



# from the Center

2008-2009



TOUCHING LIVES | TEACHING LEADERS | TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY

# Celebration!

RABBI JEFFREY A. SUMMIT

**I**N THE *MISHNA*, THE RABBIS TEACH THAT “THE DAY is short” and there is always more work to do. We take these words to heart and work hard to build a vibrant Jewish community on the Tufts campus. That makes it all the more important to recognize and celebrate our accomplishments, the milestones in our lives, the times when extraordinary programming happens on campus. There was a lot to celebrate this year. We began the year with “Shabbat 500,” with more than 500 Tufts students coming together to dance, sing, *daven* and serve hundreds of bowls of matzah ball soup on the Quad. In the spring, more than 800 students celebrated Israel’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at our IFEST. One of the sweetest parts of my work is dancing at weddings. This year, there were two weddings of alumni whose relationships blossomed during their time at Hillel.

For the second year in a row, the University recognized Hillel with the Jumbo Award as the most outstanding organization on the Tufts campus. It was wonderful to celebrate the successful completion of our Program Endowment Campaign, the first pure program endowment of this magnitude established by a Hillel. As we embark on our ambitious goal of doubling the number of students meaningfully engaged in Jewish life on campus, there is much exciting work ahead. Here, we pause to celebrate the achievements of our amazing students, committed Hillel Board Members, generous donors, and passionate staff.

May we continue to go from strength to strength!

PHOTO: BETHANY VERSOY



RABBI SUMMIT TALKS TO STUDENTS HANNAH AUERBACH, A08, JENNY KARO, A10, AND ADAM WOLLSTEIN, A08, DURING THE PROGRAM ENDOWMENT CELEBRATION.

STUDENTS SHOW SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL, MARKING THE 60TH YEAR OF STATEHOOD.



## ISRAEL'S 60TH BIRTHDAY

EVERYONE WALKING ALONG PROFESSORS Row was wowed by a 13-foot-high sculpture constructed out of blue and white balloons emblazoned with "60," as Tufts students celebrated Israel's 60th birthday during our Israel Festival (IFEST) on Friday, April 11. Now in its third year, IFEST offers students the opportunity to share and explore Israeli art, culture and history, and this year attracted more than 800 people. Equally impressive were the 100 volunteers organizing the event, staffing the booths and recruiting participants.

According to IFEST Co-chair, Brooke Ginsberg, A08, this year's primary aim was education. "We wanted people to walk away better informed about Israel," said Ginsberg.

To that end, the Campus Center courtyard was transformed into a *shuk*, an authentic Israeli marketplace, featuring falafel, Israeli salad and baklava. There were educational displays showcasing contributions Israel has made to technology and alternative energy. Reinforcing that Israel is a vibrant democracy, other exhibits presented information about women's rights and gay and lesbian rights in Israeli society. Students, faculty and administrators enjoyed hands-on activities such as making Hebrew identification bracelets and writing letters to Israeli soldiers.

Ginsberg said, "When many people hear 'Israel,' all they think about is conflict. IFEST presents the larger story."

"Visiting Israel is the most effective way to get students connected and more than 140 Tufts students visited Israel this past year through Birthright Israel. But not every student is able to go," said Ginsberg, "With IFEST we can highlight Israeli culture, music, technology and political issues in ways that engage American college students."

Students listened to a live rock band playing Israeli music and ate more than 3,000 falafel. "People are busy with academics throughout the year," Ginsberg said, "IFEST is a way to show support for Israel and at the same time have a lot of fun." HANNAH EHRLICH, A08



## More Than 500 Students Observe Shabbat Across Campus

A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE

**I**MAGINE OVER 500 STUDENTS GATHERING ON CAMPUS TO WELCOME Shabbat, playing Israeli music on the Quad, lighting candles in their apartments, and singing at Tufts Hillel. Last fall I had the pleasure of bringing my 15-year-old son, James, to "SHABBAT 500," whose goal was to bring together 500 Tufts students to celebrate Shabbat. Students chose among Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and yoga meditative services and enjoyed dinner at different venues across campus.

Shabbat is so important in my family and we regularly come together at my sister Rose-Jane's home or mine. I look forward to time with family, saying the blessings together, talking and ending the work week that way.

