



The Hillel Shofar

The Newsletter for Hillel at Virginia Tech

May 2005
Volume II, Issue 2

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Save the date!

Jewish Cinema South

comes to Virginia Tech on
November 9-13, 2005.

We will present between three to five screenings of a variety of outstanding films - features and documentaries - that explore the Jewish experience.

Whenever possible, filmmakers, scholars, or film subjects will be on hand for discussion following the showings.

Film Highlights of the festival will include

"Paperclips"

"West Bank Story"

"Columbia"

Closing reception with Rick Recht Band.

Elie Wiesel, Holocaust Survivor, Speaks at Tech

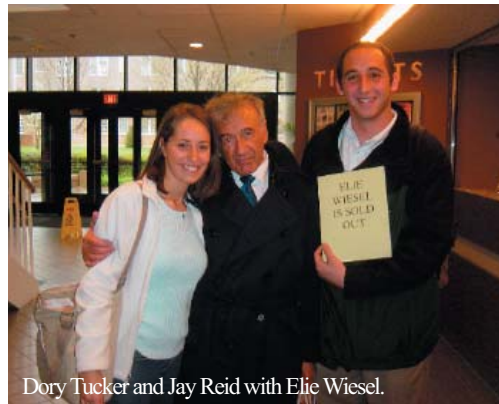
Written by Jay Reid

April 13th 2005 was a night unlike any other in Blacksburg, Virginia. Students, faculty, and 3000 others were fortunate to hear the words and wisdom of Professor Elie Wiesel. This event was special in so many ways and this was evident in the crowd that attended. For the first time, Burruss Auditorium was sold out for a speaking event. A rumor circulated that tickets were even being scalped outside the auditorium.

Professor Wiesel's day begun with a student led question and answer session. These students represented many different departments and organizations from the Uni-

versity and some phenomenal questions were asked. The questions ranged in topic from what have people learned from the Holocaust to international war crimes, and even the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Professor Wiesel also met with the local news media and several other important Hokies including President of Virginia Tech, Charles Steger. Shortly after 7 PM, Virginia Tech was introduced to the 1986 Nobel Prize winner.

As the keynote speaker of Holocaust Awareness Week 2005, Professor Wiesel spoke on the theme of the week- 'Against Indifference.'



Dory Tucker and Jay Reid with Elie Wiesel.

Hot Campuses

Virginia Tech, Towson and Georgia among the universities attracting greater interest from Jewish students.

When Jay Reid applied to Virginia Tech five years ago, his parents worried that there wouldn't be enough of a Jewish community.

When Samara Kuhn applied last year, her sense of the school was completely different. "I saw that there were 1,200 Jews here, I looked at the [school's] Hillel Web site, talked to people at AEPi," she said, referring to the Jewish fraternity Alpha Epsilon Pi. "I heard [the university was] trying to start a Jewish sorority, so it seemed like it was kind of progressing."

Five years ago, high school seniors seeking a secular college with an active Jewish life on campus might think of certain private schools — Brandeis, Tufts and Boston University, all in Massachusetts — or state universities such as Binghamton, Rutgers, Michigan and Maryland.

Today they're also considering schools like Virginia Tech, Towson University in Maryland and the University of Georgia.

These schools, and dozens of others across the country, have become increasingly attractive to Jewish students.

"I remember going to services and there would be three people, including myself," Mara Seidel, a Virginia Tech junior, recalled of her first year at the school. Now the school's Hillel services get about 30 to 40 students.

The Jewish student population is growing at schools like Virginia Tech because as the children of baby boomers come of age, admission requirements for colleges have become more stringent.

Read the full text of this article in the Press section at www.hillel.org.vt.edu.

Tzedek at Virginia Tech

Written by Samara Kuhn



Being involved with Hillel at Virginia Tech is a great way to meet other Jewish young adults, have people to attend Shabbat dinner and services with, and find an outlet for learning and leadership. But an important aspect of Judaism that some tend to overlook is "tzedek," meaning "service, charity, and righteous action."

