BUILDING BRIDGES TOWARD A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Modeling Civil Discourse

Promoting Understanding

Deepening Relationships

PENN HILLEL 2017–2018
A Talmudic story (Avodah Zarah 8a) tries to imagine the experience Adam and Eve have as the first winter approached. The air grew colder, the days grew shorter, the leaves began to fall off the trees. It must have been terrifying. It must have seemed like the world was ending. At first, Adam and Eve were so afraid all they could do was huddle together and weep.

But as the very darkest days of the year arrived, Adam and Eve let go of their fear and responded to darkness by kindling lights. They soon realize that it was not the end of the world, but just the changing of the seasons.

This story teaches a positive way to respond to darkness—while we should acknowledge our fear, we cannot let it immobilize us. We are obligated to step into the darkness, and without full knowledge of when it will end, begin to bring our own light into the world.

There is a kind of darkness on campus today. Every day we speak with students who are in pain over the ways in which our political discourse is broken. They feel like any political discussion whether it’s about race, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the Presidential election, is off limits and too fraught to engage with. This sense of fear often leaves students feeling angry, isolated and forced to retreat into their respective political tribes.

Into this darkness—Hillel is trying to kindle light by creating new spaces where students can build bridges with others from different political, ethnic and religious backgrounds. There are spaces that encourage students to connect with peers who have different life experiences or different political opinions in order to create relationships and a kind of civil discourse that has the capacity to help students both better define who they are and what kind of world they want to create.

When students are able to explore both at the same time, amazing things happen: students are inspired to both build a brighter Jewish future and work with all people to foster a more kind, civil and productive society.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Mike Uram
Executive Director & Campus Rabbi

Hillel is the most supportive organization on campus. The first question I’m asked is, “how can I help you?” and the response is always, “let’s figure this out together.” Hillel’s collaborative, can-do mentality has shaped my college experience immeasurably.

Being a student leader has expanded my idea of what it means to be “involved” in the Jewish community. What started with a desire to be an advocate for Israel has led to a greater awareness of Jewish traditions, friendships with diverse student leaders, and connections to lifelong mentors.”

I don’t think of JRP as a “Jewish club,” but rather as a vehicle for broadening my thinking. It’s prompted me to think deeply about what’s most important to me, and to consider the Jewish perspective on universal questions.

Even when I questioned something I learned, I enjoyed gaining a richer understanding of religious principles. As a result, I feel a greater sense of respect and admiration for living Jewishly.”

Sophia Kruger (W’18)

Alexander Montag (SAS ’18)

WHY HILLEL?

Sophia loves open-water swimming

FUN FACT: Sophia loves open-water swimming

WHY HILLEL? Hillel made a huge difference in Sophia’s life because it connected her with the sense of Jewish community she had previously experienced through day school. Sophia was also eager to nurture her growing passion for Israel.

Penn Hillel: Inspiring Future Changemakers

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WHY ARE WE BUILDING BRIDGES?

It’s hard to escape the sense of living in a fractured world.

Each of us, in our own way, is inundated with news, social media posts and personal conversations about how divided and contentious the discourse is around politics, race and religion. Sometimes, it’s difficult to imagine finding common ground. At Penn Hillel, we believe that today’s students will play a pivotal role in building a more civil, more open and more constructive public discourse.

Deepening Relationships

In a high-pressure environment that too often drives students to disconnect from those around them, Penn Hillel strives to build meaningful relationships with students on their own terms in a variety of ways including one-on-one coffee conversations and powerful Shabbat experiences.

Shabbat experiences

Shabbat is a time when students are able to unplug, unwind and can be open and vulnerable with their peers.

One-on-one coffee conversations

A coffee conversation is far more than a chat about Jewish life at Penn. Penn Hillel staff are invested in learning more about students’ personal lives, passions and any challenges they face on campus.

52 Shabbat dinners
1,090 students engaged
1,326 one-on-one conversations with Penn Hillel staff
879 students engaged

Modeling Civil Discourse

Modern times have given us the luxury of changing the channel or “unfollowing” those with views different from our own. Penn Hillel, on the other hand, is equipping and empowering students to “tune in”—to take part in challenging conversations and find the way in finding solutions.

