The story behind our new logo

Hillel's Hebrew Website
Math Students Make a Difference
Young Inventors Learn to Mentor
Hillel Wins National Technology Contest
Welcome from Steve Freedman
Head of School

One of the greatest and most significant highlights of a Hillel education is the eighth grade trip to Israel. Our eighth graders travel to Israel after Pesah, as graduation approaches. The trip is meant to impact the students in many ways. It serves as a powerful and meaningful culmination of all of their years at Hillel. It brings alive their learning of Jewish history and tradition, as well as the values that have been shared with them. And it is also meant to help them learn more about themselves.

When this year’s graduating eighth graders were asked what they learned after more than two weeks in Israel, this is what some of them wrote:

“I can do anything if I put my mind to it.”
“That I have a connection to my heritage and to God.”
“I like hiking.”
“I learned to be grateful and I want to join the U.S. Army or Tzahal.”
“I want to come back as often as possible.”
“ar can push out of my comfort zone.”
“I am connected to God.”
“I can do hard things if I want.”
“I can help people through rough situations.”
“I am connected to the Jewish people.”

Our graduates come back from Israel more attached to one another than ever before. They feel more deeply connected to Israel and the Jewish people. And they come back as more confident and independent individuals.

This is just one slice of the Hillel Day School experience. We work and strive, each and every day, to bring alive our adage – Mind and Soul. Better Together. -- in every aspect of a Hillel student’s education.

We take pride that we exist because we are a Jewish day school, and we are equally proud that Hillel has truly become a leader in implementing a progressive and innovative education that prepares our students for the world they will inherit.

In this issue of Divrei Hillel, you will read about the multi-faceted educational experience that our children enjoy each and every day. I hope that you enjoy it!
Hillel Beats Out All Michigan Schools in Innovation Contest

In a perfect alignment of inspiration and opportunity, our students now have their hands on a 3D carving machine, a powerful piece of technology that is capable of creating precision parts and designs from materials like wood, plastic and metal.

Hillel was one of 50 schools in the U.S. to win a 3D carver from Inventables, a creator of digital manufacturing tools. CEO Zach Kaplan had committed to placing a carving machine in all 50 states in response to President Barack Obama’s call to create a “nation of makers.”

Hillel’s winning idea, to use a 3D carver to build a “condominium of birdhouses” for different species, combines collaborative design and manufacturing, art and ecology. “Students will think wild, but build functional birdhouses;” Trevett Allen, Director of Innovation, said. In doing so, students will learn that today’s design, combined with agile manufacturing, helps not just people, but nature, too. They will later add webcams to observe bird behavior, day and night cycles, and hatching.

The submission was inspired by Volodymyr Kindratyshyn’s Dream Birdhouses, an installation at this year’s Artprize competition, the world’s largest art prize, in Grand Rapids.

Other Awards and Student Shout-Outs

Fifth grader Adin Victor won first prize and $100 in a creative writing contest sponsored by Congregation Shaarey Zedek.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics awarded Dawn Straith, our K-6 math coordinator, and Andrea Trivax, our music teacher, a grant for professional development on the topic of music and math. Andrea Trivax, our music teacher, a grant for professional development on the topic of music and math.

Now in its sixth year, the RAVSAK Hebrew Poetry Contest encourages students to creatively use and expand upon their knowledge of Hebrew through poetry. An esteemed panel of judges, including scholars and writers, judged more than 540 entries.

“We are so proud of Jacob,” Saul A. Rube, Dean of Judaic Studies, said. “And we hope many Hillel entries will be submitted again next year!”

Genny Aronov, Avery Felhandler, and Genny Aronov, Avery Felhandler, are our youngest students to master 3-D printing and design software.

Noa Alterman, eighth grader, was our school champion on the National Geographic Bee.

Eighth grader Jacob Ellenbogen won the RAVSAK Hebrew Poetry Contest in the middle school category, for his poem, “Not Just a Typical Boy.” The prize was a $100 gift certificate, and the poem will be anthologized in a book distributed to all participating schools.

Eighth grader Jacob Ellenbogen, won first prize and $100 in a creative writing contest sponsored by Congregation Shaarey Zedek.

In April, more than 250 people attended a screening at Hillel of Most Likely to Succeed, a thought-provoking documentary on the important educational changes that must be made to prepare students for this century. The movie unveiled the way meaningful, project-based learning engages students in deep inquiry that instills the confidence and mental flexibility required to succeed in a rapidly changing global environment in which few of the old models of the industrial age apply.

As the film showed, today’s students have content at their fingertips, and rather than be forced to learn subjects in a compartmentalized physical space in an order established more than 124 years ago, they are driven to learn what they value. They learn what they need to in order to accomplish a goal, and by asserting themselves in the process, they master “soft skills” that can never be taken away by automation, such as creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking, skills that are taught at Hillel.

“Our really ought not to even call them ‘soft’ skills, they’re so integral,” said Prof. Robert Wiggins, chair of the Department of Teacher Development at Oakland University, who sat on the Q&A panel that followed the movie.

When an audience member bemoaned the potential loss of basic skills and content in the service of a skills-based curriculum -- a common question among parents who fear their children will be unprepared for college admissions entrance exams -- James Seaman, an architect who works in the nexus of physical space and education, assured audience members that in the building of the many innovative schools around the world in which he has had a part, including Hillel, the content and the ability “to learn to learn” through challenges “will come together naturally, in tandem. And that ability is really the greater indicator of success in later life.”

Movie Shows How the Essential Task of Teaching Must Change
Construction continues apace this summer at Hillel, as we renovate the two outer wings of the building housing our K, 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6 learning communities. When complete, our six communities will maximize opportunities for students who learn in a variety of styles to master soft skills, uncover their passions, and fulfill their potential. As in our mercaz, and 7-8 community, learning studios are filled with light and flexible seating arrangements that open to common areas that encourage small group work, independent study and messy projects. The transformation of Hillel into a 21st century facility continues to be due to generous gifts from the William & Audrey Farber Family and the William Davidson Foundation.

We invite the entire community to dedicate the new learning communities on Thursday, September 1, 2016, at 5:00 p.m.

