



Spring 2018 Newsletter

Meet Our Team



Kristy Collins
Executive Director
Hannah Elbaz
Student President



Engagement Interns

Carly Silverstein
Sophia Schmerling
Dellyssa Weingarten
Je'Meshia Wade

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Susan S. Mintzes, Ed.D.

Rabbi Sara Abrams
Rabbinic Advisor
Josh Kaplan
Hillel Advisor

Cheers to New Beginnings

by Carly Silverstein

For Lag B'Omer, graduating senior, Josh Katzki, offered his backyard for our end of the year event. Students were welcomed by a crackling bonfire, a huge lawn of laid out picnic blankets, a steamy nacho bar and a stage for senior speeches to commemorate the twelve beloved seniors who were celebrating their last chapter here at Chico State.

Hillel incorporated a DIY program from Reboot called ReBar to inspire seniors to recreate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah speeches and share how Hillel has impacted our adult lives by choosing to embrace our Jewish identity; either affirming or reaffirming our core Jewish values as they are relevant to us today. As a graduating senior, the jitters of graduation are at an all-time high. The bittersweet thoughts of starting a fresh chapter and leaving this special town we have called home for the past four years, constantly buzzes around in our minds.

When I first came to Chico, Judaism was not a prominent aspect of my life. Life growing up revolved around sports and school and religion often took a backseat; only celebrating big holidays with my extended family. However, once I went on Birthright and began my journey here at Hillel, that was forever changed. I started holding my head higher and embracing the fact that I was Jewish and not Jew-ish. It was incredible listening to the seniors and hearing the vastly diverse backgrounds we all came from and how each of our roads crossed paths. Kristy helped each of us grow and develop into people who would leave our grandparents kvelling, while always making sure to bring us back to our Jewish roots while reminding us that each Jewish journey is an individual process.

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"Being an intern completely changed my perspective on Jewish life here at Chico State which taught me that when a group with shared interests get together, amazing things can happen, like Freshman Fridays." -Tom Sciara



Kristy and Hannah at the Senior Send Off Event

"Working closely with students is the best part of being a Hillel director, my message is clear, we each have a unique story which brought us to this moment, now let's find a way to deepen your connection to Judaism emotionally, professionally and geographically!"

Message from the Director

by Kristy Collins

She did it again! What, have another baby or are you talking about Hannah Elbaz our amazingly talented Student Administrative Assistant? As if I didn't think I was busy enough, two under two brings life to another level of crazy! Luckily we have endless support from family, friends and our Hillel community with people like Hannah. Hannah again led our Hillel during my maternity leave, taking on many more administrative tasks as well as handling all the requirements of our Hillel grant initiatives and programs.

During my absence, she organized several large projects with the help of our team members. They implemented a national Hillel survey, gathering the required number of students to determine our overall impact on campus. (Results will be revealed in the fall.) She inspired thirteen students to join our Birthright trip this summer and organized a dozen programs per month, keeping our Hillel active and vibrant! I am happy to be back part-time through the summer to continue building Jewish leadership roles for students while focusing on resources to expand our organization here at Chico State!



The Collins' Family welcomed Andrew John in February

A Birthright Adventure

by Hannah Elbaz

Part of Chico Hillel's mission is to foster a Jewish story for those who walk through our doors. We continually strive to meet this goal by providing members with the opportunity to explore and build an enduring relationship with Israel and to examine and reinforce their cultural roots.

Toward this end, very year, Chico Hillel sends students on Birthright, a ten-day free trip to Israel. This year we will be sending thirteen Chico State students on an immersive trip to Israel. Three of the students will be extending their trip to participate in ONWARD where they will live in Israel for the summer along with other peers from the SF Bay Area and participate in an internship in Israel based on their chosen fields of study. Two of the students are new to Hillel, a freshman and transfer! We are incredibly excited for these students and wish them all safe travels.



Group shot during Birthright Orientation

"Every time I've gone to Israel I felt like my time had been cut short. Now because of ONWARD I'll be able to dive deep into to the Israeli culture and have an internship that will help me expand on my major."
- Daniella Frid

Happy 70th Birthday Israel

by Sophia Schmerling



Cake made by Carly Silverstein



Group picture after we shared why we love Israel



Students groov'n in the photo booth

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion declared "the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel." Decades after this historical moment, the Nation of Israel, and Jewish people around the world, celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, or Israel's Independence Day. In celebration of Israel turning 70, students at Chico Hillel organized a 70's style themed party. On April 19th, at our weekly Thursday Night Meeting, the Chico Hillel office was transformed into a psychedelic, Israel influenced, disco dance hall! With a large tie dye backdrop, students posed with Israeli flags, blue maracas and festive boas to show their love and pride for the amazing country known as Israel. After our members finished their Mediterranean meal, our director, Kristy Collins, led a Soul Train (dance line) in which the students did their best to form a line, find a partner and boogie side by side. To end the night, intern Noah Levinson led the group in a glorious Hebrew rendition of "Happy Birthday."



End of the Soul Train Line

Freshman Fridays

by Delyssa Weingarten



Meal together in Sutter Dining Hall

"What I have enjoyed about Freshman Fridays is seeing all my friends and knowing we are the future of Hillel here in Chico."

-Nicole Sanchez



Freshman Israel Advocates, Noah Levinson and Tom Sciarra

Freshman Fridays is a new program on our campus. It seeks to encourage the upcoming class to bond on a deeper level. Not only is it fun for them, but for myself as director as well because I get to spend time with them and get to see how great of a group we welcomed this year. We value student ideas and recently funded a trip to the movies to see Avengers!

Cheers to New Beginnings

continued...

It was a beautiful time to be a part of the Hillel community, enveloped in a town of only 2% Jews, it's always comforting being surrounded by those who share the same faith and who are also a part of the tribe. The seniors symbolically passed on the torch to those who will keep the spirit of Hillel alive after the semester has finished. Hillel has touched the lives of each of us and will continue to do so as we move on to our adult lives, always keeping our faith in our minds and hearts. On behalf of all the seniors, we thank each member, supporter, and our director, Kristy Collins, for all the good memories, support and, of course, love.



Student leaders at Senior Send Off wearing grad cords gifted from Hillel

A Parent's Perspective

by Monica Spilkin



Ary and Monica Spilkin in Upper Bidwell Park

Our Chico Hillel journey began four years ago, in April, 2014, with our daughter, Ary Spilkin, a graduating senior. We met Kristy Collins, Hillel director, and through her infectious spirit, realized this Hillel may be small in size, but mighty in enthusiasm, with great leadership at its core. For Ary, Chico Hillel has been a home away from home, a family away from family. It has been a constant, where close Jewish friendships have developed through Shabbat dinners, celebrations of Jewish holidays, Hebrew class, speakers, meeting Israeli soldiers, cabin retreats, campus events like Yom Hashoah walk, peace in the Middle East art mural and more. Whether further strengthening an already strong Jewish identity, or searching for one not yet nurtured, every student fits in at Chico Hillel. At the senior send-off event, we came full circle as the seniors each described the lasting memories, support, belonging and comfort Chico Hillel has provided them. Hillel has given us real peace of mind for four years, knowing that Ary has been truly embraced by the warmth and quality of this small but mighty organization!

"We have donated to Chico Hillel from the start and urge all parents to do the same to ensure the continuity of our students' vital Jewish college experience." -Monica Spilkin

Support our Students

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\$1000 – Support a student leadership position on staff

\$500 – Support a student conference registration

\$360 – Support a monthly Shabbat dinner

\$100 – Sponsor a weekly dinner

OTHER – Donations of any amount are appreciated



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