

L'Dore Va 'Dore

From One Generation of Commodores to the next

לדור ודור

Vanderbilt University

- Meet the new Hillel staff
- Learn about Hillel events from our student leaders
- Travel with us on spring break
- Experience Israel on Hillel's Birthright trip
- Get involved with Israel Advocacy
- Join us for "Tuesdays at Hillel"

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Letter from the Director: Ari Dubin

As our student body has grown over the years, Hillel has attempted to keep pace with all the new students by ensuring we had an infrastructure that would support increased programs, diverse student activities, and multiple opportunities for students to get connected to Jewish Life on campus. This year, we have put together a truly exceptional team of program staff who have pooled their talents to make Hillel the most dynamic place to be on campus.

Candice Perilstein, Director of Engagement, recently earned her Master's in Higher Education Administration from the University of South Florida. She has a strong background in student life on campus, and has worked in both the areas of Greek Life and Student Government. Candice's primary responsibilities for Hillel are first year

students, graduate and professional students, and Hillel's partnership with JMingle, the Nashville Jewish community's group for young professionals. Program Coordinator Tessa Wells received her BA in Jewish Studies with an emphasis in education from San Francisco State University. Over the past six years Tessa has worked for the JCC of San Francisco, The Union of Reform Judaism, and Congregation Emanu-El as a 2nd grade teacher and youth group advisor. Her primary role is working with student leaders. She is also responsible for planning programs, the Reform service, and campus collaborations. Daniel Shulman, our Jewish Student Life Coordinator, recently graduated from Queens College, where he received an



The Ben Schulman Center for Jewish Life on Campus

award for his work promoting religious diversity and understanding on campus. As a student, Daniel was involved in many student programs and initiatives as a leader in Queens College Hillel, the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity, and various positions within the schools' academic senate and student government. Daniel's role at Hillel includes coordinating religious activities and observances, Israel advocacy and programming, and Birthright Israel.

A Year in Review: Update from the President, Jeremy Sandler

The Vanderbilt Hillel community this semester has been full of positive and exciting energy. This contagious energy flows through our programs and people, enriching the Jewish community of Vanderbilt University. From our first welcoming barbeque for first year students and families to the Ben Schulman Center's availability for late night exam study hours, we have been providing

dynamic and unlimited opportunities for Jewish students to explore their Jewish heritage, find an intimate and heartwarming Jewish community that reminds them of home, and be active participants in the incredible progression of Jewish life at Vanderbilt University. Vanderbilt Hillel's accomplishments have invigorated the members of our organization and brought awareness to the entire

Vanderbilt University community of what we offer and are capable of. We have created freshmen engagement opportunities with a leadership board for freshmen that supports the Vanderbilt Hillel staff in helping Jewish freshmen students find a caring Jewish community on campus. Tuesday nights have belonged to Hillel, with our ... (continued on back page)



Birthright participants enjoying an afternoon

Birthright Hillel

After having to cancel a family trip to Israel the summer before, I jumped at the opportunity to finally go. I got my best friend from home, who is now a student at George Washington University, to agree to go through Vanderbilt Hillel and I had the time of my life. I had never been out of the country before, and going on Birthright was quite an experience. From hiking Masada and visiting the Western Wall to eating falafels multiple times a day, I feel like I got a wide range of experiences. I met so many people from Vanderbilt and elsewhere, and I was able to learn so much about Israeli culture.

One of my favorite parts of the trip was when we got to experience the tourist places with the Israeli soldiers. They had such great insight and could teach us so much more than just the tour guide. They would tell us interesting facts and relate directly to us. I am still emailing back and forth with one while he is at his officers camp. Listening to how much they knew about their government and how much they truly appreciated being able to live in Israel made me rethink a lot of luxuries I take for granted. It was so enlightening to talk with them. I would do anything to go back and do the trip again! I am hop-

Samara Orkin

ing to be able to go back to Israel again soon.

Another major positive result of going on the Vandy trip is that I constantly run into someone from the trip. We all share a special bond, and just seeing them constantly reminds about how incredible the trip was. I now have many new faces on Vanderbilt's campus that I can relate to in a very unique way. The first Shabbat of the year, most of the girls from the trip met at Hillel and caught up on the rest of our summers and reminisced about our trip of a lifetime.

Hillel Alternative Spring Break

“Now, I can define my Judaism with my own story.”

Growing up, the structures of Judaism never impacted me much. I never had a Rabbi to look up to or to be inspired by; I felt constrained by the constructs imposed by Judaism. For me, Judaism has always been the intangible things – the moments you can't touch and can't explain are the ones that have always moved me the most.

