**MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD**

**JOSHUA LISS**

COVID-19 has challenged our students and community in unprecedented ways. Metro Chicago Hillel played a critical role in supporting the mental well-being of our community by providing, through resilience and collaboration, engaging and uplifting virtual events. This year, we reached 802 Jewish students at least once, and 1,091 young adults through Silverstein Base Hillel. I am proud to report an 11% increase in the number of students we reached at least six times, or through high-impact programs, which support a more viable and sustainable commitment to Jewish life.

Since March 13—when we had to end in-person programs and switch to exclusively virtual experiences—we ran 131 programs and engaged 223 undergraduates. We distributed over 100 seder meals to students and young adults who could not be with their families for Passover. Our Silverstein Base Hillel rabbinic couples worked nonstop to connect with young adults in need. Together Rabbi Megan and Paige GoldMarche and Rav Ezra Balser and Laura Elkayam have had pastoral meetings—intimate, emotionally supportive conversations—with 268 students and young adults since March. This included students from our nine “official” campuses, as well as participants from 11 other schools.

With a mix of virtual and in-person events, our students had unique experiences to travel and participate in empowering programs that allowed for self-reflection and growth.

- **JLF** has become our signature educational opportunity. We expanded the program from four cohorts to six and saw a 30% increase in student participation with 81 participants.
- **In December,** 16 students went to El Paso, Texas to learn more about the refugee crisis, and to volunteer with a local church. This experience has motivated students to continue learning about injustices within our country.
- **In May,** a group of five student leaders led a discussion around COVID-19 and incarceration which emphasized systemic racism in the prison system, as well as how the pandemic affects Black and brown communities.
- **For the first-ever Hillel Global Giving Week,** we raised over $10,000. This number was generously matched by Hillel International.

As we look forward to the 2020-2021 school year, we will continue adapting the work we do to meet the needs of our students and young adults. Our team has been working creatively to prioritize our students’ safety while providing impactful programs that foster personal growth. We are updating our leadership structure next year to give students a chance to make their community even more welcoming and engaging. We look forward to connecting with more students next year through inclusive, innovative programming.

Your support helps us continually fulfill our mission to inspire every student and young adult to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life. Together, we provide young Jews in the Chicagoland area the best opportunities to create strong relationships with their peers, find mentors and create community. Thank you for investing in our future leaders and strengthening the Jewish community of tomorrow.

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### STUDENT PROFILE

**Katherine O’Neil**  
Junior @ Loyola  

“I love the community of diverse and kind people. Hillel is a wonderful space to create meaningful personal and professional connections and explore my Jewishness.”

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### EXPANDED JEWISH LEARNING ACROSS THE WORLD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birthright Israel</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Leadership Trip</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Retreat</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel Conferences</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Paso Alternative Break</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Retreat</td>
<td>16</td>
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### STAYED IN TOUCH VIRTUALLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students and young adults had pastoral meetings with Rabbi Megan, Paige, Rav Ezra, and Laura</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate students were engaged through 131 programs</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seder meals were distributed to students and young adults who could not be with their families for Passover</td>
<td>100+</td>
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### ENGAGED STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shabbat and holiday meals served</td>
<td>1,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students engaged with MCH 6 or more times</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-impact activity participants</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Learning Fellowship graduates</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel events with 174 unique undergrad participants</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student leaders on a campus board or MCH Visionary Team</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
METRO CHICAGO HILLEL’S VIBRANT COMMUNITY

IN-PERSON PROGRAMMING PRE-COVID-19

HIGH HOLIDAYS

Over 200 students and young adults learned, prayed, and celebrated with us throughout the High Holidays. Through a variety of traditional and alternative services, several classes, and joyous meals, our participants found countless new ways to experience the holidays.

ISRAEL GROUP

MCH Israel Fellow Adi Yahalom organized a group of 18 students who met regularly to discuss current events and politics in Israel and eat delicious homemade food. It was a great way to keep Israel at the forefront of students’ minds, and to give them a space where they could debate and discuss what Israel means to them.