Unity Shabbat

In a rare moment, student leaders representing Penn’s Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities came together for a Shabbat meal, engaging in productive and hopeful discussions about shared values and aspirations.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks at Penn

In a presentation that some described as “life-changing,” renowned thinker, leader and author Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks urged a packed audience to help make religion a force for positive change, calling on students of all faiths to take on the great challenges of our time, together. This event was part of the Ilan Himmel Memorial Speaker and Film Series sponsored by Barbara and Leonard Gold.

Promoting Understanding

Penn Hillel’s immersive experiences and deep learning fellowships have a far-reaching and lasting impact across campus. Through these innovative initiatives, students access diverse perspectives, build transformative relationships and are prepared to be well-rounded global citizens.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>INITIATIVE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALIF BET FELLOWSHIP</td>
<td>Side-by-side learning series in Hebrew and Arabic, forging unique relationships between Hebrew and Arabic speakers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALLIANCE FOR UNDERSTANDING</td>
<td>Black Jews collaborative study of the Civil Rights Movement, culminating in an alternative spring break trip to Alabama and Georgia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DECOMPRESS FELLOWSHIP</td>
<td>Interfaith and inter-ethnic week-long finding trip to Israeli and Palestinian territories, generating a deeper understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict across campus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISRAEL LEARNING LAB</td>
<td>Interfaith exploration of Israel expanding students’ knowledge each semester through sessions on Israeli culture, religion, history, and more.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MORAL VOICES</td>
<td>Interfaith seminars based on groundbreaking and ethics audience, culminating in a week-long service trip to the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda.</td>
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TOTAL FELLOWS: 70
TOTAL STUDENTS ENGAGED: 910

Constant questioning and being questioned allowed me to learn about race and religion in contexts I had never before considered. Hearing and sharing stories brought new levels of empathy and alliance between minority groups, creating a more united front in the fight for justice.

MORAL VOICES FELLOW
Hillel Donors
Special Thanks to Our Supporters

Hillel is dependent on the generosity of parents, alumni and community friends.

We thank all of you whose contributions this past year allowed us to inspire Jewish life and community at the University of Pennsylvania.

Thank You to the donors who have shown their ongoing support. Please visit pennhillel.org/essersociety to our Esser Society members, Penn Hillel's Young Leadership Circle and are highlighted with a double asterisk (**).

Esser Society donors who contributed $1000+ are part of pennhillel.org/essersociety.

ANNUAL CAMPAIGN TOTAL $2,414,628

PENN HILLEL MULTI-YEAR GIFT COMMITMENTS

We apologize for any errors or omissions in this list. If you believe you are not included, please contact us at thankyou@pennhillel.org.

Thank You!
WHY WE’RE INVESTED

Penn Hillel provides a foundation for students to advance their Jewish communal selves. Academics can only be one aspect of their education and we are grateful that our student is empowered and inspired to build a great Jewish community on Penn's campus.

ANDREA & LARRY GILL

We are proud to support Hillel because our daughter has found a Jewish home away from home and a wonderful community in which to participate in at Penn.

DEBORAH (L’92) & STEVEN (C’89, L’92) SHAPIRO

Penn Hillel played a huge role in my college experience. It helped me grow a sense of self-confidence about what Judaism means to me and how it fits into my adult life. I am so proud to be a part of a great Hillel that is making a big difference in the lives of students.

DANIELLE & JEREMY (W’10) PERLMAN

A WORD FROM THE PENN HILLEL BOARD OF OVERSEERS

Thanks to the generous support of all who contribute to Penn Hillel, we are able to offer students a myriad of opportunities to explore their Jewish identities. The professional staff and student leaders work tirelessly to create communities and experiences that have a lasting impact on Jewish students. It is not just the depth of these experiences that makes Penn Hillel such a unique environment, but also the diligent effort to reach as many students as possible through one-on-one conversations and exciting initiatives. This year, Penn Hillel connected with 94% of Jewish students on campus. These achievements would not be possible without you, our loyal supporters. Thank you for continuing to be our partner in shaping the Jewish future.

Ron Perilstein  |  Chair, Penn Hillel Board of Overseers

Visit Hillel online at pennhillel.org
info@pennhillel.org

Pin Hillel is a program of Hillel of Greater Philadelphia which is a partner agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and an affiliate of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

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