



**Enriching the lives of Jewish students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world**



FROM THE **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



I've spent many weeks in quarantine at a loss for how Hillel at Virginia Tech can play a meaningful part in helping to connect students, alumni and friends to Judaism and its ethics to move our country forward. For me, the only way forward is to clarify my values and articulate my responsibilities in helping to create positive change. When talking to alumni, parents, students and friends I heard that the quarantine allowed them the opportunity to see their lives in a new light, slow down and reconnect with things they used to take for granted.

As the students, faculty, staff and administrators return to Virginia Tech, and our alumni and friends return to work, we can expand the materials we read, the connections we make, and the people we talk to. We can ask important questions and accept that the answers we receive may make us uncomfortable. We all know that change is difficult. So is the acquisition of knowledge that challenges our existing world. But I believe both are essential processes to create a more tolerant and just society for every individual. Myself and our entire team are fully engaged and committed to students', parents', alumni and friends' positive experiences, education and growth.

The emphasis in Jewish law and lived tradition on collective responsibility for our neighbors and our society is countercultural in a country built on rugged individualism. But the novel coronavirus has taught us the impossibility of fending for ourselves. I believe communal responsibility is the only way to protect ourselves and each other. We strive to build community in new and innovative ways.....together.

May the world we need, the world we want, and the world we deserve, soon be the world we have.



**BOARD OF ADVISORS 2019-20**

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FROM THE **BOARD PRESIDENT**

While 2020 has been a challenging year, Virginia Tech Hokies are known for finding family and strength within the Hillel community through hard times; this year has been no different. The Virginia Tech Hillel Board of Directors started the year by updating our short and long term strategies to ensure we continue our alignment with Hillel International and the Virginia Tech Hillel Student's Missions and Visions. While our focus quickly shifted to COVID-19 response and planning for the year ahead, we are proud to continue our program's strength into next year as students return to campus and the new normal. Your Board of Directors will remain committed to providing resources to enrich the lives of VT Jewish students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world.

-Rochelle Friedman, '09

*Rochelle Friedman*

- Doniel Kaye  
*Springboard Ezra Fellow*
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*IACT/Birthright Coordinator*
- Tonya Huslak  
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# FROM THE STUDENT PRESIDENT



I joined Hillel because I wanted to meet people who knew my Seinfeld quotes. I kept coming to Hillel because of the people – the friends I made and the innumerable experiences we shared. And I joined the Hillel Student Leadership Board because I wanted to help others have similar experiences and opportunities.

In past years on the Board, we've worked together to increase diverse programming, collaborated with the University on policies aimed at inclusion and accommodation, and, most of all, created a community that extends far beyond the Malcom Rosenberg Hillel Center.

Such is the principle of kehilla, or congregation, in Judaism – one of the defining features of what makes us Jewish. It is not by happenstance that Jews call themselves Am Yisrael – the people of Israel – rather than Dat Yisrael – the religion of Israel. Now, in light of COVID-19, this idea, which is fundamental to our Jewish identity, rings a different tune. Specifically, for me, navigating what my role at Hillel is, and what it can be.

Despite these challenges, students and community members come to Hillel at Virginia Tech because it provides an unparalleled sense of shared-identity, shared-experience, and community. So, as we move forward, while the opportunities to be physically together may be slim, I am confident we will continue to share a commitment to each other to grow and partake in the joy of our community.

I must thank the Hillel staff and the Student Leadership Board because Hillel would not be the welcoming, diverse, organized, creative, and hilarious place it is without you. Thank you for your dedication to our community, your ingenuity, and, to be fair, your tolerance of my jokes. You truly are my mishpocha.