It was a joy for me to see the same Shabbat spirit infusing the Tufts campus. My son and I first went to the tent on the Quad, where we joined a large group of students eating chicken soup and dancing to klezmer music played by our own Jumbo Knish Factory. The blessings were recited in front of Ballou Hall. I felt very proud to be there.

After enjoying more than our share of matzah ball soup, we walked over to the Granoff Family Hillel Center, where Rabbi Summit greeted us with his welcoming smile. Reform and Conservative services were led by Tufts students and President Bacow gave the D'var Torah!

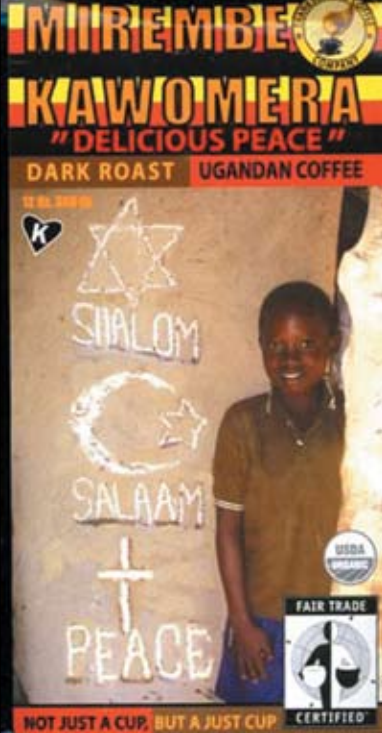
**What I witnessed that night was not only a community observing Shabbat, but Hillel enabling students to enjoy a time-honored tradition in personally meaningful ways.**

After dinner at Hillel, James and I made our way to see my daughter, Sonni, A09, who was celebrating Shabbat with friends at Alpha Epsilon Pi. About 150 students were talking, laughing and enjoying Shabbat dinner. There was a great feeling in the room!

I look forward to Friday night every week. Students at Tufts do also. They know they will enjoy a respite from a rigorous week of academics and a delicious kosher meal in a warm atmosphere full of old and new friends.

We are fortunate that our children are being educated at a university that celebrates diversity. Our children experience Judaism on campus by participating in many of Hillel's unique programs, such as the eco-friendly Tu'Bishvat Seder or the Interfaith Sukkot dinner. I am thrilled that students can go to services and dinner at Hillel or bring Shabbat into their apartments with Hillel's "Shabbat Your Own Way" kits. The Hillel Center is really a home away from home.

Five hundred students observing Shabbat together.... Hillel has come a long way.... and is still growing! ANDREW BENDETSON, TUFTS HILLEL BOARD MEMBER, A81, A09P



## FAIR TRADE COFFEE BRIDGES RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

DIFFERENT BELIEFS AND misunderstandings among people from diverse religious communities contribute to political tension around the world. Yet, in a remote corner of Uganda, Muslims, Jews and Christians live together peacefully. This spring, members of these three communities visited Tufts Hillel to share their story with Tufts students. As part of the Merrin Moral Voices Program, and in collaboration with the Tufts Institute for Global Leadership (IGL), Hillel presented an evening of song, story and photography documenting this unprecedented business venture in which more than 500 Muslim, Jewish and Christian farmers have joined to grow, market and export coffee. Members of the coffee cooperative were awarded the IGL's Jean Mayer Award for their accomplishments and vision.

### SHARING A MORAL VOICE

# Remembering the Holocaust

**I** NEVER ACTUALLY REMEMBER being told that my grandmother survived the Holocaust; I just knew. The first memory I have of learning about my family's past was in elementary school, when my grandmother made a video retelling her experiences. Besides hearing bits and pieces from my dad, I barely knew anything about the war. Whenever I had to do a project on my family or on the Holocaust, I would pull out that video and watch it, noting every detail.

