



# Annual Appeal

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter that reflects on our activities this past year 5776. It shows RPI-Sage Hillel's continued success in creating a Jewish environment for all students and a home away from home. This newsletter is our only fundraiser and we receive no financial support from the school. Therefore, we rely upon your generosity and tzedakah for the continuation of this student-run organization. We thank you in advance for your continued support. Please see the form on the back to make a donation. Wishing you a Happy Hanukah.

**Caleb Gladstone '17—President**

# Past President's Remarks

**Sarah Notis '16—Past President**

An excited freshman looking for fun activities. A lonely sophomore in search of friends and companionship. A busy junior who'd rather not have to cook her own meal. An ambitious senior with an exciting project idea looking for people to create it with. A graduate student looking for a place to go for Rosh Hashanah. A secular student looking for ways to connect with his/her Jewish culture that doesn't push them too far out of their comfort zone. A Shomer Shabbat student looking for people who understand him/her. These, and many more, are the people Hillel serves. We exist to fulfill the needs of all the Jewish students of RPI and Sage – social, communal, and religious.

Hillel, as I envision it, is a space where any Jewish student can come and be Jewish, no matter what that means to them. It's a space where someone can come to relax and unwind at the end of a stressful week, and find friends to chat and play games with. But more than that, it's a place where students can embrace their Jewish heritage and feel pride in their Jewish identities, in a world that is often hostile to those who are different. Hillel has been my home away from home, and my hope is that every Jewish student can feel welcome here. The people I've met in Hillel over the years have become my closest friends out here in Troy, and one of them even became my boyfriend!

Hillel is not only a place where Judaism and Jewishness is embraced, but Hillel's existence is based in Jewish values as well. Our strictly kosher Shabbat dinners embody the value of community (*kehilla*), and by nature of being free of charge and open to any RPI student, also embody the values of hospitality (*hachnasat orchim*) and of welcoming the stranger. Also, we pride ourselves on making sure as best we can there is nutritious food for everyone, even those with dietary restrictions such as gluten intolerance and vegetarian.

As you can see from the articles my fellow Hillel members have written, Hillel does

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5776: A Year in Review

Parent & Alumni Newsletter

# RPI+Sage HILLEL



## Girls' Night

**Maddy Bogner '16—Co-RCVP**

The ladies of RPI-Sage Hillel enjoy celebrating Rosh Chodesh at the beginning every Jewish month. As we follow the lunar calendar, this is when there is a new moon.

Rosh Chodesh is traditionally a special holiday for women to gather. One of the reasons is that in the Torah, when Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the men created a golden calf to worship, but the women refused to participate. So, we were rewarded with a holiday 12 (or 13) times a year! Each month during the school year, the Religious and Cultural Co-VPs created an event called Girls' Night to celebrate Rosh Chodesh in which we do various activities and study female characters in Jewish texts. During the Kislev celebration, we decorated cookies and then I taught Zumba and folk dance! For Adar I, we made jewelry and enjoyed a guided mediation. During Adar II, we held a Vashti's banquet in which we recognized how Vashti stood up for herself when challenged by her husband, the king. We had Persian dishes such as Yazdi Cakes and learned a Persian dance called Bandari.

During Nisan, we designed and painted wine glasses and mason jars in which we created our own cups for our RPI - Sage Hillel Passover Seder. During Iyyar, we did Israeli dancing and henna (pictured above). In all, Rosh Chodesh is a time for us to spend together while letting go and having some fun during the school week to celebrate ourselves and Jewish womanhood.



[hillel.rpi.edu](http://hillel.rpi.edu)

COME JOIN US!

# Shabbat Dinner

Friday nights

January 20, 2017

February 3, 2017

February 17, 2017

March 3, 2017

March 24, 2017

April 7, 2017

April 21, 2017

Union Phalanx

Email us for times

Hillel@rpi.edu

Bring a friend!

## Hillel House

**Aaron Markel '16—Past President**

Members of Hillel, once again, joined together to live under the same roof and call it the Hillel House. Personally, I enjoy having this off-campus house because it provides Hillel another space to hold events. The house allows the club to expand the types of events that we can host due to the atmosphere the space has when compared to the RPI Student Union. Hillel hosted a few events at the house, including a popular and delicious Yom Kippur break-the-fast (those bagels and lox were delicious), an apple nacho making event for Rosh Hashanah, some post-Shabbat dinner festivities, and more. As a recent alumnus of the house I would encourage other members of Hillel that will be either juniors or seniors next fall to come together and keep the Hillel House tradition going. It does not matter which house they chose but what matters is living with friends with whom they can connect and make a Jewish home away from home.