*-Mitch Gerhardt, '20 Electrical Engineering*

## Executive Board 2020

Mitch Gerhardt - President

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Sam Lightfoot- co-VP of Programming

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Erin Kyle

Talia Solonsky

Brian Sternback

## Member at Large

Casey Barker

Andy Brenner

Rachel Mirsen

## JNET 21

Sydney Lewis

Jared Minionis



# FRESHFEST & JFAM

Freshfest is the first introduction new Hokies get to Hillel on campus. From tubing down the New River to eating wings at Sharkey's, we welcome Freshman into the Jewish Hokie family, and become their home-base for spiritual development and community over next 4+ years.

## BY THE NUMBERS



- 46 STUDENTS ARE ON THE HILLEL LEADERSHIP BOARD**
- 14 HILLEL LEADERSHIP BOARD MEMBERS ARE FRESHMAN**



## RADICAL HOSPITALITY:

From Freshman year to Senior year, Hillel at Virginia Tech is committed to welcoming students of all family and educational backgrounds as well as religious observance. From the day they step on campus, to the day they graduate, Hillel offers opportunities and student-created programming that engages every student in Jewish community, self-exploration, and leadership skills development. Hillel at Virginia Tech is committed to facilitating a vibrant Jewish campus life that fits every students interests and potential.



“

While in college, Hillel gave me something to look forward to every week. Beyond this, Hillel at Virginia Tech introduced me to some of the most wonderful people that I will always be thankful to know. The feeling of community that Hillel was able to provide me was unmatched. Hillel also provided me with professional opportunities that were positive contributions to my résumé and further prepared me for my post-graduation career.

-Cole Knatt '20, Crimonology and Sociology

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## SENIORS



# DEVELOPING OUR JEWISH FUTURE THROUGH INTERNSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

## PEER NETWORK ENGAGEMENT INTERNSHIP

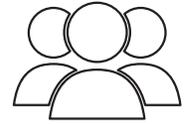
Interns venture into every VT campus community and extend a welcoming invitation to anyone interested in Jewish life all year long.

“PNEI helped me acquire mentorship and networking skills that I will use in every day life. I learned how to make strong, meaningful connections and grow out of my comfort zone.  
-Briana Schwam, '22”



## BY THE NUMBERS

53 STUDENT INTERNS



166 STUDENTS ENGAGED IN ONGOING JEWISH LEARNING



8,672 STUDENT INTERACTIONS



## JEWISH LEARNING FELLOWSHIP

Fellows participate in an eight-week curriculum exploring Jewish topics in a modern day context.

“The JLF lessons were thought provoking, while still being easy to understand, and relevant to our lives as college students. I've learned so much from the other students around me as every individual brings a new perspective to Jewish text.  
-Sarah Rothstein, '20”

## SABABA

An eight-week curriculum exploring Israel's history as it relates to other countries in the world.

“The fellowship introduced me to Hillel and Friends of Israel. After participating in the fellowship, I will be looking for future opportunities to get more involved.  
-Colette Donovan, '22”



# CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT AND CULTURE



## HIGH HOLIDAYS

**207 STUDENTS JOINED HILLEL FOR HIGH HOLY DAYS**

When we celebrate holidays at Hillel, we create a welcoming environment for all Jewish students, regardless of practice, knowledge, or affiliation. Jewish holidays are one of the most important times for students to connect to Jewish life on campus. The students can join the broader Jewish community, including alumni, university faculty and staff, and local community members in celebration. This year students celebrated Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the Malcolm Rosenberg Hillel Center by joining in a community holiday meal with traditional Jewish food followed by services and discussions..

## PASSOVER

**50+ MEALS WERE PREPARED FOR PASSOVER AROUND VIRGINIA TECH CAMPUS**



In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hillel at Virginia Tech redefined the Passover experience. It was a "Choose Your Own Adventure" as individuals were matched with others in need of virtual seders based on topic and length. Afikoman hunts were also moved online so students could participate in the tradition. Local students, community members unable to leave their home, and healthcare workers with little time to prepare were able to pick up a Kosher for Passover meal— including gefilte fish, matzah ball soup, brisket, matzah, horseradish, charoset, and dessert!