As the 2005-2006 Vice President of Tzedek at VT's Hillel, it is my goal to increase student involvement in community service, social action, and other progressive programs that aim to better our world - Tikkun Olam.

A recent visit to Hillel's annual Spitzer Forum on Public Policy has yielded me countless ideas, resources, and contacts to better our local chapter. My main initiative this year is through an organization called MAZON: a Jewish Response to Hunger. Having recently partnered with Hillel International,

MAZON interns have been appointed on campuses around the country to promote activities that increase awareness of & action towards the epidemic

of hunger. As one of 7 official MAZON interns, I am responsible for holding one small program a month and one larger program a semester. A committee has already been formed of Hillel members that have expressed concern over this growing global issue, but more students are certainly encouraged to help out. Some of our projects include "Movie & a Mitzvah" during Holocaust Awareness Week in April, helping at local food pantries, and visiting websites whose sponsors donate food to underprivileged nations by our simply clicking a button.

Community service does not have to be time consuming, difficult, or boring; one must simply find a cause that is important to them and recognize our responsibility as Jewish people to help those in need. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has" (Margaret Mead). For more information on Hillel's stance on tzedek and ways you can help, please visit <www.tzedekhillel.org>.

Judaic Studies Classes Fall 2005

Endowed in 1996, the Malcolm and Diane Rosenberg Program in Judaic Studies offers students the opportunity to explore, examine, and critically engage the rich and multifaceted history, religion, and culture of the Jewish people. As members of a community that has crossed a number of borders and cultures, the Jews have served as transmitters of texts and ideas, as agents of cultural and intellectual cross-fertilization and innovation. Judaic culture has significantly contributed to Western and other civilizations.

JUD 1104: Hebrew I

Fundamentals of Modern Hebrew language with emphasis on grammar, reading, composition, and conversation. For students with no prior knowledge of the language.

JUD 2134: Jewish History and Cultural Heritage

A thematic and historical introduction to ancient, medieval, and modern Judaism, up to the founding of the State of Israel. Themes will include monotheism, exile, mysticism, Kabbala, Hasidism, anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and Judaism in Israel and America

JUD 2414: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Introduction to the academic study of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament); a variety of scholarly approaches to the Bible, including historical-critical, literary, and gender studies. Emphasis on developing skills in critical thinking, reading, and writing about the Bible.

JUD 4974: Independent Study

Calendar for Fall 2005	
July 18-29	Orientation in Squires
August 21	Ice Cream Party in Squires
August 22	Board Meeting
August 26	Welcome Freshman Program
August 28	Shabbat Dinner
	Welcome Picnic at Duckpond
September 2	Student Organizational Showcase
September 9	Shabbat Dinner
September 16	Shabbat
September 18	Student Faculty Friends of Hillel Dinner
September 23	Shabbat Dinner
October 2	Erev Rosh HaShana/
October 3-4	Rosh HaShana
October 7	Shabbat Dinner
October 12	Erev Yom Kippur
October 13	Yom Kippur
October 17	Erev Sukkot
October 18-23	Dinner in the Sukka
October 26	Simchat Torah
October 28	Shabbat Dinner
November 6-9	Jewish Cinema South
November 18	Shabbat Dinner
November 2	Shabbat Dinner
November 16	Shabbat Dinner

Hillel Officers

Mara Seidel	President
Danica Horrell	Co-President
Sean White	Past President
Samara Kuhn	Co-Vice President
Jessica Stein	Co-Vice President
Mariah Clarke	Treasurer
Becky Porter	Secretary
Allison Utterman	Grant Writer
Daniel Gussman	Member at Large
Josh Chapman	Member at Large
Jaime Leiner	Public Relations
Stephanie Bissell	Programs
	AEPi Liason
Jordan Effron	SGA Representative
Josh Eckstein	Web Master
Laura	Newsletter Editor
Sue Kurtz	Director

Advisory Board

Nick Kornblith	Board Chair
Steve Jacobs	Secretary
Phil Cohen	Treasurer
Alicia Cohen	VT Liason
Melanie Dankowicz	BJCC Liason

Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi

by Erica Mair

Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi (colony), affectionately known to its members as Sigma, is the first Jewish interest sorority on the Virginia Tech campus. It strives to meet the social needs of Jewish females on campus while at the same time forming close relationships with the brothers of Alpha Epsilon Pi as well as members of Hillel. Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi, originally Sigma Sigma Pi, first obtained its Organizational affiliations nationally in Fall 2003.

