

METRO CHICAGO HILLEL & SILVERSTEIN BASE CHICAGO

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



About Us

Metro Chicago Hillel and Silverstein Base Chicago is a collection of Jewish communities of students and young adults around Chicago. We create inclusive, pluralistic, and welcoming spaces that engage and educate young folks across the spectrum of identity, background, and belief and enable them to reach their full potential. Through our classes, pastoral encounters, leadership development, and immersive experiences, we build communities committed to engaging with Jewish learning, living, justice and Israel.

MCH is based on five core values:

- **B'tzelem Elohim (In the image of the Divine)** – Every student is created in the Divine image. Everyone across the spectrum of identity, background and belief deserves respect and belongs in our community.
- **Tzedek (Justice)** – Jewish values and texts inspire students and young adults to pursue justice.
- **Limmud (Learning)** – Students and young adults actively engage with Jewish text and learning.
- **Yisrael (Israel)** – Students and young adults are committed to Jewish peoplehood and experience a deep engagement with the Jewish people all over the world, and the state and land of Israel, and all of her inhabitants.
- **Yehadut (Jewish Life)** – Students and young adults are actively engaged with Jewish practice, holidays and traditions.

Our Mission

To enrich the lives of Jewish students and young adults so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world.

Our Vision

Metro Chicago Hillel envisions a world where every student and young adult is inspired to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning and Israel.

319 Unique Donors

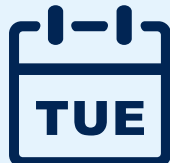


Global
Giving Week
\$18,912

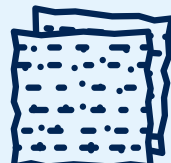


Development By the Numbers

Giving
Tuesday
\$2,901



Passover
Fundraiser
\$5,485



Base LNCLN
Fundraiser
\$5,782



132 First Time Donors



Thank you to all of our organizational partners:

18Doors | ADL | Anshe Emet Synagogue | Anshe Shalom Bnai Israel | Avodah | Chicago Niggun Circle | CJA | DePaul Mission and Ministry | EcoJews | Hadar Institute | Hebrew Seminary | HIAS | Hindu Students Organization | HMI | IPF Atid | Israeli Consulate | Iyun | JDC Entwine | JCFS | JCUA | Keshet | Lincoln Park Chabad | Maot Chitim | Minyan Rimon | Mishkan | Moishe House | OneTable | Reboot | Repair the World | Shamayim | Shtiebel | SketchPad | Svivah | Temple Sholom | The Night Ministry | Windy City Minyan | YLD

Letter from the Board Chair

There is life before October 7, 2023, and there is life after. Our world was forever changed on that day, and the Metro Chicago Hillel and Base teams have spent the year as THE essential support system for students and young adults all over the Chicagoland area. From the very first community gathering at Sketchpad with almost 250 attendees to the more than 1,000 1:1 meetings and countless pastoral conversations, we have been there for our communities all year long.

Nowhere has this been more vital than on campus. Students have been subject to harassment, ostracism, social isolation, assault and even death threats. From just after October 7 until DePaul ended finals in mid-June, we've seen more than 48 incidents on 9 campuses. Together with JUF's invaluable Israel Education Center, MCH staff have monitored social media, managed communications with parents and alumni, supported faculty and students, and held administrations accountable when they've failed to protect Jewish life at all the schools we serve.

The Base couples' efforts this year have been heroic. Even as we launched our new location in Logan Square earlier this year, the rabbis and educators opened their doors to hundreds and hundreds of people, reaching over 1,500 individuals at least once this year. As many Jews feel closed off from different spaces and communities, they continue to find a home at Base.

This Annual Report is more than just a celebration of our work this year. It's a testament to the resilience and determination of our students, our Basers, and our staff. And it's a reflection of their deep dedication to Jewish life, and each other.

As we look ahead to an uncertain year of transition, with the upcoming election and unanswerable questions about what will happen in Israel and the still unreleased hostages, we move forward with the utmost confidence in our incredible Metro Chicago Hillel and Silverstein Base Chicago team. Their hard work isn't possible without your support which has never been more critical than this year. Thank you for being our partners in this work, and we look forward to a more peaceful, more joyous year.

Liza Apothekar-Chodosh
Board Chair of Metro Chicago Hillel
Baser since 2017

Metro Chicago Hillel Board

Liza Apothaker, Board Chair

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Summer

Base Logan Square Opens!