## Mazel Tov!

We are overjoyed to announce the engagement of two of our long-time members, Nate Baer '16 and Jess Loskowitz RSC '17!



Nate and Jess are dear to us all and we wish them much happiness in their future together!

## Fondue Against Humanity

**Noah Bernstein '18—Treasurer**

As the Fall semester neared its end, students were stressed by copious amounts of studying and homework; most were looking for an escape if just for an hour or two. Hillel came to the rescue for many, fighting off the end of semester blues with chocolate and fun times with friends. Everyone enjoyed dunking fruits and pretzels into some delicious fondue while a large game of Cards Against Humanity was played. We all came away knowing a little more about each other and enjoying the company of some new friends. Hillel is looking to build off this experience and continue to make a difference in the student body at RPI and Sage.

## Sukkot

**Caleb Gladstone '17—Past Religious & Cultural VP & Current President**

During Sukkot, Hillel and its members were very busy with meals and festivities in the sukkah. For the second year in a row the sukkah was designed by our recent alumna Caren Irgang '15. For the first time in years, we were able to build a sukkah right in the middle of student life, on the outside deck of the Student Union with an excellent view of the Muller Center and Freshman Hill. This allowed for better awareness, due to the centralized, high-traffic location. It also allowed us to daven Kabbalat Shabbat and make Kiddush in the sukkah over Shabbos! We had the privilege of being hosted numerous times throughout the chag by the local Chabad Rabbi and partner to Hillel, Leible Morrison and his wife, Elisheva. Lunches were held several times at the house of some of our graduate students, and of course the sukkah on campus was always open to all students for meals.



## Chanukah

**Alice Mitnick MS '16**

Hillel aided Jews on campus with their holiday celebrations. When living in a dorm, something you are so used to like lighting candles for Hanukah is no longer allowed. Luckily, Hillel hosted a candle lighting each night, so that everyone could continue their traditions. Additionally, Hillel had exciting events such as sufganiyot making, dreidel making, and a Hanukah dinner (complete with Latkes!) to keep everyone in the holiday spirit, even when we are bogged down with classes.

COME JOIN US!

# Passover Seders

April 10, 2017

Union Shellnut Gallery

April 11, 2017

Union Mother's

Email us for times  
Hillel@rpi.edu

Bring a friend!

## Passover

**Jonathan Holmes PhD '17**

A few days before Passover, several other students and I went to Beth Tephilah synagogue to spend most of the day preparing a sumptuous kosher Seder feast with traditional braised brisket, matzah ball soup, and roasted chicken, as planned by our Culinary Director, Matt Brier. It was the best Seder meal I've had at Rensselaer, and as a long-time P.h.D. student, I have been to many. For the Seder itself, Sarah Notis '16 and Maddy Bogner '16, our Religious and Cultural co-VPs, guided us through their innovative take on the traditional Seder, supplementing the Haggadah with an interactive play of the story of Passover, discussion groups about the meaning of the holiday, and a traditional summer camp activity with hula hoops; it was so successful that we got a room full of college students to stay for the final cups after the shulchan orech (the meal)! Our second Seder was graced by RPI's own rebel hero, Prof. Bill Puka of Save the Union fame, who brought a delicious Ukrainian dish to share. For the rest of the holiday, Hillel is committed to ensuring that there is always kosher-for-Passover food available on campus. Rensselaer isn't able to provide kosher-for-Passover food in the dining halls, so we always arrange a Passover Meal Plan for students who need it. This past year's Passover Meal Plan was generously organized and run by Leible Morrison from Chabad. Remember: Passover at RPI-Sage Hillel is made possible by readers like you.



## Shabbat Dinners @RPI

**Wendy Willner '17**

RPI-Sage Hillel Shabbats are truly special. Our weekly staple, they allow students to come together at the end of week and experience the religious, social, gastronomical fulfillment, or any combination of the three they are seeking. Each Friday, students gather for the traditional Shabbat service; usually student led. However, this past year we were lucky enough to have some special guest appearances from Rabbi Gordon of the Berith Sholom Synagogue of Troy who lead beautiful services and shared a lovely d'Var Torah. Rabbi Gordon has also generously tutored some of our students, such as our lovely past president Sarah Notis, on how to lead services effectively. Our services aim to accommodate the Jewish traditions of all our members. Services are then followed by a traditional Kiddush with grape juice, challah and dinner. All of our dinners are completely kosher, and usually student made in the Beth Tephilah Synagogue. We vary our menus to keep things interesting. Some of our favorites are traditional roast chicken Shabbat, Thanksgiving Shabbat, and Hanukkah Shabbat with latkes and all. We even had one 'field trip Shabbat', during which we attended Shabbat 360 at UAlbany and enjoyed davening and a delicious dinner with their students. Friday dinners allow students to sit back and relax and get to know one another in a comfortable Jewish setting. Many friendships have been formed over the RPI-Sage Hillel Shabbat Dinner Table and we look forward to creating even more bonds in semesters to come.