## SUKKOT

“ This Sukkot I was fortunate to be invited back to Blacksburg to teach about the agricultural roots of the holiday and do some harvest activities with the students from Hillel. We sat together in front of Squires Student Center amidst the hubub of campus life, learning to make pickled green beans and sauerkraut using fresh vegetables from the Blacksburg farmers market. Jewish and non-Jewish students alike wandered into the Sukkah to learn how to preserve fresh vegetables and connect the harvest to the week-long festival of Sukkot. It was incredible to see the massive Sukkah right in the middle of Tech's campus, open to all students, welcoming, and full of life.

-Amanda Herring, '12



## CHANUKAH ON ICE

Making history at Virginia Tech, Hillel brought an indoor ice skating rink to Squires Student Center. Over 250 students attended to celebrate Chanukah.

“ Chanukah on Ice was really exciting even without real ice! I grew up going to a "Chanukah on Ice" event in Arlington every year, so when I came to VT it was sad that some years I could no longer attend. However, Hillel figured out a way to bring a plastic skating rink to VT and give us a fun winter-themed Chanukah party before the end of the semester! Free cookies, fundraiser donuts, dreidels, gelt, and music were all included. This event provided me a sense of home.

-Leor Clark, '20

# INSPIRING STUDENTS TO DEVELOP MEANINGFUL



## ISRAEL ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

- 52 STUDENTS TRAVELED TO ISRAEL IN THE WINTER OF 2020**
- 23 ISRAEL ADVOCACY STUDENT INTERNS AND FELLOWS**
- 9 STUDENTS ATTENDED AIPAC POLICY CONFERENCE IN D.C.**



“Birthright was truly life changing because I got to experience a new country with new and old friends, all while connecting over our Jewish bonds. This trip really meant a lot to me as I was travelling in honor of my Nana, who passed shortly before I left for my trip. I am so thankful that I had this opportunity to travel to Israel and it really inspired me to get involved in Jewish life both at Virginia Tech and outside. Birthright also provided me with a new outlook on life. By experiencing different cultures and making new friends, it helped me to appreciate what I have and kindle a flame inside me to help my community.  
-Jacob Levin, -21”

## ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK TRIP: NEW ORLEANS

Students volunteered with Rebuilding Together New Orleans, the largest home rehabilitation non-profit organization in New Orleans.

“ This trip was a meaningful experience with learning about systemic inequalities and the issues that are prevalent in New Orleans. It was a learning experience that I think we all really benefitted from. I felt very excited and happy to be able to experience this city for the first time and to be able to make a positive impact on the lives of the residents who were most impacted by Katrina.  
- Michelle Uchitel, '21 ”



## HILLEL HELPS

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hillel Hokies gave back to their communities.

“ Growing up my parents always instilled the Jewish values of mitzvah and tzedakah. When the COVID-19 pandemic first started I was eager to get involved. I first started working at the drive-thru testing sites in the New River Valley. This pandemic has changed my outlook by recognizing the strength and resiliency of our community. I am amazed to see so many strangers helping others and I hope we can continue this connection and responsibility beyond the pandemic.  
-Jackie Abramson, M.S. Public Health '21 ”

# CREATING COMMUNITY ON AND OFF CAMPUS



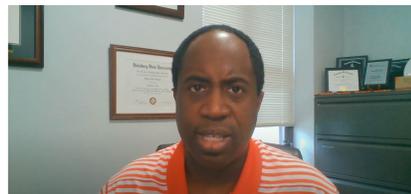
Daniel Pearl World Music Day is an international network of concerts that use the power of music to embrace tolerance and humanity.

“Planning, coordinating, and attending Daniel Pearl World Music Day the last two years has been one of my favorite parts of being involved with Hillel at Virginia Tech! This year we had the chance to bring Sammy Adams—a very popular artist with college students—to Blacksburg for everyone to see live. Being part of the programming committee and having the chance to publicize, coordinate, and actually execute an event of that scale is something that I’m so grateful for and just added to the list of opportunities that Hillel has given me to grow and learn!