Summer brings new beginnings! A new Base opened its doors on the west side of Chicago during the summer of 2023. Base Logan Square is the home of Rav Moshe and Ariana Webber and their toddler, Toviah. On the Westside, there tends to be very little institutional Jewish life, but Base Logan Square has already made its mark on the west side community bringing large vegetarian forward Shabbat dinners, arts programming, meaningful service projects, and Torah learning.

In the Spring, Base Logan Square hosted an all night learning for Shavuot in partnership with Repair the World Chicago, Avodah, JCUA, 18Doors, and Keshet, where community partners taught Torah with simultaneous sessions throughout the night with 40 participants in attendance. This was the only program of its kind on the west side. In its first year Base Logan Square engaged 715 unique individuals, and they will continue to create vibrant and innovative spaces of Jewish life and belonging filling a critical need for the west side Jewish community.



Vegan-Omnivore Debate

In August, Silverstein Base Lincoln Park had the opportunity to partner with Shamayim: Jewish Animal Advocacy for a unique event and fundraising opportunity. Rabbi Shmuley Yanklowitz of Shamayim challenged Rav Will to a debate on the question of whether Jewish ethics require us to be vegan. We were able to bring together 60 community members for a fun and educational debate on Jewish food ethics. And Rav Will won, bringing home \$5,000 of funding for future Base programs!



Welcome Back BBQ

We welcomed back students to campus and our community. For new students, the BBQ is the first chance they have to really experience the magic of our multi-campus community coming together. Over good food, lawn games, and tie dye, students met our new staff, reconnected with old friends and made new connections, and enjoyed the beautiful weather. 22 students filled the backyard, sidewalk, and driveway.



Base Camp with Silverstein Base Lincoln Park

In August, Silverstein Base Lincoln Park gathered a group of Chicago 20's & 30s for a special chance to take the Base vibe out of the city! Our annual retreat features a mix of classic summer camp activities such as a bonfire, lakefront time, and ropes course, and the deep Jewish experiences people have come to expect from Base, especially a beautiful Shabbat full of learning, discussion, prayer, Shabbat meals, and singing. The thirty young adults who joined us, a mix of community regulars and newcomers, reported that they had a meaningful and fun time, and that it was a great way to build intensive connections with each other and the Base community.



Fall

Holidays: Queer Sukkah Happy hour and Clothing drive with Keshet, Temple Sholom, Repair the World

During Sukkot, Silverstein Base Chicago partnered with Keshet, Temple Sholom, Mishkan Chicago, and Repair the World to host a Queer Sukkah Happy Hour and clothing drive. Over 50 young people attended, and this program laid the foundation for a sustained partnership between Base, Keshet, Repair the World, and Temple Sholom to do queer-focused engagement together. This partnership was reprised on Shavuot with a Queer-centered pre-Shavuot learning and food drive.

We welcomed students back to school and hosted weekly Shabbat dinners on campus and at Base and at MCH!



JLF saw over 20% growth

This year, we saw more than 20% growth in enrollment over 3 cohorts for the Jewish Learning Fellowship! Over 8-10 weeks, students and staff study how Jewish wisdom can help us navigate issues in everyday life. We offered in-person sections as well as one virtual section so that students could participate in a way that worked for them, regardless of their location. One section was specifically for freshmen to help them build relationships with other new students. This year, we also introduced a new curriculum called Ancient Wisdom for Modern Wellbeing, where students in that section explored questions about wellness, self care, and more. *Our cohorts are generously supported by the Ruth Wenger & Jonathan Markowitz Family Endowment.*



Between Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot, MCH hosted more than 35 programs, meals, celebrations and services.

Rosh Chodesh at Base ANVL

Every month at Anna & Fred Doppelt Base Andersonville, young women come together to learn about the spiritual secrets of the Hebrew month, discuss, and do a relaxing and soul-centering craft. This has become a cornerstone program,, and has fostered a beautiful microcommunity at Base Andersonville. This program is generously supported by the Jewish Women's Foundation of Chicago.

October 7th Changed us All

After October 7th, our people and community felt completely shattered, and while there was so much we did not yet know, we knew that we were living in a different world than the one we had been living in just days before. While there were opportunities for communities around the city to gather and rally, almost none of those spaces were geared to people between the ages of 18 and 40. All of Silverstein Base Chicago gathered at SketchPad, with well over 200 young adults to reflect on the horrific tragedy that had been executed against us. In small groups we sat and began to process how this was landing on us individually and how it was affecting us in our lives. We closed the evening with some singing and time for socializing.

Increased Presence on Campus, supporting students in the face of antisemitic incidents on campus



Rallies here and in DC

On Nov. 14, we flew with 11 of our student leaders to stand and rally with the Jewish people in what was the largest gathering of Jews in the history of America. We cried out for the immediate return of our hostages, sang songs of resilience and listened to the supportive words of a collection of bipartisan politicians, bereaved families and student and celebrity activists. Despite how isolated we can feel, it was a powerful reminder of how united we can be. Am Yisrael Chai!