Israelis Transforming Their Schools Pay Two-Day Visit to Hillel

The Amit network of 110 schools in Israel, serving 30,000 students in 29 locations, includes some of Israel’s most impoverished, disenfranchised, at-risk children. There is a great need to build their competencies in ways that level the playing field in a competitive global environment, and the group of principals and managers tasked with that mission visited Hillel in April.

“Hillel has become an icon that people come to see and learn from as part of their journey to transform education,” said Prakash Nair, president of Fielding Nair International, the educational architectural firm behind Hillel’s reconstruction and also a new Amit campus in Ra’anana, Israel, that will house a teachers’ college, and new primary and secondary schools for 1,200 students.

Nair, along with James Seaman, FNI principal and Michigan Studio Director, and Richard Elmore, a professor of educational leadership at Harvard University, accompanied the group to Detroit. The group learned the history of Hillel’s transformation, which began with a visioning process in 2012 when Steve Freedman, Head of School, asked teachers to “envision what a space looks like when children are inspired to learn.” That activity ultimately led to the renovations that began in 2014, and which are continuing this year with the transformation of our K-2 and 3-6 wings.

Beyond Hillel’s physical changes, Amit educators were curious about how our curriculum is successfully moving from instructional to investigative and exploratory, how 21st-century skills such as creativity are assessed, and how one achieves balance between skills and content.

In hearing stories of schools a bit farther along the path, the educators were excited about taking their blueprints to practice.

“Be careful what you wish for,” Mr. Freedman said. “Because, like our dream for Hillel, dreams do come true!”
This past year saw iPads in every K-4 classroom, and the introduction of the Google suite of educational tools for all students in fourth grade and higher.

Students in first grade used educational apps such as Chatterpix to animate Ivrit letters, fourth graders logged their reading on Biblionasium, fifth graders earned laptop licenses by mastering Google apps for education, and teachers explored Google Classroom, Docs and Slides.

Even our ECC four-year olds reinforced their learning of the alphabet using iPads. And our kindergarten students enjoyed weekly tech play, using different phonics apps to support their classroom learning. Second graders were introduced to Skitch on the iPads as a way to create interactive flash cards for their Hebrew vocabulary words, and they played math games, too. Third graders explored Google Docs while practicing their editing skills.

Our eighth graders incorporated blogging into their Exploration Projects, a year-long intensive study of a passion looked at from a number of disciplines. Our first-ever afterschool coding club got off the ground, and students met Osmo, Dot and Dash, who introduced students to robotics and programming.

Once again, the entire school participated in Hour of Code, a global movement that demystifies and teaches the basics of computer science.

Other highlights included mastery of typing by our third graders, small moment stories written by our first graders that they illustrated using our green screen, the e-publishing of books by our fourth graders, and the creation of QR codes, commercials and websites by our sixth graders for Hillel’s version of Shark Tank, in which students pitch innovative products to a panel of local judges.

We even got into virtual reality, when Google chose Hillel to pilot its Pioneer Expeditions, enabling students to travel to the pyramids in Egypt, and the Great Barrier Reef, without getting on a bus for a field trip.

As teacher Josh Cutler told the Hometown Life newspaper, which covered the Google Expedition day at Hillel, “To be able to see where (historic events) happened rather than just talking about them is so valuable...It really brings history alive.”
Over the course of the school year, our seventh grade Math Trailblazers group (MTB), consisting of eight students, explored several different algebraic concepts. These concepts included an understanding of linear relationships, writing linear equations, and the significance of slope in our everyday lives.

As we were studying, we became aware of a local family whose friend uses a wheelchair, and who visits during the High Holidays. Each year, it proves quite a challenge to lift this friend up four stairs to enter the house. We decided to interview the family to gather information regarding their friend’s needs and wants. Concluding the interview, pairs of students began to elicit ideas from one another and to generate a proposal to construct a ramp.

In essence, these eight students began an intensive architectural project involving slope. After researching the Americans with Disabilities Act compliance building codes, each of the four groups built both a scale model and a 3D-model of their design. They also generated a written proposal. Weeks later, we invited the homeowners, three architects affiliated with FNI -- the architecture firm responsible for Hillel’s renovations -- and the parents of these eight students to school to evaluate the designs. The homeowners thought about which design would best meet their needs and met with us several weeks later to share their results. The design chosen comprises four independent ramps to be placed at the rise of each step.

The family had agreed to financially support our construction, but these algebra students felt it was important to help raise funds in order to support the build. The students contacted Bake Station and sold enough brownies to cover nearly the entire budget! Finally, materials were purchased and construction began. Each student participated in the construction of the ramp. The fully functional ramp was delivered on June 8. This project was a wonderful real-world application that made a difference in our community.

By David Venning, math and science teacher
Young Inventors Learn to Mentor
By Lori Rashty, first grade teacher, and Trevett Allen, director of innovation

Today’s students are tomorrow’s inventors, and it is imperative that schooling increase their curiosity, not squash it. That’s the principle behind our new First Grade Inventors’ Program, developed by Lori Rashty, a first grade general studies teacher, and Trevett Allen, Director of Innovation.

“There is tremendous value in helping children retain their inherent curiosity and interest in the world around them, the way they were as toddlers,” Mrs. Rashty said. “So we designed a program that encourages expression and creativity, and requires the students to use higher-level thinking skills.”

The program took a select group of students to the Maker Space, where they first learned about inventors from Leonardo Da Vinci to lesser known inventors whose designs for craft projects appear in magazines for do-it-yourselfers. Then they started to sketch their designs, keeping a journal of their work, and learned to build prototypes of their own inventions, in collaborative teams and individually.

“The goal was for them to teach each other and share their passions,” said Mrs. Rashty.

Student inventions included rocket blasters, CD holders, and a robot made of string. Their only instruction was to “try, and try again,” teaching them the important value of perseverance.

Then these young inventors became mentors to their peers in the rest of the first grade, to guide them through the invention process. “It was exciting to see the collaboration between students,” Mrs. Rashty said.

Many of the mentors, like Maayan Kaplan, felt like teachers themselves. “I am a teacher! I am a mentor for the invention program!” she said.