Now, I can define my Judaism with my own story. So here goes: I fly ten hours to Uruguay with 35 of my peers. I travel to a shantytown and in two days build a house by hand with the most primitive of tools. I find myself looking around and am actually envious at the kind of unity and love that the members of this community have for each other. Living in poverty, with no material possessions, I learn from a three-year-old girl named Abi and a seven-year-old boy name Ali, that in all reality, the best things in life truly are free. I learn from their 27 year-old single mom, who's also



raising a baby and running a nursery for the kids of the village, exactly what is important in this world. My group and I dedicate the house to them, and go on our way.

And then it's Friday. I walk from the hotel to the synagogue and look around; in Montevideo, Uruguay, for the first time all trip, I feel at home. For the next hour, I am no longer a Gringo American – I am a Jew, just like everyone else in that room. This overwhelming sense of normality and consistency is what really hits me hard. Sure, the sermon is in Spanish, but every prayer, every song, every dance... they are all the same. And when the services conclude, just like at home, everyone walks around, shaking each other's hands, wishing them "Shabbat Shalom." In that moment, I feel secure being Jewish, knowing that anywhere I go in the world, there will be a synagogue with old men in the middle, the gossiping ladies, and

Nate Degroot

the scampering children, just like at home.

I built a house for a Uruguayan family and hopefully gave them a little bit of hope and a chance at a future. And I was rewarded with the most spiritually moving experience of my life. While I can't necessarily articulate the connection between mitzvot and spirituality, I can certainly feel it. I know for a fact that without the house building earlier in the week, my Friday night services in Uruguay would not have been nearly as stirring. And without attending Friday night services, there would have been something missing in the house-building. But with both of those combined, I have never felt more Jewish in my life. I am not telling you to do the Hillel trip next year (although you probably should), I am simply telling my story. I am telling you how I felt. And above all, I am urging you to find your own story. Define your own Judaism!

Nate Degroot is again going on Hillel Spring Break this year. He will serve as the Student Trip Coordinator on this year's trip to Rio de Janeiro . This year Vanderbilt Hillel will bring over 30 people to Rio, more than Hillel group.

Class of 2009

Class of 2009, listen up! During our four years at Vanderbilt we have seen so many wonderful changes happen at Hillel. During our freshman year we saw the addition of a conservative service. Back then, we could barely make a minyan! Now Hillel is working on having Reform, Conservative and Orthodox services every Shabbat! Remember the first Falafel at Midnight, the first Israel Festival, the first catered Shabbat meal? The changes Hillel has made since our first year have been incredible. The staff, the programming, the

strong student involvement, and all the student trips amaze me year after year.

Sadly there was not a Freshman Board when we started here and because of that our class is not as close as others at Hillel, but we can change that this year. Ilana Blumenfeld-Gantz and I were eating lunch at Grins one day, and thought about what we could do to give back a way for us to be remembered for years to come. Class of 2009, join with us to give back! A Senior Gift seemed like the perfect idea. The gift should be what Hillel needs and wants, but also will

Brittney Fishman

gives us an opportunity to bond. Let's make some memories, put together some programs, and leave a gift that will last through all of our future alumni reunions. If you think of any ideas, anything Hillel may need, or anything gift you think would be particularly meaningful, let us know. We can find a way to give it together! Join the Facebook group and get involved before you graduate. We look forward to working with you! We hope that this act will encourage other classes to give back to Vanderbilt Hillel as they say good-bye to college life.

'Dores for Israel

'Dores for Israel, Vanderbilt's pro-Israel organization, works to promote Israel on campus both culturally and politically. 'Dores is a relatively new organization, and throughout my time at Vandy, I have had the privilege of watching it grow into what it is today. Alongside the growth of Hillel, 'Dores has grown tremendously, attracting students of all years with all sorts of interests.

As President of 'Dores, I am very proud of what we have accomplished so far this year. In early September, we hosted Falafel at

Midnight, serving free falafel to students out and about on a Saturday night and attracted nearly 300 students! We have also done a make-your-own-hummus night. 'Dores for Israel and Vanderbilt AIPAC partnered with Vanderbilt Student Government to host a debate-watching party for the first Presidential debate. Our goal was to impress upon students the importance of the upcoming election, both in a sense of how it affects us as Americans, and how it affects other countries such as Israel.

Michelle Peck

I'm very excited about the rest of our semester, which will include a Krav Maga class (an Israeli martial art) as well as an Israel Lecture Series, in which group members will have the opportunity to discuss anything Israel with Vandy professors. Everyone is welcome to become a member, and I hope to witness the continued growth of this organization!

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Tuesdays at Hillel

"Tuesdays at Hillel" is an exciting new addition to our programming at Hillel this year. Our goal behind this new program is to have a weekly event, planned by the Hillel Program Board, to encourage engagement for all types of students.