A new system of rabbinic deployment allowed schools such as Lake Forest, IIT, and SAIC to benefit from increased staff presence.

Jewish visibility and presence has always been a priority for MCH, and has become more important than ever since October 7th. When campus environments quickly turned hostile and unwelcoming to Jewish students, we launched a Campus Presence plan that prioritized a consistent, positive Jewish presence on all our campuses ensuring that students could easily access support that they needed. We aimed for positive, public promotion of Jewish life on campus through tabling, drop in coffee hours, bagel brunches and more. Through this outreach, we had over 170 engagements, both with Jewish and non-Jewish students, to promote community building and positive interactions with Hillel and Jewish life on campus.

Winter

Chanukah - Hannukah - Hanukkah

In partnership with YLD, Rav Moshe and Ariana held their first Hanukkah party. There were plenty of latkes and sufganiyot for the taking, along with a bunch of other snacks, and everyone was serenaded all night by their Spotify Hanukkah playlist made for the occasion. It was a great success with 41 people in attendance

Silverstein Base Lincoln Park brought a little light into the December darkness when the Mulhern-Friedman Family hosted Chicago college students for a Chanukah Shabbat Dinner complete with latkes! Base LNCLN also held their third annual Stoop Menorah Lighting lighting the menorah outside and then heading inside for drinks, doughnuts, and community.

MCH Student Travel Opportunities

This winter, MCH students had two opportunities to go to Atlanta to participate in national learning opportunities about Israel.

Hartman: The first was with the Shalom Hartman Institute. Our group of 5 students shone amidst a selection of students from elite universities. With no hesitation, they jumped into the programming, asking questions of speakers and participating in large-group conversations right away.

Israel Summit: In February, a group of students long with our Israel Fellow Itan Shaham, attended the Hillel International Israel Summit. The Summit included high level workshops, training programs, and masterclasses designed to help guide Hillel's top Israel student leaders interested in being active in education and advocacy on campus.



Grief group and increased engagement opportunities with JCFS partnership

Our ongoing partnership with JCFS continues to allow us to offer crucial supports to our community. At Silverstein Base Lincoln Park, our monthly online grief group, co-led by Rav Sarah and JCFS Social Workers, allows young adults who have experienced the loss of a parent or sibling to come together in a healing, supportive space. As far as we are aware, this is the only such space available in the Jewish community of Chicago targeted for this age group, and meets a crucial need. This year, we were further able to expand our support with special in-person Shabat dinner, Jewish learning, and discussion opportunities, all of which participants reported were meaningful opportunities to connect to each other and the Jewish tradition in a difficult time.

LEARN!

In January and February, Silverstein Base Lincoln worked with our partners at YLD to build a cohort of 25 young adults to come together for 10 sessions of Jewish learning on sex, relationships, and love. We dug into crucial questions that are so central to this life stage and all of human experience, opening up a wide ranging conversation between our own experiences and diverse Jewish perspectives. Text study and discussion over wine and snacks continues to be one of our most popular program models!

♥ Terumah Fundraiser Success!

Silverstein Base Lincoln Park's annual fundraiser was an even bigger success this year! Rav Sarah raised \$5,800 from 55 donors, most of whom are Base participants. The fundraiser supports our work and ability to grow, while also performing an important educational function in helping our participants understand the costs and responsibilities involved in being part of a community.

Drag Bubbie! Sober Seudah! Purim Fun!

Rav Jonathan and Hannah at Base Andersonville identified a need in the community to provide a sober-friendly environment during Purim, a day commonly associated with heavy drinking. The Sober Purim Seudah (feast) brought together both college students and young adults to celebrate the holiday in a safe and inclusive setting.

This year, Metro Chicago Hillel hosted our very first Purim Drag Show at the Annoyance Theater! This program was spearheaded by students, for students, and brought in over 20 people. Our show opened up with one of our own MCH students performing a stand up comedy set, and then Drag Bubbie Merriam Lefkowitz stole the show sharing the story of Purim. This included belting out Jewish parodies of some of our favorite songs, and bringing the audience up on stage to play games. And nothing completes a Purim spiel like fresh hamantaschen and Purim themed mocktails!

On Purim, Luba & Bernard Friedman Base Loop partnered with YLD to host a megillah reading and costume party on the night of Purim. We had over 50 people in costumes, dancing to our DJ's beats, partaking in the festivities and showing up with Jewish joy for this amazing holiday!