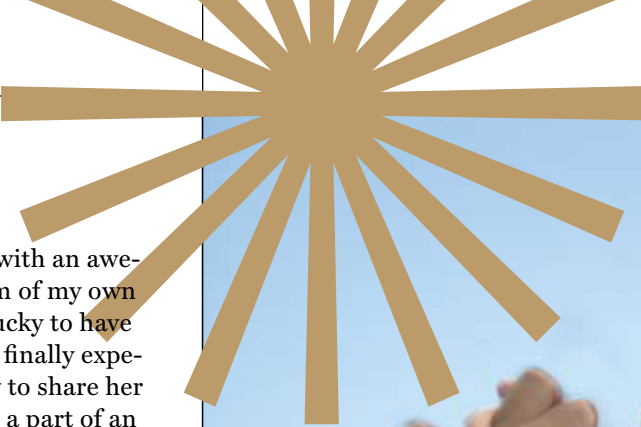
In 2001 what was once only a story became reality when I traveled with my family to Auschwitz. There are no words to describe how it felt to watch my grandmother go back to the place where her parents, siblings, aunts, un-

cles, cousins, nieces, and friends were murdered. I witnessed her strength as she recounted her experiences to her children and grandchildren. With courage and tears, we stood by the crumbling gas chambers and recited the *Mourner's Kaddish* for my lost family I will never know.

I am proud to be active in both the Merrin Moral Voices Program and the Hillel Student Board, providing me with an opportunity to discover and share my family's story. On April 7, 2008, my grandmother, a true hero, spoke at Tufts Hillel. My grandmother, poised and collected, reflected on the tragic loss of six million Jewish people. My grandmother, my hero, shared her experiences at Auschwitz



DURING RECENT FAMILY TRIP, >>  
OLGA SCHUMAN STARES AT  
BARREN BARRACKS AND  
PAINFULLY RECALLS HER YEARS  
AT AUSCHWITZ.



publicly for the first time with an awe-struck, over-crowded room of my own peers. I truly feel lucky. Lucky to have watched my grandmother finally experience some closure, lucky to share her last name, and lucky to be a part of an event with such an important impact on the Tufts community.

My grandmother told me that before the event began, she asked my late grandfather to be there with her, to help her stay strong. At first I was skeptical, but watching my grandmother up at the podium, so beautiful, so calm, so strong, I knew his hand was on her shoulder. Thank you, Grandpa. And thank you, Grandma, for showing us what it means to be a hero. ALEXANDRA SCHUMAN, A09



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE SCHUMAN FAMILY

## BUILDING *B*RIDGES

For the past three years, Tufts Hillel has been the leader in a major initiative to promote Jewish/Muslim/Christian dialogue and education on five university campuses. With substantial funding from the federal government, this project has had a major impact on campus, creating peaceful, productive dialogue in the contentious areas of religion, politics and history. The project culminated with a major conference, *Religious Pluralism at a Time of Extremism: The Campus Responds*, which brought more than 400 people from 26 campuses to Tufts.

For more information about this initiative, please visit [www.tuftspathways.org](http://www.tuftspathways.org)



CULINARY TREATS abound at Hillel. Alex Schuman, A09, joins a group of Happy Challah-ween bakers.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACROSS CONTINENTS

Tufts Hillel's Alternative Breaks offer students once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to travel during winter, spring and summer breaks; opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others while experiencing first hand the traditions and cultures of peoples across the globe. Pictured here is a mural painted by Hillel students and Argentine pre-schoolers during a week-long collaborative trip between Tufts Hillel and the Joint Distribution Committee. This trip was funded, in large part, by Tufts Trustee Emeritus Ed Merrin and his wife Vivian, whose dedication and generosity have supported Shabbat and community service programs at Tufts Hillel for many years.



## Tufts President Lawrence S. Bacow Co-chairs Conference on the University and the Jewish Community

**V**ISIONARIES AND INNOVATORS from academia, philanthropy, journalism and the Jewish world explored the role of the university and the Jewish community during a three day conference in Washington, DC. *Imagining a More Civil Society*, the theme of the March, 2008 Summit organized by Hillel International, could not have been more timely, as civil discourse and freedom of expression are among the most important issues for college campuses worldwide. And, of course, Jewish tradition has long brought together scholarship and civic engagement, in the belief that each benefits the other.

Tufts' substantial presence at the conference spoke to the University's position as a leader in civic engagement and to the cutting-edge programs offered by Tufts Hillel to the entire student body. The conference unequivocally testified to the growing impact of Hillels on campuses nationwide. And most notably, the exceptional relationship between Tufts University and Tufts Hillel, and the shared mission of *Tikkun Olam*, were inspirational to all.