“Most of our first graders can now tell you the three stages of the prototyping cycle: Plan, Do, and Review. They will also tell you that any prototype has to go through the cycle several times so it can become a better project,” Mr. Allen said.

One student making a stuffed panda bear was on his sixth prototype as the year came to an end, and now looks forward to learning to sew. Learning the process of inventing has developed students’ problem-solving abilities and their creativity, in the broadest sense of the word. It challenges students to become actively engaged in the learning process. The students experienced success and increased self-esteem. They also discovered quickly that it is fun!

Say It in Ivrit-Hillel’s First Hebrew Website
By Amalia Poris, ECC-8 Hebrew coordinator

Five seventh grade students in my class took it upon themselves to face a technological and linguistic challenge this year -- to create an informative, user-friendly Hebrew website, https://sites.google.com/a/hillelday.org/arutz4news/, modeled after hillelday.org.

The students were looking for a creative way to use and show their sophisticated knowledge of Hebrew. Marnie Diem, our Coordinator of Technological Adventures, guided the students through website creation, helping them land on the first tab, News from Hillel. Acting as reporters, the students interviewed teachers, took pictures and produced short videos, and wrote their articles in Ivrit. After they wrote their news section, they each created content for a section of personal interest -- from the current presidential election campaign, to pop culture, to birds in captivity.

Their goal is to continue to build the site in eighth grade. As the students say, “We have a lot on our minds, and we like to say it in Hebrew. Our goal is to continue writing many more articles, and to say it in Ivrit!”
and do something else with her life? After changing and prestige, or would she take the more sound route long dream of being a math teacher, despite low pay difficult decision to make: would she pursue her life-

lenged her with math. Over a decade later, she had a first grade, when her own teacher inspired and chal-

Mrs. Straith first fell in love with math and teaching in it could change at any time.

was the first of a dozen different styles over the years, and there haven't been two consecutive years where

her major 11 times, the pressure from her parents and bank account won out, and she graduated with a degree in accounting and started work as a mortgage banker. She loved the job. It allowed her to interact with people, and it paid well, but it wasn't enough. One day, a motivational speaker came to a conference she was attending. He was a retired teacher, and though he wasn't pushing for anyone to change careers, his message resonated with Mrs. Straith. It reminded her of her passion.

"Every word that came out of his mouth touched my heart," she says. "I was literally sitting in the wrong seat of my life."

When the speaker was finished, she found her boss and gave him her one month notice. After moving in with her now-husband Don, she went back to school for teaching.

“What you think you want to do when you're 18 is not necessarily what you want to do when you become an adult,” says Don. People often think it's too difficult to switch careers later in life, but she “actually made a change doing what she loves to do.”

Considering who she is, the switch to teaching wasn't much of a surprise to him.

“She's a lot more open-minded than most people,” he says. “She's smarter than most people. She's more nurturing than most people, which are all things that are good, considering she’s teaching.”

Mrs. Straith went through rigorous training to earn a master's degree in education from the University of Michigan, and successfully landed a job as a teacher. For the last 10 years at Hilbel, Mrs. Straith has been exactly where she’s happiest.

Creativity is infused in her teaching. Some of her many projects include seeing how much cash can fit in a briefcase, making omlets using proportions, and measuring how far different water guns can squirt.

“It wasn't just a normal math class,” recalls Joey, a seventh grader who had her for five years. “She always had a creative project planned. It wasn’t just sit down and do the work; it was always a fun way to do it.”

Recently, Mrs. Straith taught her third graders geometry using paper airplanes. During that time, all of the students' lockers were check-full of planes. Inevitably some ended up on the rafters throughout the school, and many have yet to be taken down.

The meshing of art and math in her teaching is also shown through her work in the school’s maker space, where during lunch and recess she helps kids create original projects with jewelry and sewing.

“She taught us on the sewing machine, and I'm now making earrings in just five minutes," says Bella, a sixth grader. Before working with Mrs. Straith, Bella didn’t know how to sew or make jewelry. Now she can make a beautiful pair of earrings in just five minutes.

There may not be any equations or times tables, but even in the maker space, Mrs. Straith is teaching using mathematical thinking. The use of the tools, the selection of the materials, the assembly itself— all are examples of the subtle ways people use mathemat-ical reasoning in their everyday lives. No one, while making their projects, reaches for a hammer when they need a pair of scissors, because it has systematically and mathematically been ruled out alongside hundreds of other possibilities.

"When you're born, you're born mathematica," says Mrs. Straith. “You see the world through mathematical goggles. You experience the world through math.”

In Mrs. Straith’s perfect world, all teachers would wear “mathematical goggles” as well, integrating the discipline into others that are seemingly disconnected but, in actuality, are not. Even Judaic studies teachers can use the Jewish calendar to incorporate a little math into their curriculum, she suggests.

"It's all around us. Everything in this world is connected to math.”

In fact, Mrs. Straith’s thinking aligns with Hilbel’s physical and philosophical transformation, where walls and subjects collapse to facilitate interdisci-plinary, project-based learning in flexible spaces that lend themselves to varied configurations of students. It’s become common for students of all ages to be found working in one of the new areas like the mercaz, or “center” of the school. Hilbel has also encouraged and made it easier for teachers to explore other modes of teaching, outside the traditional classroom.

All this is perfect for Mrs. Straith. “It’s an exciting time to be a teacher,” she says. But in the end, it’s not space, or even the math that matters most— it’s the love of math, a love of learning, respect for themselves, their learning, and the world around them, I want them to be leaders. I want them to be the change-makers of this world. I want them to have big dreams and to try to achieve those dreams. It’s not about the math content so much; it’s about the whole person.”

No school, maker space, or laptop computer can make such a significant impact by itself. Real change, on that level, only comes from the right teacher.

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The Split that Led to Unity: A Dvar Torah on the Exodus

This past year, several students presented Divrei Torah to the Board of Trustees at their monthly meetings, and on occasion, to the entire faculty at the start of professional development meetings. Here we share one given by fifth graders Jacob Mills, Max Hortick, Aaron Zekman, and Luke Zeff, whose love for and pride in learning Torah is on display, as well as the lessons learned that affect their own lives today.