Spring

Special Events on and off Campus

Bulls Game: MCH staff and a group of 11 students cheered on the Chicago Bulls as they played the Washington Wizards. It was a great opportunity for our students to spend time with the staff in a more social setting. And even though the Bulls lost by just two points, it was a lot of fun for all who attended!

Hindu Shabbat: Over forty students came together to celebrate both Jewish and Hindu traditions for the 11th annual Hindu Shabbat Dinner at Loyola University Chicago. Students enjoyed a delicious kosher Indian meal and partook in both Shabbat rituals and a traditional Hindu prayer called Aarti.

Israel Week Epoch: Each spring, MCH hosts a variety of events during Israel week to celebrate Israeli Independence day. With the the spring *yamim* arriving after many of our schools had already finished the semester, we held Israel week “early” offering Israeli movie nights, shakshuka brunch, and folk dancing. Israel Epoch concluded with Mega Israel Shabbat at Base Loop where all our MCH students could come together in celebration and joy. *Our Israel programs are generously supported by the Iris and Steven Podolsky Israel Leadership and Advocacy Initiative.*



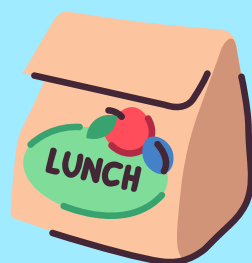
Special Shabbats

At Metro Chicago Hillel, we love Shabbat. And the only thing our students love more than Shabbat, are our special themed Shabbats. We've had spooky Shabbat, Barbie Shabbat, musical Shabbat and more! Shabbat is a time to bring a busy week to a close and for our students that means a chance to recharge with joy in community with fellow undergraduates from around Chicagoland.



Sack Suppers at Logan Square

In partnership with Repair the World Chicago and The Night Ministry, Base Logan Square packed 50 vegetarian sack suppers to be distributed to those who experience housing insecurity on the west side of Chicago. This program has become a monthly staple of Base Logan Squares programming, putting Jewish values into action by helping those who are most vulnerable and in need.



Passover

Our student and young adult communities are incredibly diverse. For holidays like Passover, we make sure that that diversity isn't a barrier to participation. This year we ran 11 different seders so everyone who needed it had a place to go, and an experience to remember. From traditional seders to “learning”-style meals to the “Art of Possibility”, the MCH and Base teams shared their unique talents and perspectives to engage 238 students and young adults. Several of our Base locations and campuses also offered Pre-Passover learning opportunities as well as meals during Chol haMoed.



Global Giving Week & Supporting our Students

Metro Chicago Hillel could not do what we do without the generosity of our friends, alumni and Hillel community throughout the year, and this May, our community pulled together and made Hillel Global Giving Week (HGGW) 2024 the best HGGW so far! HGGW was launched in May of 2020 to help campus Hillels raise critical funds at the outset of the pandemic. Since then, it has become Hillel's signature online fundraising campaign to help campus Hillels continue reaching, engaging, and supporting students. This year, we nearly doubled our original goal, and we tripled the number of unique HGGW donors which earned MCH a full match from Hillel International as well as a bonus! In all we raised \$18,912.

MCH by the Numbers



Shavuot

Base LGSQ partnered with JCUA, Keshet, 18 Doors, Avodah, and Repair the World Chicago, to craft a night of learning with a variety of sessions with different teachers in the community. 40 young adults studied and celebrated together for the first program of its kind to take place in Logan Square,

At Base LNCLN, young adults had a choice of offerings. Rav Sarah was featured on a panel during the time-honored Lakeview tradition, the community Tikkun Leil Shavuot, hosted this year at Anshe Emet Synagogue. The panel of rabbis debated and answered questions directly from the community. The evening also featured opportunities to learn Torah with community member teachers from around Lakeview! Base LNCLN also hosted 26 Shtiebel community members on the second day of Shavuot for song-filled traditional prayers including a reading of Megillat Rut and a delicious dairy lunch!



Metro Chicago Hillel Staff

METRO CHICAGO HILLEL SERVES STUDENTS IN AND AROUND CHICAGOLAND

INCLUDING:

Columbia College Chicago
DePaul University
Elmhurst University
Illinois Institute of Technology
Lake Forest College
Loyola University Chicago
Roosevelt University
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
University of Illinois Chicago

Hillel
Metro Chicago

Base
SILVERSTEIN BASE CHICAGO

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*Metro Chicago Hillel is a division of The Hillels of Illinois, a partner
in serving our community, supported by the Jewish United Fund and Hillel.*

JUF amplifies our collective strength to make the world a better place—for everyone.