EL PASO ALTERNATIVE BREAK

In December, as the refugee crisis on the southern border worsened, 16 students traveled to El Paso, TX to learn about the economic disparity present in immigrant communities. In partnership with a local church, students made and distributed 30 food boxes and 200 sandwiches to over 100 immigrants and refugees and heard first-hand accounts of the hardships that undocumented immigrants face. The students learned how faith and spirituality play a critical role in immigrant communities, and how Jewish history and values connect our community to theirs.

SIMCHAT TORAH

The holiday celebrating the annual completion of reading the Torah seems to fly under the radar for lots of students and young adults. Many have not celebrated the holiday since they were children, and some have never even heard of it. Rather than a traditional Simchat Torah celebration of singing and dancing, MCH hosted a five-course dinner inspired by the five books of the Torah for 32 students. We had grilled cheese in the shape of a Torah, vegan burgers representing the holy sacrifice, and much more. Between each course, students shared some thoughts on each book.

STUDENT PROFILE

Daniel Rappoport

“"My favorite experience with Hillel was the Life’s Biggest Questions JLF because it happened at a time when I was beginning to seriously question my values and life priorities. The class helped guide me onto a path that has made me happier and healthier, and a more active member of the Chicago Jewish community."
VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

COVID-19 caused a global upheaval that directly affected our organization and participants in countless ways. Shifting to exclusively virtual engagement, finding innovative ways to provide food and community to our participants, and meeting the mental health needs of students and young adults took a comprehensive and collaborative effort. Our staff demonstrated the utmost dedication to our students and young adults by providing one-on-one and group Zoom experiences.

ISRAEL @ HOME MYSTERY BOXES

In place of the typical Israel Week events, staff put together boxes to send to our students around the country, which included food, a book, coloring materials, and lots of swag. The items correspond to five different virtual programs led by student facilitators relating to Israeli culture and history. Over 40 students participated.

PASSOVER SEDER KITS

Our Passover kit pick-up and delivery service provided over 100 seder kits and meals to students and young adults in Chicago. Our participants chose between multiple seder options, including attending a seminar with Rabbi Megan to learn how to lead their own seder, and downloading a seder video guide featuring Rav Ezra and Laura. 12 MCH students also participated in a Dungeons & Dragons-themed seder led by two of our staff.

SENIOR SERIES

Starting in May, 14 seniors met every Thursday for a month to talk about life after graduation. Together with different MCH staff members, the group discussed issues like professionalism, closure, and how to connect with the Jewish community after graduating.

YOM HASHOAH

One of the most powerful moments of the year was our “Zikaron BaSalon” or “Memory in the Living Room” event for Yom HaShoah. We heard MCH’s Manager of Operations and Student Life Rachel Lipson’s grandmother Joyce Wagner share her story as a survivor of Auschwitz. Over 80 people joined the incredibly moving, heartfelt Zoom call.

STUDENT PROFILE
Abigail Geller  Sophomore @ DePaul

“Hillel was the obvious choice for my continuation of Jewish life in college. It’s given me close friendships, a constant source of community in a new city, Jewish religious enrichment, and leadership experiences.”

Daniela Shulman  Loyola

“The most meaningful virtual programming this spring was the Israel at Home box. It was incredibly exciting to get a box full of goodies that corresponded to different programs. It gave me something to do and something to look forward to every week. It was incredibly meaningful for me, because I was able to share the snacks and tea with my family and show them what Hillel does for me at school and include them in my community. My father, who lived in Israel for 15 years, was happy to see all of the snacks and absolutely loved the idea as well.”

STUDENT PROFILE
Molly Fidlow  Sophomore @ Loyola

“My favorite experience with Hillel was planning my first Shabbat because it ended up bringing so many people together to eat, laugh, and learn about Shabbat.”

STUDENT PROFILE
Daniela Shulman  Loyola

“There were many meaningful virtual programs this spring at Hillel, but for me, the Israel at Home box was the most impactful. It was a great way to stay connected to Jewish culture and traditions even during this unpredictable time.”

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“It was incredible to receive a box full of goodies that corresponded to different programs. It was exciting to look forward to each week and share the snacks and tea with my family.”
In our second year of having two locations, Silverstein Base Hillel emphasized themes of justice, equality, and mental health in programs and classes. Rabbi Megan and Paige and Rav Ezra and Laura hosted 1,351 unique participants this year, 486 of whom were undergraduate students. Programming at SBH is deeply rich in content and gives participants a chance to build personal, lasting relationships with a rabbinic couple. From attending the August Base Fundraiser, to learning cohorts, to viewing the Facebook Live with Rabbi Megan and Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Base Hillel provided a wide variety of events to ensure all participants could find programs that felt comfortable for them.