Since its Sigma Sigma Pi days that began three years ago, the sorority has tripled in size and holds bright prospects for growth and success at Virginia Tech. At the end of fall 2004, Sigma went from interest

group to colony status, and is now slated to become a full chapter in the fall 2005. The ladies of Sigma have participated in many activities together such as weekly lunches, bowling, trips to windrock, and ladies nights. By their involvement in Sigma, sisters have forged strong bonds of friendship that will last a lifetime. No other organization on the Virginia Tech campus offers this valuable opportunity of Jewish sisterhood to female



students. Sigma hopes to continue to expand its membership and provide this invaluable experience to future students. For more information regarding Sigma, please e-mail sigma-aeppi@vt.edu

Alpha Epsilon Pi Organizes Kiddush Cup

Alpha Epsilon Pi recently held its second annual Kiddush Cup on Saturday, April 9th. While the weather did not prove to be as inviting as it had been the previous year, success was achieved in terms of both attendance and brotherhood.

Several aspects of the Kiddush Cup had changed from last year. In the previous year the fraternity had rented the go karts from Fun Challenge, a facility in Christiansburg. This year, however, Alpha Epsilon Pi decided

to purchase 5 go karts, one of which was attained through the help of Nick Komblith. These go karts were used for the event and will be used for the annual philanthropy every year.

The Kiddush Cup was advertised heavily with sign up stations posted outside D2 and Owens Dining facilities. In addition, brothers Sam Renaut and Vic Kasoff spoke with several Greek organizations promoting the event. The event received press from the

Collegiate Times and a full page write up in the Roanoke Times!

The Kiddush Cup was considered last year by AEPi nationals to be the most original philanthropy out of all the chapters across the country. The event itself is unique from other philanthropy's in that it is open to the entire Blacksburg community and not just the Greek community. Throughout the course of Saturday, young children, teenagers, college students, and parents all stopped by to participate. Every one of them had a great time.

Key to a Jewish Boy's Heart is Through His Stomach

by Jay Reid

Many people associate Friday with hanging out, crazy parties and overall a fun experience. I personally can totally relate with that after experiencing all that Virginia Tech has to offer for nearly 4 years. However, for a group of 50 students, our Friday night starts differently to a slight degree.

When classes are finished Friday afternoon, I like many other students, try and catch up on sleep with a little nap. I don't sleep too long for my Friday plans, like other Jewish



students at Virginia Tech, begins at 6 PM. Our night has just begun with what some consider the perfect transition from a stressful week to a great weekend.

These students, the active Jewish body of Virginia Tech, have gathered at Hillel to bring in Shabbat. Unlike

your atypical Shabbat we are all accustomed to, this Shabbat is a little different. After a long week of academics, it is great to come and see your friends and catch up on the events of the week over a nice meal. All college students alike can appreciate a free meal, so we all make sure to eat our fair share. Besides, what Jewish mother could stand to see her son go hungry?

After dinner, we proceed to go upstairs and devout the next hour in praying. The candles are lit and the Kiddush & Ha-Motzi are sung. A Virginia Tech tradition that keeps services fresh