(Aaron) We have recently been learning about Kriat Yam Sul. As you know, this is about the parting of the Red Sea as the Hebrew slaves left Egypt with their leader, Moshe. They left at dawn because Pharaoh just wanted them to get out. Pharaoh had enough of the plagues and did not want to see Moses again. If that happened to me, I probably would not want to see Moses ever again, either!

(Max) The Egyptians were chasing our people. Once they got to the Red Sea, it was a dead end. Then God split the sea so our people could cross safely. Once the Jewish people got to the other end of the sea, it collapsed on the Egyptians.

(Jacob) A more modern day comparison we can use to understand the Exodus from Egypt is the underground railroad with Harriet Tubman. Harriet Tubman was like Moses, making many trips to save African American slaves. She was like their Moses, leading her people out of slavery. She stood up to a large group of people, also like Moses did.

(Luke) Yetziat Mitzrayim, the Exodus, took place around this time of year. Just imagine, it was around this time that our people were on their way to Sinai to get the Torah. After all, as of today we are more than halfway through the Omer, barely 3 weeks until Shavuot. Imagine if you were Moses and you were responsible to lead people out of Egypt, to receive the Torah on Sinai.

(Aaron) Just as Moshe was responsible to bring Torah to the people, Hillel Day School teachers are responsible to lead their students to do their best in school and in life, and to receive and understand the Torah. We are so fortunate to learn Torah this year with Morah Clara Gaba, who helped us to learn and do well, even though it was a challenge for us to be in a class that is fully taught in Ivrit.

(Max) In our most recent performance assessment, we were challenged to write a poem about the splitting of the Red Sea, just as the Song of the Sea, the shirat hayam, is in the parshah we’ve been studying. We had to choose a form of poetry such as a haiku, acrostic or rhyming. At least one simile or metaphor was required.

(Jacob) Just as we’ve learned that B’Nai Yisrael had to work to be ready to receive the Torah, we have to work to trust in Hashem. As we know, B’Nai Yisrael did not immediately trust in God. They were impatient, and didn’t believe that Moses would ever come down from Mt. Sinai. Their lack of faith led them to build a golden calf. We as Jews have to have faith in God, every day- even when things seem bad.

Fourth Grade Gathers Four Corners for Pesah

By Phyllis Meyers, Judaic Studies teacher

This year’s fourth grade model seder looked entirely different from the one you may have remembered attending. To further their understanding of K’lat Yisrael, the unity of the Jewish people from all corners of the earth, the fourth graders were Ethiopian Jews smashing plates on the floor and, quite literally, crossing the waters of the Red Sea. They were also Moroccan Jews, in full, glorious garb, marching and chanting “… ya’tzanu mi’Mitzrayim…” as they rotated the Seder plate over each individual participant’s head. And they were Yemenite Jews, too, with magnificent headdresses adorning their heads, sitting on pillows around a low Seder table decorated with lettuce leaves and other symbols of spring. They were also our forefathers in Egypt, using the format of bibilodrama to convincingly convey the struggle of leaving Mitzrayim.

Our fourth graders truly “went to town,” and, through their active involvement in research, dress, drama, and song, the variety of the Jewish experience came alive for them as never before. Clearly, the students were deeply engaged and very much enjoyed this authentic and powerful experience, furthering their understanding that we are all one people, all observing Pesah no matter where we come from in the world.

We believe that from this point on, when we recite the Amidah during our daily tefillot, repeating these words will resonate very deeply with our students.

"תקע בשופר גדול לחרותנו, ושא נס לקבץ גלויותנו, וקבצנו יחד מארבע כנפות הארץ… "

"Sound the great Shofar for our freedom; lift up the banner to bring our exiles together, and assemble us from the four corners of the earth….."
Family Profile: Julie and Aaron Feinberg

Hillel parent Julie Feinberg regarded Hillel with a discerning eye when she and husband Aaron toured the school for the first time, before enrolling daughter Noa in preschool. After all, Julie has extensive experience as an educator, first at Teach for America, then at a Washington, D.C. think tank, and now as a consultant for educational technology companies. She knew the research and the trends, and, happily, she saw them reflected in Hillel’s educational program.

“Hillel is a progressive school, not focused on content alone, but on how to learn, on the soft skills that you can’t teach but that become intrinsic, and on the dual language piece that has a positive effect on cognitive development,” Julie said.

She was equally impressed by the professional staff, who “looked at the whole child,” and were able to nurture Noa into a child who “has confidence, friends, and can’t wait to go to school on Monday mornings,” Julie said.

Noa is now a 6-year old rising first grader at Hillel, and the family has seen similar growth and maturity in their second child, Ari, who is 4 and in the ECC.

The family, who resides in Huntington Woods, and includes baby Raya, also enjoys Hillel’s inclusive Jewish environment, its emphasis on Jewish values, and its special programs, including the eighth grade trip to Israel.

“My grandmother is a Holocaust survivor, and when she came to Noa’s Hanukkah play, she got teary-eyed,” said Aaron, an attorney. “You don’t find that in a public school. Especially in this day and age of easy distraction, it’s validating that we made the right choice for our kids.”

Community Kvells as Fifth Graders Learn to Layn Torah

Our fifth graders read Torah from the Tanakh as part of their learning at Hillel, but this year, at the end of January, in a new program, they chanted verses from Parashat Beshalah, and their voices filled the mercaz.

Surrounded by their loved ones, pairs of students chanted from nine Torahs laid out on nine tables, using the Torah tropes they learned from Rabbi Jonathan Berger, Rav Beit Hasefer.

Rabbi Berger taught the students how to layn (read Torah) in fifth grade so that they see it as a “skill they can use all their lives in their congregations, and not just in preparation for their b’nai mitzvah,” he said.

“As teachers we were both amazed and delighted to see the students advancing in their learning and applying their skills!” said Clara Gaba, a fifth grade Judaic Studies teacher.

“Learning to read Torah requires dedication and discipline to master the notes and techniques for reading directly from the sacred scroll,” Mrs. Gaba continued. “Not only are our students already on the right path for their bar and bat mitzvahs, but the ability to read Torah is truly a reward in itself.”