-Casey Barker, '22

## READING OF THE NAMES

In order to honor Yom Hashoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, Hillel at Virginia Tech annually organizes Reading of the Names. As COVID-19 changed the past tradition of reading Holocaust victims' names on the Drillfield, our community adapted and read names virtually. Over 65 individuals read the names of children murdered during the Holocaust, totaling over 6,720 names. Readings were recorded ahead of time and streamed live on social media. Those that participated included students, alumni, staff, and community members.



Shabbat at the Malcolm Rosenberg Hillel Center included an average of 100 students a week. As Hillel programming was transitioned online due to COVID-19, Shabbat continued to be an impactful experience.

“At first, it was difficult to transition to online Shabbat programs, but the Hillel at VT community was there offering support and advice every step of the way. While we couldn't have our normal Shabbat service, we had the unique opportunity to come together and learn about Judaism through Zoom discussions. I loved hearing all of my friends' opinions on different Torah Portions, Jewish Laws, and holidays. Even though we weren't physically together, I felt more connected to my community and my faith.

-Jenny Judenberg, '21

# HILLEL EXTENDS BEYOND STUDENT LIFE



Alumni join together for a beautiful Shabbat experiences in DC and NOVA



Richmond Alumni get-together for Top Golf!

WE ARE INCREDIBLY THANKFUL FOR ALL THOSE THAT PARTICIPATED IN THIS YEAR'S COMMONWEALTH KIDDUSH CUP!



Together we raised over \$52,000 for programs impacting over 1,300 students. We were able to pivot to virtual programming and continue to supply students with Jewish connections.

WE WILL BEAT THE WAHOOS NEXT YEAR!

New Babies, New Homes, New Jobs, Engagements, Weddings?  
We celebrate them all!

DID WE MISS YOU? SEND US YOUR MAZELS, SO WE CAN SEND YOU ONE!



PUP PRIDE



ONESIES



BOTTOMS UP



TOO COOL FOR DROOL

Family Circle members play a vital role in providing transformative Jewish community for their child and all the Jewish students at Virginia Tech. Please join and make an impact.

**You receive:**

- A copy of our Annual Impact Report
- Quarterly newsletter
- Invites to Parents & Family weekend events
- Regular photos of Hillel Hokies in action
- Personal thank you call



**Family Committee \$2,500 or \$208/month:**  
 Join the Family Committee and you will be invited to exclusive hosted events to share vision and updates of our program.  
*INCLUDES: Below + Join for 4 years and receive an engraved brick in the Malcolm Rosenberg Hillel Center fire pit!*

**Visionary Circle \$1,800 or \$150/month:**  
 Your gift sponsors 1 Shabbat with 100 students on average.  
*INCLUDES: Below + Full Shabbat dedicated in your name*

**Mensch Circle \$1,000 or \$83/month:**  
 Your gift sponsors Jewish learning for 30 students for a year.  
*INCLUDES: Below + Homemade Holiday Meals*

**Mitzvah \$540 or \$45/month:**  
 Your gift supports our Jewish leadership program with over 20 leaders.  
*FOR YOUR HOKIE: Below + Parking at Hillel Center*

**Proud Circle \$360 or \$30/month:**  
 Your gift enables 12 student interns to meet peers over coffee to engage new students.  
*INCLUDES: Below + Wellness Check-In every semester*

**Sustainer Circle \$180 or \$15/month:**  
 Your gift sponsors a one time program for 10 students.  
*FOR YOUR HOKIE: 1 year access to Monday Munch, priority access to chicken soup hotline, exclusive invitations to upcoming programs, and Hillel Face Mask*

# YOUR INVESTMENT IN EACH STUDENT

Hillel at VT spends\* \$176 less than the national average per student, based on our size. A future goal is to increase Hillel's budget to be able to invest more in each student, which will yield a greater impact in each student's experience.

