

# Hillel

Winter 2021

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Dear Friends of UVM Hillel,

Even through all of the challenges of this past year, we have truly had a remarkable semester at UVM. **Our Hillel was one of very few in the country to have a safe, in-person semester for our community of students.** Thanks to every individual's commitment to the Green and Gold Promise, we are ready to welcome students back to Burlington and back to Hillel.

We have focused our efforts on supporting one-on-one connections, small group pods, and virtual programs to ensure that every student has access to Jewish community. By offering safe, in-person opportunities and virtual programs, we've been able to build a strong connection between Jewish students in Burlington and around the world. You'll learn more about some of those initiatives in our Winter Quarterly.

Stay in touch and stay safe! I look forward to seeing you again soon.

Matt Vogel, Executive Director



To learn more about UVM's Green and Gold Promise, visit [uvm.edu/deanofstudents/green-and-gold-promise](http://uvm.edu/deanofstudents/green-and-gold-promise).



# WinterFest

We often hear that UVM Hillel is a 'home away from home' for our students. Even though they left campus at the end of November to complete their semesters virtually, we didn't let that stop us from providing opportunities for them to stay connected to their UVM Jewish community. Our staff and student leaders agreed that December break was an important time for us to continue being there for our students, regardless of where in the world they were located. Not only did we strive to engage our students, but we encouraged and invited their families and other Hillel friends to join so they could get a peek into life as a Jewish student at UVM.

We launched our December break efforts by bringing together our campus community to celebrate Hanukkah. Our student leaders planned a variety of candle lightings, virtual cooking classes, and social events. It was a special experience being joined by students, parents, grandparents, siblings, and community members as we shared the magic of Hillel and Hanukkah with everyone! The staff worked diligently to reach out to every student who participated in a Hillel event during the fall semester to check-in and see how their break was going. Our very own Springboard Fellow, Corey, hosted a virtual challah bake with his mom. Corey worked closely with student leaders to organize this program where he invited us into his kitchen while continuing his efforts of building a strong UVM Jewish community. You can see the final product and learn how to make your own Challah on our Instagram page ([www.instagram.com/uvm-hillel](https://www.instagram.com/uvm-hillel), @UVMHillel).

As students grew eager to return to campus in February, our staff worked with them to plan WinterFest, a multi-session program in partnership with Hillel International. WinterFest was Hillel's first ever Winter festival of Jewish learning designed specifically to bring light to our students during the darkness of winter. Through small group conversations they were able to learn about Shabbat through crafts and build deeper relationships with one another. All of these December break initiatives helped our students strengthen their connection to the Jewish community at UVM and their Jewish identity.



It was a special experience being joined by students, parents, grandparents, siblings, and community members as we shared the magic of Hillel and Hanukkah with everyone!



**Our cohort of students made their own Shabbat wine glasses during one of our WinterFest sessions. We mailed them all the materials needed and by the end of the four virtual sessions they had made all of their own Shabbat kits!**

# Hillel College Fair

With college tours and campus visits disrupted by COVID-19, Hillel International built an opportunity for UVM Hillel to engage with prospective students, the first ever virtual Hillel College Fair. We partnered with the UVM Admissions office to host two Zoom sessions where staff and student leaders were able to meet with nearly 100 prospective UVM students and parents. We also received contact information for 100 additional interested students who were unable to attend our sessions for whom we've been able to act as campus resource.

During our time together with these students and families, we felt it was very important that we allow them to hear what Jewish life was like on our campus during the coronavirus pandemic. We used the time to show them that even though things may have looked a little different, we were still able to create a strong community on campus through safe in-person and virtual opportunities that allowed our students to connect and celebrate their Jewish identities. Our diverse student leaders shared their firsthand experiences as Catamounts and what they loved most about UVM and Jewish life on campus.

When asked about this program, Sarah Ladd '22 shared, *"I love UVM; the people and the opportunities that have allowed me to find a home here. I hope to help future Catamounts discover their love of UVM while finding the community and connection to other students that I have been so fortunate to have. Students are so active and involved on campus, it is inspiring! Jewish life is a small family within the greater UVM community, no one is ever alone. Hillel has greatly shaped my college experience and I want to give back to this amazing organization by bringing together future Jewish students and supporting them through their transition to campus."*



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The University of Vermont

**NOV. 22-24**

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High school students need help navigating the world of college admissions now more than ever, with restrictions forcing the cancellation of in-person sessions with admissions officers and campus visits. We took the opportunity to demonstrate our relationship with the admissions office by inviting the Associate Director of Admissions, Christopher Perlono, to join us and speak directly with the potential students and their families. We were able to highlight other institutional connections by having two AdvoCats (campus tour guides) share their unique knowledge and answer campus-specific questions that came up.

Since the College Fair, we have remained a resource and contact on campus to these prospective students and their families. They were all appreciative of our partnership with the admissions office and we look forward to providing other opportunities for prospective and incoming students.

Do you know a high school junior or senior who might be a good fit for UVM? Help them learn more about UVM by referring them to the admissions office! Refer-A-Catamount by visiting [www.bit.ly/UVMRefer](http://www.bit.ly/UVMRefer).



# Class Notes

## Life Beyond Graduation

**'62** – Even after almost 60 years since graduating, **Rabbi Vic Hoffman** retains very warm memories of Hillel during his student years and stresses the importance of Hillel for Jewish students during their college years as a place to explore Jewish life and form their own Jewish identity. After 12 years as a congregational rabbi in New Orleans, he moved to Jerusalem with his wife Hinda and family in 1981, where he became involved with real estate, while maintaining an active affiliation with the Israeli Conservative Movement. Vic has been most impressed with the great expansion of Hillel at UVM, and the number of Jewish students it serves safely on a weekly basis in the new Hillel House (and virtually). Now semi-retired, he looks forward to visiting UVM Hillel and getting a firsthand feel for how campus life and Hillel impact Jewish students.

**'20** – After a wonderful undergraduate experience, **Bonnie Tursky** has remained in Burlington to pursue a master's degree in Speech & Language Pathology at UVM. Originally from Framingham, MA, she feels grateful for the experiences and lifelong connections that the university has provided, which have shaped her life and the person she is now. One of her favorite memories at Hillel was when she had the opportunity to work with other students and staff to organize a Saturday Shabbat experience, complete with Jewish brunch foods, laughter, and joining together as a community. Bonnie appreciates Hillel for providing the space to find her unique voice, discover new interests, and learn more about the person she is and strives to become.

Submit your class notes: [ali@uvmhillel.org](mailto:ali@uvmhillel.org)



**Hillel**  
The University of Vermont  
Hillel Quarterly Winter 2021

## Invest in the Future of Jewish Life

Thanks to a unique partnership with the UVM Foundation; alumni, parents, family and friends can make a gift to UVM and have 100% of your donation be directed to Hillel. Every one of us holds a special connection to Burlington, Vermont and our UVM community. We invite you to share in the joy of giving to the university. Help make a difference for today's UVM Jewish students so they can make a difference in our world.

Visit [www.uvmhillel.org/donate](http://www.uvmhillel.org/donate) to make your tax deductible gift.