Hillel Plays the Hits

From Stevie Wonder to One Republic and that “Lava” song you can’t get out of your head from the short film of the same name, Hillel students, parents and friends enjoyed Art & Music Night - Stephen Gottlieb CityJam, featuring the Simone Vitale Band, in March. This show-stopping performance by our students and choirs raised the roof, and student artwork in a multitude of mediums was on display throughout the building.
Mini Floats & Feedback Form
Authentic Learning

By Joan Freedman, director of curriculum

Third graders explored passions this year, and during their unit on biographies, read Balloons Over Broadway by Melissa Sweet, discovering that Tony Sarg’s passion was puppets! The Macy’s Day Parade debuted in 1924, and he inflated the first helium balloon, Felix the Cat, for the parade in 1928.

Working in teams, our students engaged in a project-based mini unit, integrating measuring, sketching, recycled materials, writing, and thinking like an engineer. The students imagined they were float designers for a mock company called the Fascinatingly Fabulous Float Fabricator Company of Detroit. Each team was challenged to collaborate and design a Detroit-themed mini-float. The float had to be able to move ten feet, it had to be no longer than 18 inches, or taller than 24 inches, and could only be made of recycled materials.

The students received authentic feedback from real float designers when they brought their floats to the Parade Company, the firm behind the annual America’s Thanksgiving Parade in Detroit. There was plenty of learning, laughter, and problems being solved!

PARENT TESTIMONIAL

Dear Hillel Day School Staff,

I have written and rewritten this letter over and over and the truth is I will never be able to express how each and every person at Hillel Day School has helped shape, inspire and develop Nia (Nitzanna) into the outstanding person she has become over the last 9 years. There is no doubt in my mind that without each and every person that has had contact with Nia directly in the classroom or just throughout her day she would not be the person she is today. You have all played an important role and helped her get to where she is. Your impact will stay with her for a lifetime. You have all not only fostered her academic and Judaic soul and spirit but have given her the appetite to learn.

As Nia graduates I know that this will not be her last contact with Hillel. I thank you and I am filled with gratitude. We did not take this educational opportunity for granted and feel very fortunate. Thank you all for your time, effort, support and guidance – we will always be grateful.

Shelly Brodsky

One Good Deed Begets Another in the ECC

By Jackie Eaton, ECC 3 teacher

Thanksgiving, Purim, and springtime. What object can bring all three of these together? How about a simple canister—like one that once held oatmeal or baby formula? Did you know something like that container can also be filled with hope, then beans and beads, and finally, soil and seed, to fulfill the concept that mitzvah goreret mitzvah (one good deed brings another)? That’s exactly what happened in Room 28 this year.

Our three-year olds had “homework” to do with their families in early November, to decorate a simple can in a way that would show how they were thankful. Cans were sent home to families along with instructions to fill the can with rice or beans and beads, and eventually, soil and seeds to fulfill the concept that mitzvah goreret mitzvah (one good deed brings another). That’s exactly what happened in Room 28 this year.

Soon the cans became part of the classroom. About a week prior to Purim, each child filled his can with beans and beads. The kids would tweak the sound until they could drown out Haman’s name at just the right volume! Right after the holiday, the innards of the cans were sorted and counted by color. Within days, the cans took on new meaning. Each child added soil and seeds. The responsibility of watering the cans, and being sure sunlight shone brightly onto them, became part of everyday jobs in the classroom. By the second week, sprouts emerged. By week three, the cans were sent home to be added to each child’s personal garden. Daisies grew!

By the end of the year, each child could proudly say that he or she had had a hand in these perennials that will remind them of their Thankful Cans for years and years to come.
When Nine Years Feels Like Nine Minutes
By Emily Feldman, eighth grader

Who knew that nine years could feel like nine minutes? It felt like just the other day I first walked into Hillel as a kindergartner. My kindergarten mind had no idea about the amazing experience I was about to embark on, and how it would end up changing my life.

Hillel is a special place where I always feel at home and welcome, a feeling that students at Hillel know very well. But there are so many more benefits of being a student at Hillel. At Hillel they not only teach you the basic secular and Judaic studies, but how to be a mensch. Hillel taught me skills that I will use throughout my lifetime, not just as a learner, but as an adult in the future. It saddens me a great deal that this is my last year here, but I will always remember and cherish every lesson I learned. Hillel will stay with me long after I leave the doors of the building.

When I think back on my time at Hillel, I will miss my teachers and my friends the most. The love, care, and respect I have gotten from every one of my teachers is something that I don’t take for granted; that cannot be replicated elsewhere. My friends have helped me through the years, through good and bad. It is just one big, loving Jewish community that is truly incredible. My teachers and advisors have done an excellent job of preparing us for high school, no matter where any one of us is going. They are understanding and helpful, and they truly feel more like friends than anything else. So as I prepare to leave Hillel, I know I am ready and excited for what is to come.

I am always asked, “What is your favorite memory from Hillel?” I could say the Shabbatons, field trips, or programs, but I honestly could not choose just one. So I can confidently say that my fondest memory of Hillel was the day I walked in the door. When I think of that day, I think of what that day really meant to me. It meant I was starting a journey, and every time I think of that, it warms my heart. When I think of myself as a Jew in five or ten years, I see myself practicing the way I did at Hillel. Hillel taught me so much about my culture and history that I don’t see myself giving up any of it. It means so much to me to be part of a greater community, and I have always loved that feeling.

To the eighth graders of the future, my advice to you is as follows: Take a step back to notice how lucky you are to attend a school like Hillel because not everyone gets to experience this opportunity. Always listen, take everything in, and don’t take anything you learn or experience for granted, because Hillel is a magical place, a place to call home. With that, I thank everyone involved in helping to create a one-of-a-kind, educational, and memorable journey at Hillel.

HILLEL IS A MAGICAL PLACE, A PLACE TO CALL HOME.