In August, Silverstein Base Hillel hosted its first fundraiser. The event raised over $10,000, and many of the donors became “Base Supporters” at different giving levels, allowing young adults to come for free to certain events throughout the year. The group of 80 mingled, chatted about their favorite Base Hillel moments, and heard speeches from Rabbi Megan and Rav Ezra and some of our young adults.

Rabbi Megan ran a Judaism & Feminism class with over 20 people, both students and post-college Basers, thanks to the generous support of the Jewish Women’s Foundation. The cohort discussed feminism in the Torah and other Jewish texts. Weekly topics included a female clergy panel, feminism and Jewish law, women in Jewish and feminist history, and a spoken word workshop. Caroline Rothstein, who led the workshop, shared poems and led the group in writing exercises and one-on-one sessions to help the participants hone their voice; poems were shared at the last class.

In a joint series with YLD Pride, Rav Ezra taught Pirkei Avot, Ethics of our Ancestors, and a new commentary written by the religious arm of the Israeli Gay Youth movement. Through these texts translated by Rav Ezra, 20 students were exposed to new concepts of identity, religious and moral duties, and inclusive community through the lens of our tradition.

“After deciding to move to Chicago, I signed up for a Birthright trip to meet people here. Rav Ezra was on it, and that is how I discovered Base! Base has been an excellent place to meet people and make friends who share my values.”

“Allison Tanner”

“Base has that mix of celebration, learning, singing, friendly faces, and great Jews that really hits the spot. Because I like so many people at Base, those are always both communal and spiritual connections.”

“Jonathan Karsch”

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IN THE BEGINNING: AN INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER WITH RAV EZRA AND FATHER JAMIE

This course was co-taught by Rav Ezra and Father Jamie Mueller of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Together, they led an interfaith group study of Genesis, exploring themes of God, creation, and how our traditions understand the text and understand each other. The series was featured in the Chicago Catholic online magazine and 23 students and young adults participated.

JUSTICE SERIES

Silverstein Base Hillel: Lincoln Park ran its fourth annual Justice Series this spring with local partners Mishkan Chicago, Repair the World, Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, and Avodah. 25 participants embarked on deep learning around the intersection of Judaism and economic justice. The group learned about the injustices that exist in Chicago and dove into the Fair Tax campaign, exploring how they can make changes around these issues.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

FAITH, HOPE, AND MEANING: A CONVERSATION WITH MAYOR LIGHTFOOT

On May 8, Rabbi Megan interviewed Mayor Lori Lightfoot, broadcasted on Facebook Live for 155 viewers. What was originally envisioned as a conversation about faith and community during the COVID-19 pandemic transformed into a conversation about power, racial justice, and accountability in light of current events after the death of George Floyd and the resulting movement for change in our city and nationwide.

JUDAISM AND MENTAL HEALTH

Throughout May, Rav Ezra and Rabbi Megan launched a new series on Judaism and Mental Health with JUF’s YLD. The overwhelming demand meant we had to open a second cohort. 40 people learned about Shabbat as a spiritual practice, empathy, and forgiveness.

SILVERSTEIN BASE HILLEL BY THE NUMBERS

2,826 unique participants
6,034 participants engaged through 336 events

2019–2020 SCHOOL YEAR

596 Shabbat attendees
446 one-on-one meetings/conversations
302 people attended a learning program
183 young adults had 6+ interactions with SBH

YOUNG ADULT PROFILE

Elyse Kallen

“I came to Base for the enriching programs, and I stayed for the warmth and welcome from the rabbis and their families. I’m so grateful for not only the abundance of opportunities to grow socially, spiritually, and intellectually, but to be a part of the supportive community that Rav Ezra, Laura, Rabbi Megan, and Paige have worked so hard to create.”
JUF amplifies our collective strength to make the world a better place — for everyone.

Community powered, we consider the totality of local and global Jewish needs and how to address them. From generation to generation, we help people connect to Jewish life and values, fueling a dynamic, enduring community that comes together for good.