



Hillel HAPPENINGS

UMass Amherst Hillel's Annual Newsletter



WELCOME BACK!

After more than a year away, students are back at Hillel and it's great to see their smiling faces again (even when they're under masks)! **Page 2**



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Ken Feinberg ('67) discusses his acclaimed role as Special Master to the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund, his connection with Judaism, and the Netflix movie "Worth," based on his book.

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FROM THE RABBI

Dear Friends,

Once again the Harold Grinspoon Hillel House is filled with the sights and sounds of Jewish students - our community is buzzing and the shift back to in-person events is having a tremendous impact on the well-being of our students! From lively Shabbats, lawn parties, student group events, and holiday services and kosher meals, our Hillel has already engaged hundreds of students across campus this fall.

We continue to plan wide-ranging fun experiences with our students leaders, while taking precautions to ensure the safety of our community as the pandemic continues to evolve.

As you browse through our annual newsletter, we hope you enjoy seeing the impact of your support and photos of students reconnecting. You'll learn about the programs we offer and read alumni highlights, including a very special Q&A with Ken Feinberg (Class of '67), Special Master to the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund.

Looking ahead, 2022 marks UMass Hillel's 80th year on campus and the formal launch of our three-year strategic plan! These initiatives will catapult student engagement and ensure our Hillel is here for generations of future Jewish students. I look forward to sharing more about our plans to recognize this milestone in the months ahead. In the meantime, we're celebrating all the moments, big and small, of being together once more. *On behalf of our community, thank you for making our work possible.*

Aaron Fine

L'shalom, Rabbi Aaron Fine



STUDENT LIFE



REUNITED
(AND IT FEELS SO GOOD!)

We kicked off the Fall 2021 semester with a whirlwind of programming, beginning with FreshFest, Hillel's pre-orientation program for new Jewish students. Despite the uncomfortable heatwave, students and parents alike formed connections during a casual BBQ on the Hillel lawn. Students then went bowling, ate s'mores by a campfire, did service work at a local Jewish farm in Northampton, and even went on a field trip to Target to purchase last-minute dorm supplies! Student programming rolled right into our first in-person Shabbat -- and the events have been non-stop ever since then. At our annual Kick Off Block Party, we hosted more than 150 people, including a food truck and many social activities! And of course, the High Holidays created a myriad of opportunities for hundreds of students to share Jewish rituals and customs.

For the High Holidays, we hosted Reform/Conservative and Orthodox services on campus and at Hillel. We rented a big tent for daytime services in front of the Old Chapel. With the support of UMass Kosher Dining, Hillel fed hundreds of Jew-

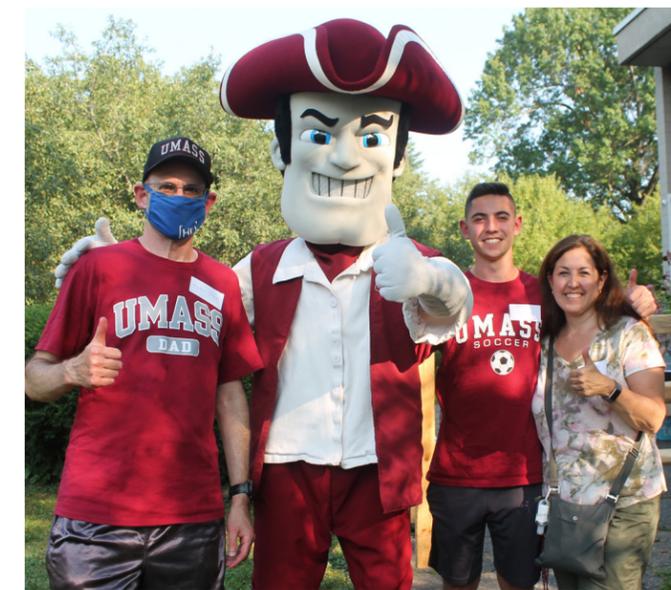
ish students free meals at Franklin Dining Commons, instead of Hillel House as is our tradition. Although logistically challenging these modifications enabled us to provide safe, in-person programs for the entire community. After last year's reduced student population on campus and Zoom programming, it has been wonderful to celebrate together in person this year.

Interest in our student-led groups is very high this year, and throughout the semester our staff and upper-class mentors will continue organizing and hosting social events, challah bakes, service opportunities, and vibrant discussions about Jewish identity and combating anti-Semitism. Programs like our 8-week intensive Jewish Learning Fellowship (JLF) will continue to create ways for students to form close friendships while discussing life's big questions in relation to traditional and contemporary Jewish texts.

Not surprisingly, even the smallest gestures make a big impact. While tabling at the Wellness Fair the first week of school, nearly 100 students stopped by to connect with our staff, who distributed free small succulent plants to help students decorate their dorms and, at the same time, shared important information about maintaining good health and mental wellness.



Students and their parents enjoyed beginning-of-semester events such as FreshFest and the Kick Off Block Party at Hillel.



JEWMASS organizes social events for students of all different Jewish backgrounds.

CHALLAH FOR HUNGER brings people together to bake and sell challah to raise money to combat food insecurity.

RUACH is the Reform and Reconstructionist student group at UMass Hillel.

JEW TALK is a discussion group focused on empowering Jewish students to connect with their Jewish identities, fight for social justice, and combat anti-Semitism.

JEWISH LEADERS IN BUSINESS connects students to networking opportunities and educational events to better prepare students for the competitive business world.