Student Athletes Share Spotlight
By Nicole Miller, athletic director

At the annual Kaufman Family Athletic & Enrichment Fund awards program, we were honored to hear from guest speaker Daniel Relle (class of 2007), who played basketball as a Hillel Hawk. Later, at Cranbrook, and at Boston University, he became determined to join a Division 1 collegiate team. Through his hard work, focus, and time management skills, Daniel joined a novice, Learn to Row program at the Detroit Boat Club, and ultimately made it to a national championship race as part of a top contending collegiate crew team. He eventually became the most decorated rower in Boston University history. He now works locally in advertising and marketing, and teaches at a local fitness studio.

Daniel’s 4 a.m. spring training sessions, and summer rowing and workout sessions in high school, followed by four years of hard work in Boston, were keys to his success. Triumph is about “putting in the effort to get what you want, motivation, teamwork and training,” he said. “You don’t need to be a superstar athlete to reach a high level, you just need to put yourself out there.”

When asked when he knew athletics would be an important part of his life, he replied “age four.” He shared that he was always full of energy, and he felt as though he could run forever. While we are not all so lucky to know so young that we have big plans, there is no debate about the importance of both athletics and education in the development of a child. It was validating to hear from an alumnus who has found such value in physical activity.

Together, academics and sports help to support the whole child, providing valuable learning experiences, and building a skill set that can be used throughout life.

The positive energy that followed the program was a tribute to Daniel’s tale and the celebration of Hillel’s athletics. Each athlete was recognized for his or her participation in and commitment to Hillel athletics. Awards were given to individuals who stood out in their given sport.

Each year, the entire school gathers together to send off the current crop of eighth graders on their annual Israel trip, waving flags and giving mezuzah for the class to take with them. Each year, the anticipation grows among our younger students; they can’t wait for it to be their turn. This year’s class was no different. As they prepared for a trip without their parents to the Jewish State, for which they have developed a deep love during their time at Hillel, students expressed excitement, uncertainty, and, upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport, elation. As Noa Alterman, class of 2016, said, “After all these years of waiting, it’s finally our turn to experience the impact traveling to Israel has on a Jew.” To read about this year’s Israel trip, please visit http://www.hillelday.org/Page/Student-Life/8th-Grade-Trip-to-Israel
FAREWELLS
2016 Retirees

NANCY CROITORI, PE TEACHER

The book of Ecclesiastes (3:1) begins: "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." And although I do so with mixed emotions, the time has come for me to retire, after 18 years of teaching at Hillel Day School.

First, I must acknowledge the wonderful professionals I’ve worked with over the years. Without the support, direction, strength and humor of the following people, my career at Hillel would not have been as productive—or as long: From Ceil Ginger and Aliza (Cyril) Rossen, to Nicole Miller, Brad Freitag, Floyd Johoff, Tony Sanders, Steve Jones and the ECC staff, I have been enriched and share many memories of teaching. A host of other teachers have inspired me in their approach to teaching; Robin Leah, whom I helped to choreograph almost 10 years of spring musicals, stands out as one who taught me that “process” in teaching—the steps needed to get to a desired goal—is one of the most important lessons a teacher can master.

At every step, the administration supported and encouraged me to draw upon my areas of interest and expertise to enrich our curriculum. I coached the cross country team for 18 years, taught American Sign Language, Health and Creative Expression classes, started an archery unit, the annual Turkey Trot and Badminton Tournament, and helped to develop the ECC movement education program. It’s been my pleasure to share my interests and, hopefully, influence my students to try new things, to be creative, and to enjoy themselves in a variety of settings.

I’ll always remember the Shabbatons and Washington, D.C. trips I attended, and helping to coordinate Count Your Steps, Jump for Heart, blood drives and initiating our Healthy School Action Team. It is my hope that these programs continue and become stronger and more successful because of the superb team Hillel has in the Physical Education Department.

I thank and cherish the years I shared with my colleagues in the P.E. department. I also offer heartfelt thanks to the administration. Finally, I will miss the “wind beneath my wings” - the students. I will continue to pray that G-d’s richest blessings be bestowed upon the entire Hillel community. As for me, I begin a new season with my family, friends, and the elderly, as I begin working to provide respite to caregivers, in my future “spare time.”

“IT’S BEEN MY PLEASURE TO SHARE MY INTERESTS AND, HOPEFULLY, INFLUENCE MY STUDENTS TO TRY NEW THINGS.”

LISA KURZMANN, ECC 4 ASSISTANT

Six and half years ago when I heard that Hillel was opening an ECC, I said to myself, “I have to get a job there!” A Hillel ECC would combine two of my greatest passions – Jewish education and young children. I knew that I had to be on the “inside” in order to be able to promote what I inherently knew would be the premier Jewish preschool in metro Detroit.

Working in the ECC has been a joy and an honor. Educating young Jewish hearts and minds is sacred work. It is never too early to begin exposing a Jewish child (and parents) to the joy, beauty and values of our heritage. I have seen firsthand the vital and precious role that the Hillel ECC plays in facilitating these first educational experiences for the youngest members of our Jewish community. Although I will no longer be part of the staff, I will always remain one of Hillel Day School’s greatest advocates. L’hitraot- I will visit often!

ARIEL WOLGEL, JUDAIC STUDIES TEACHER

The number seven in Judaism is associated with the concept of “shelimit,” or wholeness. Shabbat completes our creative efforts as the seventh day of the week, and the end of this school year concludes my own creative efforts at Hillel Day School.

In Pirkei Avot, Chapter 4, Mishnah 1, it says, “Who is wise? He who learns from all people.” Throughout my time at Hillel, I have been blessed with mentors, colleagues, and students who taught me about education, Judaism, and myself. It has been a gift to work in an environment that embraces creativity, collaboration, and reflection. Highlights of my time at Hillel have included making a siyyum on Masekhet Berakhot with my students, implementing the sixth grade minyan enrichment program, and developing engaging learning activities and assessments with my colleagues. Most meaningfully, I recall the times when I witnessed my students developing a skill, teaching a goal, recognizing their God-given talents, and achieving new heights.

While I am sad to leave the Hillel community, I am excited for the adventures that are to come as Aron, Tzali, Maayan, and I move to California this summer. I plan to spend next year embracing one of my favorite teaching positions - mothering. Over time, I am interested in expanding my skills to include special education. I also would like to extend my knowledge and experiences in the realm of spiritual education.

