

This school year, our Jewish students leaned on Hillel of Buffalo more than ever before. None of us expected the challenges that this year would bring. Yet Hillel met the moment, providing support, Jewish learning experiences, Shabbat dinners, and mentorship to hundreds of students this year.

### ISRAEL

Since October 7, antisemitic incidents targeting Jewish students on U.S. campuses, including harassment, threats, bullying, intimidation, vandalism, and violence, have increased by more than 700% compared to the same period last year. The University at Buffalo has been relatively calm in comparison to activities at other universities, however our students needed our deep support. Through our partnership with Jewish Family Services, we offered multiple opportunities for students to talk with licensed counselors that spanned over many months. The University Police Department spoke with our staff almost daily, and regularly visited the Hillel lounge to check in. Communication with Susan DeMari, the Director of Community Security at the Buffalo Jewish Federation, was extensive. She was updated on the latest events and concerns on campus and provided support to our staff. At the end of October, we had a single instance where a student's mezuzah was found on the floor outside her door one morning. The Anti-Defamation League was called, and they did not feel further action was required. The student chose not to file a police report and put the mezuzah back up on her door frame without any further issues. During the spring semester, there were multiple anti-Israel and pro-Israel marches on campus. Through all of this, we held space for Jewish students to process their feelings while ensuring their safety and security during this difficult time.



### LEADERSHIP

Students come to campus with so many different interests. We make it our mission to give students the resources and mentorship they need to turn their ideas into programs for all students to enjoy. This year, these programs included: open mic nights, cooking classes (focused on making budget friendly and healthy meals), painting sessions, and field days.

#### ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

**350+** students participated in Hillel programming

**140** Total events this year

**22** students served in leadership roles

**24** students participated in ongoing Jewish learning opportunities

Joining Hillel as a recent transfer student has provided me with such a strong sense of community. I've made amazing friendships and connected with many Jewish leaders who have really inspired me to continue my Jewish learning and advocacy throughout college and beyond, and I'm very grateful for that."

- Stephanie Newberger, 2027

## SHABBAT

This year's student-led Shabbat Services provided a meaningful and inclusive way to end the week for our students. Students gathered for services, a discussion on the Torah portion, and then came together for a kosher shabbat dinner.



Hillel has given me community, leadership opportunities, and a second home for my whole university career. I couldn't be more grateful for everything they've been and done, and the wonderful people who've made it what it is.

- Aaron Davis, 2024



## JEWISH HOLIDAYS

Our celebration of Jewish holidays this year was marked by joyous and meaningful gatherings, including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, Passover, and more. These student-led gathering provided opportunities to engage in rich cultural traditions and spiritual reflection.



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our community outreach efforts this year, including volunteering with Jewish Family Services, the Food Recovery Network, and participating in Federation events, which greatly inspired a spirit of giving and belonging among our students. These initiatives not only provided valuable support to the Buffalo community but also instilled a deep sense of responsibility and connection in our students. Through their dedicated service, students developed a lasting commitment to giving back and strengthening the bonds within our community.

## WELLNESS

Our wellness programs this year were a tremendous success, offering a diverse range of activities designed to promote mental and physical well-being. From wellness walks and yoga sessions to the innovative Shabark Shalom, Mental Health First Aid training, stress ball making, and painting, students found numerous ways to relax, connect, and rejuvenate. These initiatives played a crucial role in fostering a supportive and healthy community, helping students manage stress and enhance their overall well-being.

## SUPPORT HILLEL

Each year, Hillel of Buffalo must raise close to \$150,000 to support Jewish students. This amount is in addition to the generous funding we receive from the Buffalo Jewish Federation and Hillel International. It is only through your partnership that we can offer students such a rich menu of programs. With your generous support we can add new opportunities to reach even more students. To make a gift to Hillel, please visit [hillelofbuffalo.org/donate](https://hillelofbuffalo.org/donate). If you care about students now, and want to sustain your impact in the future, we would love to discuss our Life and Legacy Program with you. Please be in touch with Dr. Mike Steklof, [mike@hillelofbuffalo.org](mailto:mike@hillelofbuffalo.org) or 716-463-5061 for more information.



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