**^** RABBI SUMMIT LEADS PANEL ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT FREE SPEECH WHILE PRESERVING CIVIL DISCOURSE. SECOND FROM RIGHT: LISA COLEMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY, TUFTS UNIVERSITY.



# Tufts Hillel Celebrates Success

ON MAY 1, 2008 TUFTS HILLEL CELEBRATED THE COMPLETION OF A \$6.4 million Program Endowment Campaign to support a broad range of programs promoting Jewish life and learning, arts and culture, interfaith dialogue, social justice, Israel advocacy and Shabbat and holiday observance. The second largest student organization on campus, Tufts Hillel is believed to be the first Hillel to complete an endowment fund of this size strictly dedicated to program support.

The Program Endowment Campaign, chaired by Dan Kraft, A87, Tufts Trustee and Hillel Board Member, exceeded its goal by \$600,000 with the help of a \$750,000 challenge match contributed by Tufts Trustee Joe Neubauer, E63, J90P, and his wife, Jeanette, J90P. Leadership gifts were also received from Dan and Wendy Kraft, Ed and Vivian Merrin, and Hillel Board Member David Rosenberg and his wife Joan.

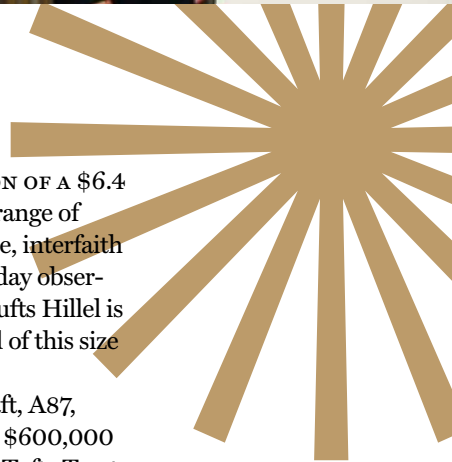
Funds raised through the campaign will support new, and expand existing, programs that benefit not only Tufts' 1,700 Jewish undergraduate and graduate students, but the entire University community.

**“Tufts Hillel enhances Jewish life for all our students while helping to promote something every university wants: active, thoughtful, and responsible college graduates,”** said Dan Kraft.

“If we truly wish to have an effect on our University, on our community, and on the world, it is essential to partner with others. We are grateful to the many donors who have collaborated to make this campaign a success,” said Rabbi Summit, Tufts Hillel Neubauer Executive Director, as he personally thanked Hillel Board Members and endowment fund donors.

When asked how he would describe the spirit of Hillel now, having attained this significant endowment, Rabbi Summit explains,

“Our goal over the years has been to build a vibrant Jewish community where students celebrate, argue, eat, sing and learn in a welcoming atmosphere and where Jewish students appreciate and understand their heritage at the same time they are engaged with the entire Tufts community. Hillel has made a real contribution to campus life at Tufts. Now we are poised to impact so many more students as a result of this program endowment.”



RABBI SUMMIT THANKS JOE AND JEANETTE NEUBAUER FOR ESTABLISHING THE NEUBAUER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORSHIP.

MATT COHEN, A08 AMY SPITALNICK, A08 AND NEIL DIBIASE, A09 PRESENT PERSONAL STORIES OF HOW HILLEL HAS TRANSFORMED THEIR COLLEGE YEARS TO MORE THAN 150 FRIENDS AND DONORS AT THE MAY 1, 2008 ENDOWMENT CELEBRATION.