As I embark on this next stage in our family’s journey, I pray that my students cultivate their own growth mindset, and that they are able to embrace life with gratitude, curiosity, and reflection. I hope that they are able to put their learning into action - in their creative efforts, professional passions, and acts of kindness.

Thank you to Hillel Day School for a meaningful and enjoyable seven years.
Lawrence and Hilary Handler like the quasi-urban feel of Birmingham, Michigan, with its retail shops and sidewalks a short distance from their home. But when it was time to enroll their children, Jacob and Nicolette, in school, they felt compelled to balance city living with a Jewish school community that was reminiscent of the close-knit neighborhoods in Oak Park and Southfield, where they had each initially grown up.

“Jewish identification is a driving force in our family,” said Larry, an ophthalmologist who specializes in oculofacial surgery. “I want it for my children, and to the extent that they want it, I want to provide it to them, so that they can run with it.”

From the moment they started school, both Jakey, a rising seventh grader, and Nicolette, a rising fifth grader, have had an “amazing experience,” Larry said. “And every time I walk into the building, I’m in awe of the place, especially when I walk past the wall honoring those who have given before me. Their generosity paved the way for my children to enjoy a high quality education, faculty, and facility, and it makes me want to express my thanks.”

So together, Larry and Hilary – a near constant lunchtime and PTO volunteer – have made Hillel central to their Jewish philanthropy. They have donated to the Annual Fund at a leadership level “since day one,” Larry said, and Larry was an active participant in the school’s former annual golf outing for many years. The couple also plans to make a significant gift to the school’s new 20-by-60 Endowment Campaign, which aims to raise $20 million by the school’s 60th anniversary in 2018, securing the school’s facility, technology program, faculty development and more for years to come.

“As the Jewish community continues to move apart geographically, Hillel becomes the new Jewish community center. That’s a big reason we send our kids to the school, and it’s a big reason to give. Even families whose children are long graduated from the school are participating in the Endowment Campaign. So how can I sit on the sidelines? I’m excited to participate, and to instill the value of tzedakah in my children. To the extent that one is able to, it’s part of being a Jew.”

To make a gift to the 20-by-60 Endowment Campaign, please contact Amy Schlussel, Director of Advancement, at 248-539-1484.

Annual Gala Honors Stalwart Supporters

Growing up in Corpus Christi, Texas, Beverly Liss never dreamed her children and grandchildren would attend Jewish day school. Liss reflected on her gratitude for the gift of such an education at Hillel Day School’s Annual Gala on Sunday, May 22, held at the school, where she and her husband Arthur, were honored with the school’s Dream Maker Award.

“We are truly blessed,” Beverly Liss said, her faint southern accent resonating with the crowd of over 425. “Eight of our nine grandchildren attend a Jewish day school. And the ninth, who is a baby, will, too!”

The gala also celebrated Michael and Norma Dorman with the Jacob E. Segal ("Z") Award, named for the founding rabbi of Hillel. The parents of four Hillel graduates, the Dormans have tirelessly worked for the school, positively impacting all of its constituents, from students to staff to the board of trustees.

“Everything we did, we did with love, for Hillel helped us do what we did best – turn out four mensches,” Norma Dorman said.

Steve Freedman, head of school, also took time to acknowledge this year’s Distinguished Alumni Award recipients, Dr. Ron Gaba, director of clinical and translational research in radiology at the University of Illinois, Elanah Nachman Hunger, a rising arts patron in Detroit, and Charles Ornstein, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. “You truly are the school’s living legacy,” Mr. Freedman said.

The evening included a cocktail reception sponsored by Telemas Capital and Ari Pichman Insurance, strolling dinner, bars sponsored by Talmer Bank, silent and live auctions sponsored by Lori and Maurice Pogoda, and speed painter Dave Santia. The gala raised close to $100,000 for Hillel’s tuition assistance program, which helps to ensure that as many Jewish children in metropolitan Detroit who wish to attend Hillel Day School may do so.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Hillel Day School’s sponsorship program puts you and your company in front of our outstanding community and offers many advantages. The people you reach in both print and electronic formats will include currently enrolled families, former students and parents, community friends and leaders, plus the growing numbers of families who are interested in Hillel Day School. This exciting marketing program also affords your business high exposure at annual events such as the Family Shabbat Dinner, Hanging & Hayride, Israel Independence Day Carnival & Kosher Rib Burn-Off, Movie & Munchies, and the Hillel Day School Annual Gala.

We invite you to partner with Hillel Day School as a sponsor for the 2016-2017 school year. Your sponsorship will provide critical tuition assistance dollars to families who might otherwise not be able to afford a Hillel education.

The fall’s first event, the Welcome Back Family Shabbat Dinner on September 9, is quickly approaching. If you are interested in sponsoring this event or any others, please call the Advancement office at 248-851-6950. A brochure with a full listing of this year’s opportunities for sponsorship will be arriving in your mailbox soon. Please partner with Hillel Day School and enjoy the many benefits of participation in our sponsorship program. See the following page for a look at our first sponsorship opportunity.
Family Shabbat Dinner Sponsorship Opportunity

SEPTEMBER 9, 2016

At Hillel, we believe that rituals offer the opportunity to sanctify our lives and elevate the every day. At our Family Shabbat Dinner, the entire Hillel community, from our youngest two-year-old learners to our eighth graders, over 550 students in all, and their families, will gather to celebrate the joy of Shabbat. This festive evening, taking place in the miznon (cafe) and other areas on the Hillel Day School campus, will include family activities, songs, dinner, and a Shabbat-themed give-away to families who attend.

