and penalized socially and professionally for engaging in dialogue with Jewish people about Israel and Palestine, providing non-Jewish students with the opportunity to learn about the conflict in a safe and low-stakes setting is crucial. We can never hope to have understanding between Jewish and non-Jewish communities if we allow people who discourage learning and dialogue to control the conversation and the narratives that circulate. This is an important step in asserting the power of dialogue for peacebuilding both in the region and in the Diaspora. I am so grateful for the chance I was given to participate in this trip, and I feel empowered and inspired to continue the work of building relationships between our Jewish community and our neighbors on campus going forward. I am confident that the friendships formed on this trip will lead to meaningful experiences back home, continuing conversations and ideas explored during the trip.



AMICHAH LEVY





WELCOME TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We recently welcomed two new members to our community board.



JEFF DANNICK

Jeff Dannick joined the Pozez Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia in March 2011 as its Executive Director. In that role, he combines his passion for community building with his love for Israel and for Jewish culture and traditions; his commitment to education; his belief in the importance of fitness – physical, mental, and spiritual; and his expertise in management and fundraising, to help bring the Pozez JCC to new heights.

Jeff's background is quite diverse. After completing his bachelor's degree in Performing Arts/Theatre with a minor in Business Administration from Alfred University, and earning his master's degree in arts administration and an MBA from Southern Methodist University, he pursued a twenty-year career in theatre administration. Prior to joining the Center, Jeff served as the Executive Director of the Israel Children's Centers, the American fundraising organization that supports the Israel Tennis and Education Centers. Jeff and his wife Marcia live in Springfield, Virginia and have two grown daughters, Samantha, and Rachel.



ALEX ROSENWALD

Alex Rosenwald is the Senior Director of Communications for The Hill, where he focuses on the reach and awareness of their streaming channel, live events, and journalists. He previously served in communications roles for the Hudson Institute, Ricochet, the Washington Examiner and The Weekly Standard. Rosenwald received a Bachelors of Science in conflict analysis and resolution, focusing on Middle East history and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, from George Mason University. He is also a James Madison Fellow at Hillisdale College, as well as a Tehom Fellow with the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington. He currently lives in Fairfax with his wife Maddie (they both met at Mason Hillel), and are members of Congregation Olam Tikvah.



HILLEL IMPACT REPORT

169

**Coffee Chats
With Students**

177

**Jewish
Undergraduate
Participants in
Hillel Activities One
or More Times**

529

**Shabbat Meals
Served**

15

**Leadership Positions,
Fellowships, and Interns**

69

**Participants Attended
Hillel Activities Six
Times**

119

**First Time Participating
in a Hillel Event or
Program**



HILLEL IMPACT REPORT

MASON HILLEL'S YEAR: IN NUMBERS 2022-2023



529

Kosher Shabbat meals served

169

Coffee chats held to connect with students



42

Students participated in Jewish/Israel Learning



492

Students met while tabling

61

Students Attended Holiday Programs



15

Students on Mason Hillel Student Leadership for Next Year



177

Jewish Students have attended 1 or more Hillel events



119

Students attended a Hillel event for the first time

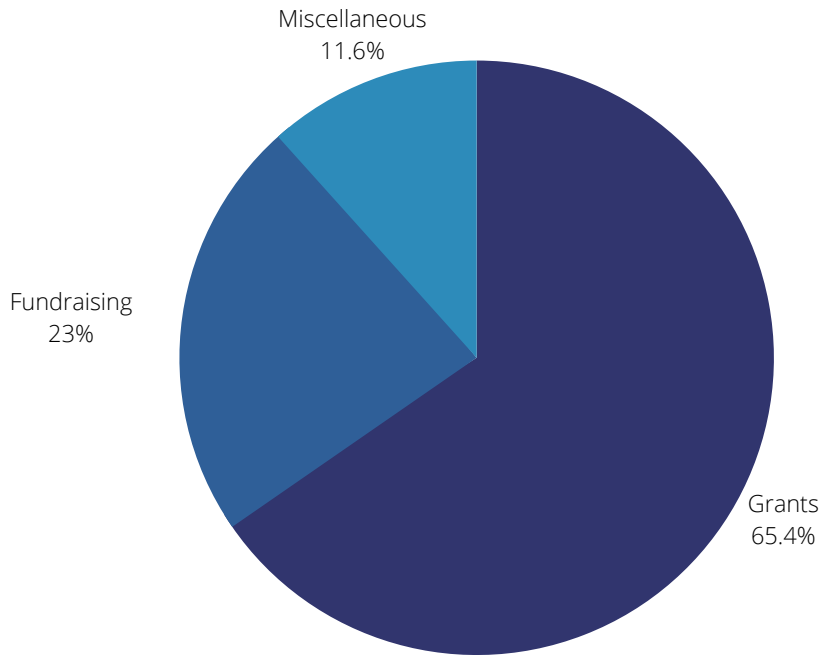


69

Jewish Students have attended 6 or more Hillel events

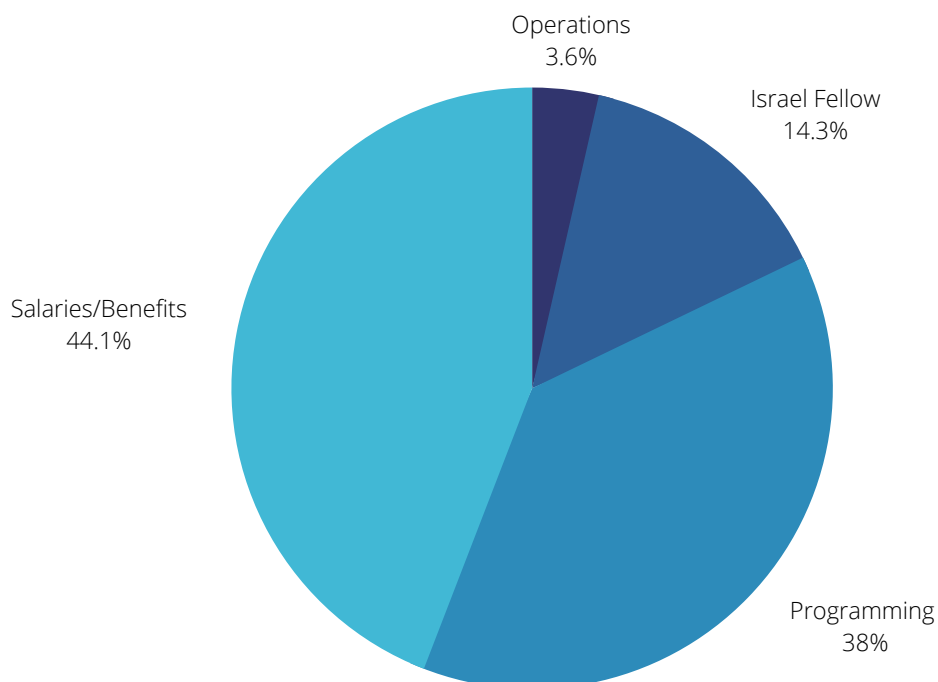


2022-2023 REVENUE



\$390,212

2022-2023 EXPENSES



\$370,455



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Thank you for support! We apologize for any errors or omissions.

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