## Yom HaShoah

**Sarah Notis '16—Past Co-RCVP**

Hillel is usually a place where we celebrate and have fun, but we also know how to tackle difficult and somber topics. For Yom HaShoah, we placed over 5,000 flags on the '86 field, each flag representing 2,273 people killed in the Holocaust, and each color representing a group that was targeted. Several students took time out of their days to help set up the display because it was so important to them that we make sure never to forget the millions of souls who lost their lives. Also, this year, it was our turn to host the Troy Jewish Community Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony. My friend, Maddy, and I spent hours planning the ceremony, which we held in RPI's Chapel and Cultural Center. Several students recited poems and readings, and members of the different synagogues in Troy came to join us. We hope that we were able to create a meaningful program for them; Margo Singer from Berith Sholom Congregation, described it thus: "Tonight I attended a program put on by the students of RPI-Sage Hillel. One student wrote a very interesting reflection on a weeklong trip she made to Poland, which including visiting towns which were formerly vibrant Jewish communities and also to Auschwitz and Treblinka. The program tonight not only was a moving tribute to the memory of the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust, but also others who were murdered by the Nazis, including gay people, and Roma. May all their memories be for a blessing, and may we never forget."

# A Place for Everyone

**Jonathan Holmes PhD '17**

I have recently begun my fourth year as a Hillel officer, and it's been quite the experience. The dedication of our members and officers is something to behold. We have ambitious goals and quite successful outcomes in spite of being a completely student-run organization doing our own administration and fundraising as a 501(c) (3). Fundraising and maintaining institutional memory is a major challenge when most board members turn over in 2-3 years. As a result, we are accustomed to keeping very tight budgets and relying solely on often inexperienced volunteers to produce high-quality programming. On the one hand, we have a great story of triumph over adversity. On the other hand, we'd rather that committed Jews at RPI did not have to face such adversity in the first place. That's why this year, I've taken on the role of Special Projects Coordinator: a new position for developing Hillel's long-

term projects and maintaining relationships with outside organizations like the RPI administration, the Jewish Federation, and Hillel International. Our long-term goals include permanent staff, a Hillel building with a kosher kitchen and communal space, and kosher dining on campus. We have established an excellent relationship with the Jewish Federation; last year we received a grant partially funding Shabbat dinners, and this year, after submitting a painstakingly constructed grant application to the Jewish Federation, we received a grant for a part-time Hillel staff member! We are very excited about this, and we would like to thank you for your contributions, both emotional and financial, that have gotten us to where we are now. With your help, we have built a strong organization – now more than ever, we need to leverage our human capital to lay a permanent foundation for Jewish life at RPI and Russell Sage. Let's make this a place where even the most committed Hillel members can be students first.



*Past President's Remarks from page 1.*

quite a lot – in addition to Shabbat dinners, we also have holiday events, parties, brunches, and creative social events. Of course, to accomplish all we do takes a great amount of effort, and all of it is done by Hillel students. We cook, set up and clean up meals, plan activities, lead prayer services, drive food and people from place to place, write grant applications, reach out to new members, manage the budget, and much more. I am

continually impressed by the members of my community and their dedication to each other and to Hillel. But even the students who do the most for our community do not merely give -- they receive as well. The students who run Hillel learn leadership, teamwork, and organizational skills. We gain confidence in ourselves and in our abilities. And we learn what it means to create something we can be proud of.

But of course, none of this is possible without your continued support. We are immensely grateful for the faith you show in us. Your contributions to Hillel give us the resources we need to continue to support our Jewish community. So please, join us in creating and sustaining this wonderful community.

Shana tova,  
~Sarah

Donation Form

Please place a check next to the event(s) or program(s) you would like to sponsor:

- Ice Cream Social: \$36                       Yom Ha'atzmaut BBQ: \$72
- Fondue Against Humanity: \$36         Shabbat Dinner \$154
- Girls' Night: \$54                             Rosh Hashanah Dinner: \$180
- Yom Kippur Break-the-Fast: \$54        Passover Seder: \$360

Please indicate here if you wish to have the event recognized in someone's honor. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Would you like to donate an unrestricted gift?**

Please specify amount: (\$) \_\_\_\_\_

Checks may be made out to "Rensselaer" with "Hillel" in the memo field, and sent to:

*Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute*  
*Gifts Processing Center*  
*P.O. Box 3164*  
*Boston, MA 02241*

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Hillel: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Your phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Donations are Tax-Deductible**