EVENT SPONSOR - $5,000
- Corporate logo will appear on all print materials (invitation, sponsor banner, signage, and promotional items), identifying your company as the “Family Shabbat Dinner Event Sponsor”
- Prominent recognition at the event
- Company logo will appear in Hillel e-newsletters, bi-annual publication, and on Sponsors page of website
- Opportunity to include a promotional item for the Shabbat Bag distributed to all attendees at the dinner
- Company logo will appear on a sticker affixed to the Shabbat Bag distributed to all attendees at the dinner
- Gold full page ad in Shulman Scholarship Journal
- Includes 4 tickets to the Shabbat Dinner

DINNER SPONSOR - $3,600
- Corporate logo will appear on all print materials (invitation, sponsor banner, signage, and promotional items), identifying your company as the “Dinner Sponsor”
- Company logo will appear on all dinner tables and/or dinner stations
- Company logo will appear in Hillel e-newsletters, bi-annual publication, and on Sponsors page of website
- Opportunity to include a promotional item for the Shabbat Bag distributed to all attendees at the dinner
- Silver full page ad in Shulman Scholarship Journal
- Includes 4 tickets to the Shabbat Dinner

DESSERT SPONSOR - $1,800
- Corporate logo will appear on all print materials (invitation, sponsor banner, signage, and promotional items), identifying your company as the “Dessert Sponsor”
- Company logo will appear on all dessert tables
- Opportunity to include a promotional item for the Shabbat Bag distributed to all attendees at the dinner
- Full page ad in Shulman Scholarship Journal
Alumni Spotlight:
Elizabeth Seagle (class of 2000)
By Gabriella Burman, communications coordinator

Four years ago, Elizabeth Seagle shaved her head to raise money for St. Baldrick’s Foundation, a charity dedicated to conquering childhood cancer. She did it publicly, at a fundraising event attended by kids with cancer and their families. The event triggered a memory of a Hillel schoolmate who had died of brain cancer in 1994.

Sebastian Dittman (z”l) was a first grader across the hall when Lizzie was a second grader. He died before the school year ended, and the school yearbook that year was dedicated to his memory. “I remember it was the first time I had seen the word ‘deceased,’” she recalled. “It stuck with me.”

When Lizzie decided to shave her head again for St. Baldrick’s this year, in May, she decided to do it in Sebastian’s memory, and to raise $5,000.

“I wanted to make it more personal,” she explained. She even sought out Sebastian’s family online, eventually finding his aunt, Jill Mainster Menuck, a current Hillel parent.

Menuck, naturally, was touched. “Elizabeth is an amazing person, and it says a lot about Hillel, too, that we’re all a family,” she said.

Elizabeth’s mother, Miriam Berry Seagle, is a member of Hillel’s first graduating class of 1967, her older sister, Olivia Brennan, graduated in 1997, and Hillel certainly instilled the values Seagle lives by. “My strong sense of giving tzedakah comes from the programs we had, reaching out to others in a way that makes a difference in people’s lives, contributing to Tikkun Olam.”

“And I really loved my Jewish education,” Seagle continued. “In my social circle, I’m known as the expert! And I love languages, having learned Hebrew so young. It shaped some of the educational choices I made, studying French pretty intensely in college.”

Seagle graduated from the University of Rochester in 2010 with a degree in psychology, after having taken a few years off to work and to travel. She works as a bank teller, and lives in Royal Oak, where she enjoys the active lifestyle of a millennial, but also possesses the seriousness of someone older than her years.

“Childhood cancer is its own category, and it doesn’t get the same attention, dollars, or experimental trials as adult-onset cancers. There’s something we can do about it. When you shave your head, it’s a pretty drastic conversation starter, and people become more aware. I do it to show solidarity, and to say that having no hair is fine, there’s nothing wrong with it.”

WHEN YOU SHAVE YOUR HEAD, IT’S A PRETTY DRASTIC CONVERSATION STARTER, AND PEOPLE BECOME MORE AWARE.

Hilary (class of 2002) and Rachel (class of 2009) Gorosh

I n a day and age when most people have their heads in their technology and miss what’s around them, a video showing simple kindness has gone viral on YouTube, and features two Hillel alumnae, sisters Hilary (class of 2002), and Rachel (class of 2009) Gorosh. Divrei Hillel caught up with them to learn the backstory:

The sisters were visiting Stockholm this past spring, and after being helped by people on the street to find a subway, walked into the station to discover an elderly man slowly carrying a large suitcase up the metro stairs while other travelers ignored him.

“I have a vivid memory of turning to Rachel and saying, ‘I’m going to go help that man,’” Hilary said. The rest of the story was caught on a hidden camera.

As she carried the man’s bag up the stairs, “Rachel chatted him up and he was as friendly and grateful as can be, considering the slight language barriers,” Hilary said. They were shocked when they learned about the hidden camera, but grateful to have been helpful to someone after being helped themselves with directions on the street moments before.

“Hilary does good deeds like this on a daily basis,” Rachel explained. “As a special education teacher, she is always teaching me how to be a better person and leading by example. I hope that if I were alone in this situation, I would have noticed the elderly man struggling with his bag and gone to help as well.”

The sisters said that Hillel Day School instilled these lessons in them, “especially with the

Mensch Cards,” Rachel said. “I remember getting a Mensch Card when I was in eighth grade for a small good deed that a teacher noticed. Hearing my name called over the announcements made me feel proud and that feeling continues to inspire me to do mitzvot.”

The message in the video is relevant, they said. “Especially nowadays, when we all seem to be so focused on our technology, ourselves, and our next destination, it becomes increasingly difficult to look around and give help where it is needed. After the whole experience, we sat down for lunch and really thought about: ‘What if we had been on our phones? Would we have noticed this man who needed help?’”

Performing mitzvot and Derekh Eretz are deeply rooted in their Jewish values, and reflect how they were raised by their parents, Bruce and Tammy, “and our teachers at Hillel have always had a profound impact on us as well as our sister Jamie,” they said.

“We have been overwhelmed by the kind messages from our friends, family, and the Hillel community, and were honored when we heard that the video was shared at the final school assembly this year. We hope it inspires current Hillel students, and anyone who watches it, to pay it forward and continue to do mitzvot, no matter how big or small.”

View the video online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yst7jPjCfEI&spfreload=5
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BY: Marc & Steven Goodman
BY: Suzy & Jim Sussberg
BY: Rabbi Michael Brook
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BY: Adam & Carol Lieberman
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STOP BY AND CHECK OUT ...

THE AUDREY AND WILLIAM FARBER FAMILY K-2 LEARNING COMMUNITY

Coming to Hillel Day School, September 1, 2016