\*Investment per student based on FY19 figures provided





# JEWISH RITUAL & SPIRITUALITY



# ISRAEL ADVOCACY & ENGAGEMENT



# TODAH RABAH THANK YOU!

You are the reason all this and more is possible.

# TZEDEK

# HEALTH & WELLNESS



# SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

# THANK YOU FRIENDS AND DONORS

“As an entering freshman (Rat) at Virginia Tech (1951) not knowing one person, I soon learned self-discipline and to “stand up” when I saw something that was not right. One of my accomplishments was to start Hillel in 1954. There were only 8 identifiable Jews in our first gathering. It makes me proud how Hillel has evolved into the viable organization it is today. Supporting Hillel reinforces my legacy. In my Army career I used this experience to serve as Jewish Lay Leader in addition to my normal duties. I remember when an upperclassman would lock my heels as a “rat”- My response would be “when you flunk out, I will be here.” In some. not all cases I was right.

-Ben Abramowitz, '54

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The happiness, security, Jewish atmosphere, kind chevra (community), and care that Hillel at VT provides for our daughter gives me the comfort a college parent hopes for. Our daughter has made lifelong friendships, and her experiences at Hillel are enjoyable and thought provoking, and help her to grow in so many ways. The mentors that she has at Hillel have taught her leadership and interpersonal skills that will be used in everyday life. Most importantly, the genuine kindness of the staff at Hillel at VT is like no other we have ever seen, and we are forever grateful. They not only took Briana under their wing, but they put us at ease knowing she has a family at college.

-Limor Glazer, Parent of Briana Schwam '22

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“I found in Hillel at Virginia Tech, my community and my sense of connection to the Jewish traditions that made me happy and fulfilled growing up. With Hillel at Virginia Tech, I was able to dig deeply into Jewish texts and rituals to enhance my spirituality and observance. This growth alongside my academic courses was very important to making me a whole person. By the time that I graduated, Hillel at Virginia Tech had grown into a beautiful, state of the art building, providing visibility, a sense of security, and space for Jewish students to express themselves. I contribute to Hillel at Virginia Tech so that future generations of Jewish students can have the space to learn and grow in the ways that I did, that were so meaningful in shaping my future.