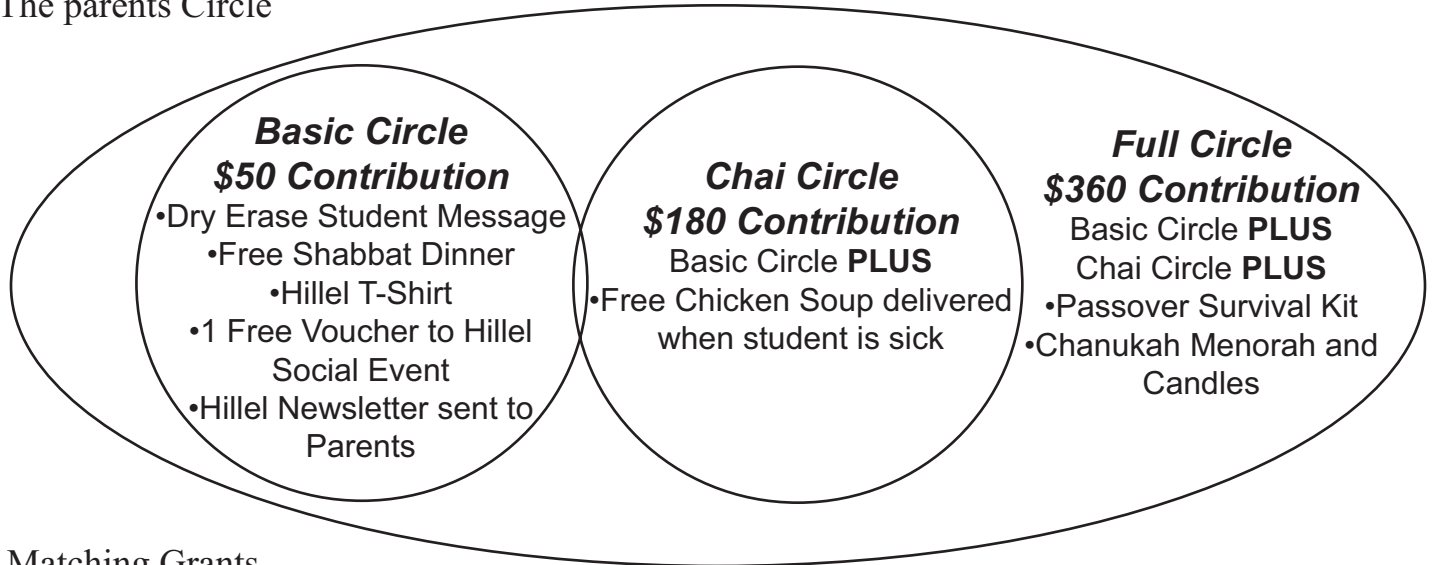
is that services are led by different members of Hillel, giving each Friday night a nice variety with different customs/traditions of prayers. All the students can appreciate the importance and meaning of the Sabbath, but in the same sense we keep it fun. Some nights, two members of Hillel play guitars and sing songs. Also, if a joke is cracked we can all chuckle without worrying about some older congregant shooting you a mean look (if you're like the Reid boys, its happened a 1000 times).

Shabbat services provide us Jewish students a sense of relaxation where we can put aside all of our worries from the past week and enjoy the company of fellow Jewish students. Services conclude for the evening and we all say our goodbyes. For many of us though, we will be seeing each other quite shortly, because at this point the night is still young and we all are looking to make the most out of our short time at Virginia Tech.

Partner with Hillel

Hillel at VT is continuously growing and expanding but without your help these changes are not possible. This year there are two ways you can support your Hillel at VT and as always any gift is completely tax deductible.

The parents Circle



Matching Grants

Hillel International

Due to a generous grant from Hillel International, Virginia Tech Hillel is able to have a budget which serves students through a full-time Director and part-time student help. Through this, Hillel at VT will be able to develop more creative programs and increase student engagement as well as become a visible campus organization sought after as a partner in programming and leadership throughout the university. In order to maintain our funding, over the next three years Hillel at VT must work to be independent of the Hillel International Center grant.

HILLEL OF GREATER WASHINGTON

Hillel of Greater Washington has also generously offered Hillel at VT an opportunity for matching funds to help us expand. All donations given before January of 2005 will be matched up to \$2000 from the Hillel of Greater Washington.

Phone: 540-951-2060

Website: www.hillel.org.vt.edu

Email: Hillel@vt.edu

Hillel

My family/I would like to help Hillel at VT become a stronger organization.

