

In the 2019-2020 academic year, Hillel supported students through unprecedented challenges. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, Hillel had engaged more students and offered a greater variety of programs than ever before. When most students left campus in March, Hillel staff increased their student outreach and engaged 180 students virtually through the remainder of the semester. Students observed Passover in new ways. Incoming freshmen participated in Zoom welcome sessions and seniors were celebrated through virtual Hillel graduation. Thank you for supporting these efforts and showing the students the strength of the Jewish community.



FINDING THEIR PLACE

Hillel engaged 400 Jewish undergraduate students, which marks a 25% increase from last year. 755 unique students interacted with Hillel, which includes undergraduate and graduate students from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. Hillel is becoming known as a fun and accessible hub of Jewish student life on campus. As one freshman commented, "Hillel has already brought me my best, most fun and caring friends and future roommates!"

LEADING & INNOVATING

Through the Design Hub innovation platform and the Organizational Design Internship, 26 students challenged themselves to lead their peers. Students were trained in design thinking and received individualized staff coaching. The sky was the limit, and they created Israeli cooking classes, volunteer projects with children, virtual painting lessons, Russian-themed Shabbat, a Tu b'Shvat seder, and many other initiatives that express their passions and strengthen them as leaders.



SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Students are educated and passionate about society's challenges and want to help make the world better. This year, ten students spent a week volunteering in urban Miami for alternative winter break. Through hands-on service they learned about poverty and education inequality. They challenged their thinking through engaging group discussions of Jewish social justice teachings. Upon returning to Buffalo, they continued to volunteer in the local community.

EXPLORING ISRAEL

Eleven Buffalo students joined students from Kent State and Milwaukee for a 10 day Birthright Israel trip. They connected with Israel's most ancient stones and its most recent tech innovations. Most of all, they built lasting friendships that continue upon their return to campus. One student remarked, "Birthright was an unforgettable experience. I got to visit places I never thought I would see with the kindest people by my side. The culture, history and land are so beautiful."



PROMOTING WELLNESS

Hillel supports the students in maintaining a healthy lifestyle on campus. Students nurtured their bodies and spirits through yoga sessions, Zumba classes, healthy food options, cooking lessons, stress-reducing essential oil kits, and mental health screenings conducted by Jewish Family Service. The new Wellness Lounge, located within the Hillel Center, is a dedicated space where students can stretch, read, get creative with art supplies, sit by the sunlamp, and recharge their spirits during a busy day.

CELEBRATING TOGETHER

When students can't be with their families, Hillel creates a home away from home. Students join at Hillel for weekly Shabbat services and dinner. High Holidays on campus include over 150 students, faculty and community members. This year, when the usual student-led Passover seders at Hillel were not possible, staff safely delivered seder plate kits and kosher for Passover food to students who remained in Buffalo, away from their families. No matter where students are, Hillel ensures that they are not alone.