## MAKING UP FOR *L*OST TIME

**When I was thirteen, I watched many of my friends complete their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, but I didn't join them. In fact, I did not even know I was Jewish when my family came to the United States from the former Soviet Union when I was six years old.**

**After entering Tufts last year, I began to think a lot more about my religious identity. What did it mean for me to be Jewish? What did it mean to be born in a country where my family was denied rights because of their religion? As I thought about these questions, I became involved in Hillel and attended a variety of programs. But I wanted to do more. This year, at the age of nineteen, I chose to become a Bat Mitzvah along with three of my peers, exactly thirteen years after learning I was Jewish. In Hillel's adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah program, I learned how to read Torah and lead services for my fellow students. I went to educational programs and studied with Rabbi Summit. I feel that becoming a Bat Mitzvah marks the beginning of my life as a Jewish woman, a woman who has solidified her Jewish identity. As we celebrated together with family and friends, it felt like I was making up for lost time.** KIRA MIKITYANSKAYA, A11

## Personally speaking...

**T**HE TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE IS A DIFFICULT ONE FOR many students; I was no exception. When I first came to Tufts, I explored a number of different organizations. It wasn't until I discovered Tufts Hillel that the pieces really began to fit together. It all started with Friday evening Shabbat services, a relaxing time at the end of an often hectic week.

I also wanted to do something that mattered to others. It was during Holocaust Commemoration Week during the spring of freshman year that I began to get more involved with Hillel. Later, as Social Action Chair of the Hillel Student Board, I organized several initiatives, including programs that brought students to volunteer at nursing homes and food banks. Having gotten a taste of the many service oriented opportunities available at Hillel, I was really drawn in by the compelling work of Hillel's Merrin Moral Voices Program. All of a sudden, I found myself developing a new program.

**Inspired by Tikkun Olam, a Hebrew phrase that means "repairing the world," I created an after-school mentoring program for Boston's immigrant youth. With Hillel's support, a new program—Hillel Helps High Schoolers—took root in the Somerville community.**

Tufts students are matched with local high school students in need of assistance with college applications, essay writing, financial aid forms and standardized tests. The program's mission is to provide the tools needed by at-risk youth that will support them as they apply to college and hopefully go on to higher education.

As Tufts students, we are fortunate. Most of us had a great deal of support as we navigated the college application process. Now we have the responsibility to give back. And most importantly, my experiences with Hillel Helps High Schoolers has made me realize that by making a difference in the lives of others, I have made an even greater difference in my own. I am confident that given the opportunity, students can be catalysts for social change and community empowerment. MATT COHEN, A08



MATT COHEN, A08, WAS PRESENTED WITH THE "HEROES AMONG US" AWARD FROM THE BOSTON CELTICS FOR HIS MENTORING PROGRAM. HE IS PICTURED WITH JOE JOHNSON OF THE ATLANTA HAWKS (LEFT) AND PAUL PIERCE OF THE BOSTON CELTICS (RIGHT).



# MAZAL TOV

Many wonderful things happen at Tufts Hillel...and sometimes people even meet and get married! This past spring Rabbi Summit officiated at the wedding of Hillel Alumni Laura (Israel) Sinrod, A04, and Daniel Sinrod, A03, who met at Tufts Hillel.

BUILDING A SUKKAH in the center of the campus Quad is just one of the ways Hillel shares Jewish tradition and culture with the entire Tufts community.



## SPECIAL THANKS

### MELAMDIM THOSE WHO TEACH

Faculty and Staff Contributors  
to the Annual Fund

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# MANY THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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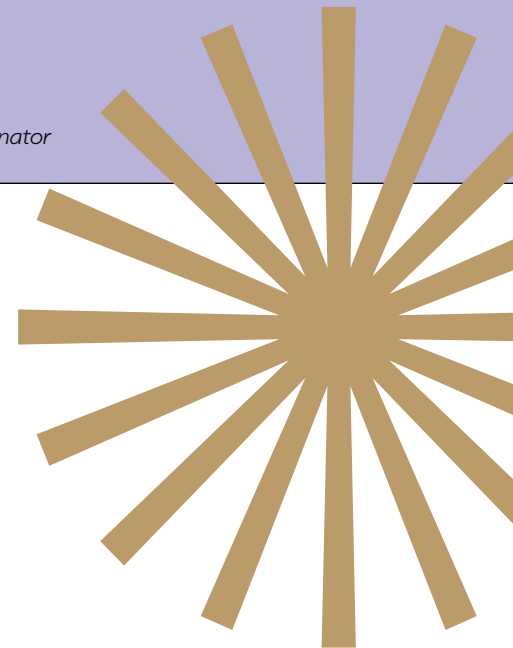
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