I/We would like to be a matching gift donor OR/AND

Please add us to the Parent's Circle: (check one) Basic Circle Chai Circle Full Circle

Enclosed is a check (payable to Hillel at Virginia Tech) for \$ _____

Parent Name: _____ phone: _____

Address: _____

Student Name: _____ phone/cell: _____

Student Residence: _____

Student E-mail: _____ Parent E-mail _____

A Tree of Life for Virginia Tech

Written by Greg Touchton

On a chill winter afternoon in February, several students, faculty, and staff met to accept the donation of a young Arborvitae, or Western Red Cedar. This Tree-of-Life (Arborvitae) was given by Dr. Greg Eaton of the Horticulture department to show the importance of trees in cultures. As part of Hillel's celebration of Tu B'Shvat (Birthday of Trees) a small ceremony was held. Students, Faculty, and Community alike spoke of the significance of trees.

Hillel was happy to receive the gift of the Thuja plicata and has coordinated with the University Architect to plant the tree at the site of the ceremony. Because the arborvitae has a lifetime of over 1000 years it is expected to be a meeting place for Hillel students for years to come.

Hillel Members

Play Dating Game

By Matt Teich

On Saturday the 5th of February, Hillel co-sponsored an event with Alpha Epsilon Pi. This event was Singled Out; a dating game in which male and female contestants picked a date from the pool of eligible singles.

Each contestant had answered a few questions about their personal tastes, and after they eliminated some singles from the pool, with a few general questions, the singles would be asked the same questions the contestant had answered previously. If they singles got the answer correct, they would take a step forward. The first single to reach the contestant won a date. Overall there were four "couples" who had dinner at Sharkey's.

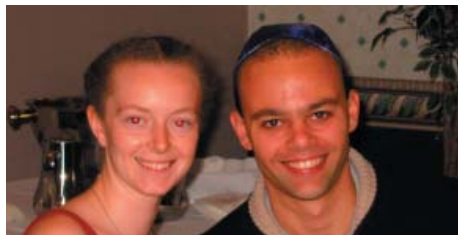


Beth Soref.

Meet Our First JCSC, Beth Soref

Thanks to generous support from Malcolm and Diane Rosenberg, Hillel's Jewish Campus Service Corps Fellow will work on campus helping students explore and celebrate their Jewishness.

"I am so excited to be Virginia Tech Hillel's JCSC fellow. I feel so welcomed by the community. I am looking forward to having the opportunity to meet the students, create engaging programs, and work with you at Virginia Tech".



Congratulations, Graduates.

Hillel at Virginia Tech wishes you good luck in your future endeavors! Please keep in touch! All the best,

Cantor Praises Virginia Tech for Hosting Elie Wiesel

Washington-Congressman Eric Cantor (VA-7) praised Virginia Tech for hosting Nobel Peace Prize recipient and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel in April during its annual Holocaust Awareness Week.

"I commend Virginia Tech, particularly its Hillel student leaders and Holocaust Awareness Committee members, for its efforts to bring internationally recognized speaker and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel to its campus," said Congressman Cantor. "The impact of Elie Wiesel's campus visit, combined with the program activities of Virginia Tech's Hillel and Judaic Studies programs, increases cultural awareness and understanding for all of us in the Commonwealth of Virginia."

"Virginia's 7th District is home to over 15,000 Virginia Tech alumni, who, even after graduation, still closely follow campus activities. This visit will no doubt be an enriching experience for all affiliated with Virginia Tech."

Kurtz Awarded

Advisor of the Year

For her role in increasing the visibility of Hillel on campus, Director Sue Kurtz was recognized at the 13th Annual University Student Leadership Awards on April 27.

We want to hear from you!

We would appreciate information about what you have been doing since leaving Virginia Tech. Please send material to hillel@vt.edu or Hillel, PO Box 708, Blacksburg, VA 24063.

Name: _____

Degree/Year: _____ Email: _____

Occupation/Title: _____

Professional Duties: _____

Recent Achievements: _____



Virginia Tech Hillel
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Blacksburg, VA 24063

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Spring '05 in Pictures



*Passover Seder underwritten by Linda Shapiro and Morton Cassover.
Purim celebration made possible with support from a Soref Grant and Hillel International.*