-Isabel Shocket, '13

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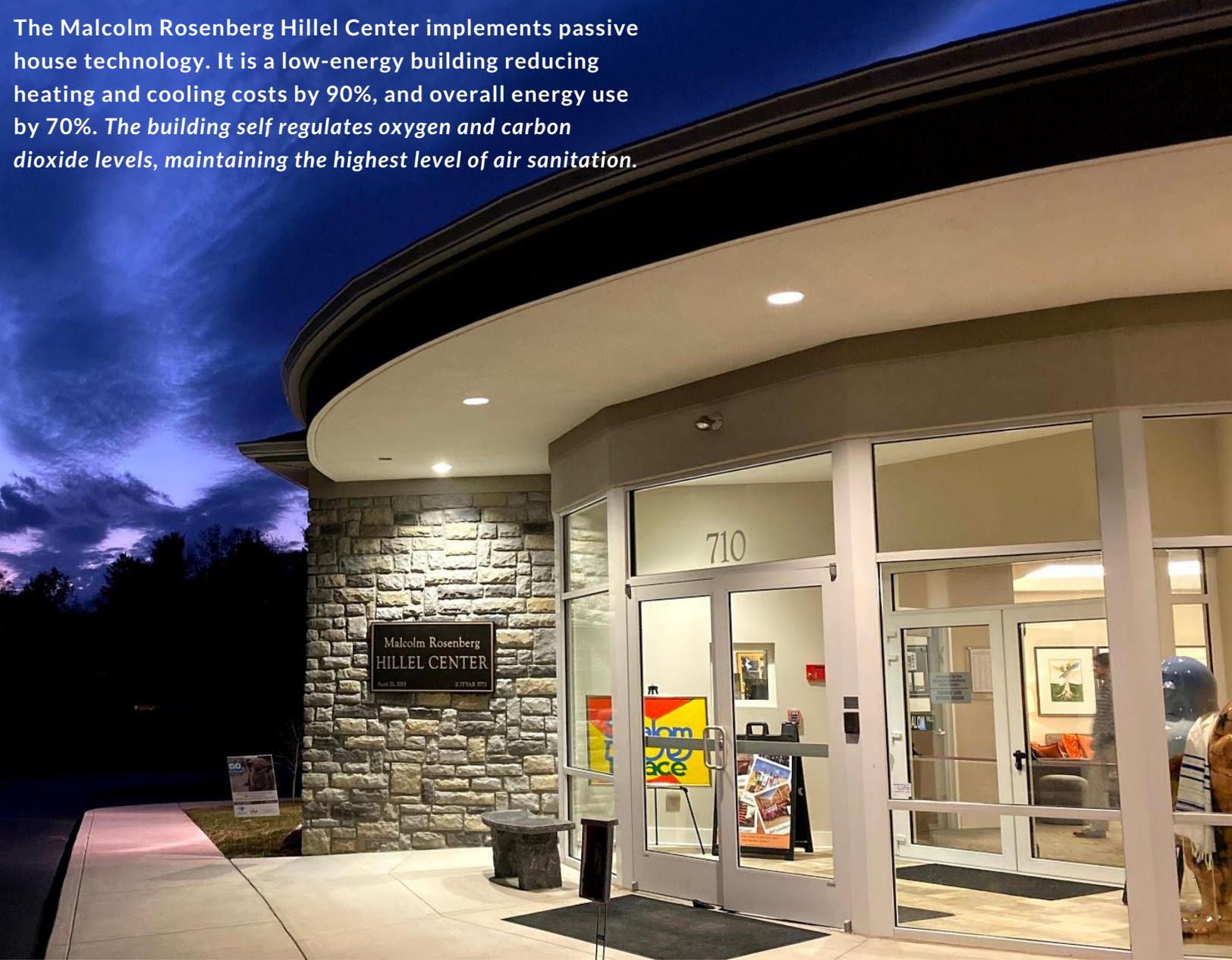
“ I donate to Hillel at Virginia Tech because I remember how impactful both the staff and community were to my life in college. As a student, Hillel provided Shabbat meals, holiday celebrations, and opportunities for Jewish practice and personal growth. Hillel's building is a safe space to be Jewish on a large campus that doesn't always feel welcoming. College is a time where my peers and I experimented and our experiences in college made lasting impacts on our lives. I donate to Hillel because they provide a wonderful and meaningful Jewish college experience.  
 -Jesse Isserow, '18 ”



“ We give in the spirit of Tikkun Olam; we truly want to repair what is broken and fortify what is strong and beneficial in this world. Giving our time and money represent self-less activities that provide personal balance and fulfillment. We believe in the Mission and we love the energy of Hillel at Virginia Tech. Despite not being an alumni or parent, we became interested in Hillel at Virginia Tech as a result of the courageousness of Livu Librescu, and stayed involved due to the leadership. Engaging young Jewish students and developing in them an appreciation of Jewish history, accomplishment and culture is the key to our Jewish future.  
 -Jay and Jodi Klebanoff, Community Leaders, VA Beach ”

# Our Organizational Donors

The Malcolm Rosenberg Hillel Center implements passive house technology. It is a low-energy building reducing heating and cooling costs by 90%, and overall energy use by 70%. The building self regulates oxygen and carbon dioxide levels, maintaining the highest level of air sanitation.



Malcolm Rosenberg Hillel Center  
Hillel at Virginia Tech  
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Blacksburg, VA 24060



  
**Hillel**  
AT VIRGINIA TECH®  
IMPACT REPORT  
**2020**