Board members collaborated to come up with a program each week that reflects what we feel the Jewish students at Vander-

bilt are looking for. We, as an entire board, feel like these programs will give students a different kind of connection to our Hillel. Some of our Tuesday programs this semester have been a Belmont debate watching party, finger painting and fondue, tie-dyeing Hillel t-shirts, and trivia night. This first semester of "Tuesdays at Hillel" has been so successful that next semester the program board has

Sophie Samuels

decided to do an ongoing series of programs on Tuesdays focused on dialogue with different groups on campus. The first of this series will begin in February with a dialogue with students from the Black Cultural Center. In addition to dialogue programs, the Program Board is also working on co-sponsoring an Inauguration Ball on January 20th.



Students having fun at Tuesdays at Hillel

Hillel Staff

- Ari Dubin, Executive Director*
- Deborah Wilson, Operations Manager*
- Candice Perilstein, Director of Engagement*
- Tessa Wells, Program Coordinator*
- Daniel Shulman, Student Life Coordinator*

Hillel Executive Board

- Jeremy Sandler, President
- Sophie Samuels, Programming Vice President
- Rebecca Kastan, Membership Vice President
- Jessica Solomon, Religious Vice President
- Shira Paul, Religious Vice President
- Lindsey Smith, Communication Vice President
- Nate DeGroot, Marketing Vice President

Program Board

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Leah Benatar | Michelle Peck |
| Leya Edelstein | Theodore Samets |
| Allison Gordon | Goldie Schupak |
| Jacob Hirsch | Eric Walk |
| Jessica Morse | Lauren Zaluda |

I grew up in a very liberal Jewish home just outside of Boston. When I chose Vanderbilt, my mother was concerned that the Jewish student population was not as large as that of many Northeastern colleges and universities. I warned her that, though my religion would always be important to me, I had no plans to be actively involved in Hillel or other Jewish student organizations. I wanted to experience a full integration into the diversity of the Vanderbilt community.

However, once I arrived on campus, I discovered Hillel to be a second home. The Hillel staff was inviting. Tessa, Candice, and Dani watch out for the freshman and provide a nurturing safety net. They are always ready to talk, show the freshman around and help us to get oriented. That made it much easier to manage the first important holidays away from home. At Hillel there's a place for every Jewish student's religious practices, so the customs felt similar, and the smells of Jewish cooking familiar. Hillel is the one place on campus where it is possible to get a good, "home-cooked" meal. Hillel creates a warm, inclusive community, similar to the synagogue in which I was raised.

There are always fun and interesting activities. The different themed Shabbat services (such as bluegrass Shabbat, and Rock n' Roll Shabbat) are always entertaining. Other fun events like Fondue and Finger-Painting Night have made it possible to get to know the other Jewish freshman and upperclassmen. I look forward to being able to participate in Hillel's Birthright trip to Israel with my Jewish friends and the Spring Break trip to Rio. These events will bring me even closer to my Jewish peers, which would have been more difficult without Hillel's presence on campus. Hillel, with its prominence and availability has made my transition to college much smoother and my Jewish life in college much richer.

A Year in Review, continued

student leaders organizing and providing programs on Tuesday nights for our students to participate in. We had incredible attendance for our High Holiday services and dinners, where nearly 400 students came together at the Student Life Center to celebrate the beginning of the Jewish New Year. For Homecoming weekend, students and staff worked together in holding an Alumni Gala, where Vanderbilt Jewish Alumni came together. For many alumni, it was their first time walking into the Ben Schulman Center for Jewish Life, and left our building unbelievably impressed with the significant leaps and bounds our Jewish community has made. Our Shabbat services and dinners are still a popular place for undergraduates and graduates to greet the Sabbath and enjoy themselves on Friday nights. And while we have grown so much in our involvement and community members, we have always stuck to what has always been important to us

as Jewish students on the Vanderbilt campus. This is the energy that has flourished throughout the Vanderbilt campus and made our students proud to be Jewish at Vanderbilt University.

And as we move forward into the next semester, this powerful energy will continue to sustain its vivacity and excitement. Conversations have started about collaborating with other diverse student organizations in a program celebrating all three holidays of December. Over thirty people will go to Rio de Janeiro for the spring break to become culturally immersed in the South American's Jewish population and perform rewarding hours of service in the local communities. Our Tuesdays at Hillel programs will serve to seek out everyone from Vanderbilt University to start important and intellectual dialogue about ideas and issues that are significant in our community. Our staff has started recruitment for future student leaders and a special Birthright-Taglit trip to Israel after the school year. Overall, this



Freshmen girls atr Shabbat.

is a golden era for the Vanderbilt Hillel community and a proud moment to be a Jewish student at Vanderbilt University. And while things grow and change at Hillel one thing remains the same- we are a welcoming and loving community and that is the thing I am most proud of as President.