HILLEL STUDENT GROUPS
To learn more about our programs, click [HERE](#).

STUDENT ALLIANCE FOR ISRAEL gives the pro-Israel community a voice on campus by creating spaces of open dialogue through educational and social platforms.

MIZMOR offers opportunities for students to engage religiously, spiritually, and culturally with Conservative Judaism.

KEHILAH is a community for LGBTQ Jews at UMass.

MISHELANU provides a home on campus for Israeli-American students.

DEGEL is for students from Orthodox backgrounds to gather and support each other religiously and socially.

JSTREET U works to create an open dialogue on campus about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



TOGETHER WE'RE STRONGER!

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

UMASS HILLEL BY THE NUMBERS

658

Students engaged last year

450

Gift packages sent to students last year



468

Student experiences hosted by Hillel this past year



104

JLF students enrolled in Jewish Learning Fellowship & Israel Learning Fellowship experiences last year



199

Hillel events either on Zoom and in person last year



689

Shabbat dinners to go last year

40

Students in leadership positions

COUNTLESS

Times we pivoted to meet students' needs last year

110

Students and parents recently participated in FreshFest, our annual pre-orientation program



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT KEN FEINBERG



Ken Feinberg (class of '67), is one of the renowned figures in the field of dispute resolution. He has served as Special Master to some of the most high-profile, sensitive -- and sometimes contentious -- mediation cases in the U.S., including the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, the TARP Executive Compensation Initiative, the Agent Orange Veteran Payment Program and the BP Deepwater Horizon Disaster Victim Compensation Fund. He also served as the administrator for One Fund Boston, which aided the victims of the Boston Marathon bombings.

His book, "What Is Life Worth," details the painstaking efforts -- both monetarily and emotionally -- to compensate the victims and survivors of the 9/11 attacks.

Feinberg took a few minutes out his busy schedule to talk with us about his unparalleled career, his connection to Judaism, and about the recent release of his Netflix movie "Worth."

Q: Your accomplishments are many. Where do you feel your "greatest impact" is and what are you most proud of?

KF: Clearly, I'm most proud of the 9/11 Compensation Fund because it was of such historical importance to the country and was created in a very short period of time, just 13 days after the tragedy.

Q: Is there any aspect of your Jewish upbringing that helped guide your work?

KF: I think there are aspects of Jewish ritual having grown up in Brockton that have really helped me. Don't forget that when death or tragedy impacts a Jewish person, the Jewish community surrounds the victim and provides solace and help -- the shiva, the graveside service. And I found that our nation and these [victim compensation] programs are designed to administer aid to the victims' survivors much the way the Jewish faith [cares for those facing loss].

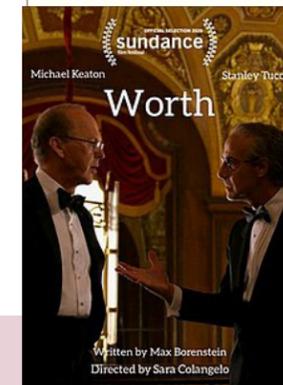
Q: In your book "What Is Life Worth," you explain you navigated a vast and complex "mosaic of human emotions" as you administered the 9/11 fund. Did you draw on any Judaic values or principles in creating a case for equitable compensation?

KF: First of all, the mathematics of compensating value -- the formulas that are being used to try and distinguish family survivors of a stockbroker versus families of survivors of the waiter -- were built into the statute of the fund, much the way that judges and juries value lives every day. So that aspect of it was not particularly difficult. The tough part -- that wasn't referenced at all in the statute and where my Jewish values kicked in -- was in dealing with the families themselves: the emotion, the solace, the pathos, the tragic nature of families of survivors coming to see me one on one. How I worked with those families, over time, how I

What is Life Worth?

The UNPRECEDENTED EFFORT to COMPENSATE the VICTIMS of 9/11

KENNETH R. FEINBERG



met them in private and empathized with their plight, I learned in part from my Jewish heritage in terms of being there for them, listening to them, offering solace and advice. The statute didn't require any of that. And yet I thought it was critically important, and it turned out to be extremely important in helping the families commit to the fund.

Q: The movie "Worth" shares this story more broadly with the world. Is there something you want people to take away from it?

KF: Oh, yes! Remember that the 9/11 attacks, and the resulting 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund, happened only 20 years ago. And the great story that comes out of the fund is how completely apolitical it was and how the country stood as one in coming to the aid of the victims. There was no red state-blue state, liberal-conservative, Republican-Democrat, Trump-Anti-Trump, nothing like that. Everybody rallied around the victims. Everybody supported me in my efforts. And I think that is the great lesson: that in times of tragedy and crisis, the American people do come together and they really can demonstrate a common definition of a national community.

Q: In "Worth," you are played by the actor Michael Keaton, who has also starred as Batman. In portraying you, do you think he captured your superpower?

KF: Well, you'll have to ask others about that... [laughing] My children saw the film at the Sundance Film Festival, they said, "Dad, Michael Keaton is a great actor, but he's better as Batman." Others say he did a pretty good job mastering the Boston-Brockton dialect. I think he got inside the character pretty well and figured out some of the stress points and some of the challenges that I confronted. I spent a lot of time with him and he is a great actor, and I think he captured the overall challenge pretty well.

ALUMNI

YOU HAD ME AT HILLEL

3 couples share
how they made
a love connection
at UMass



Dan and Zippy Brown

Dan and Zippy Brown (both '13)

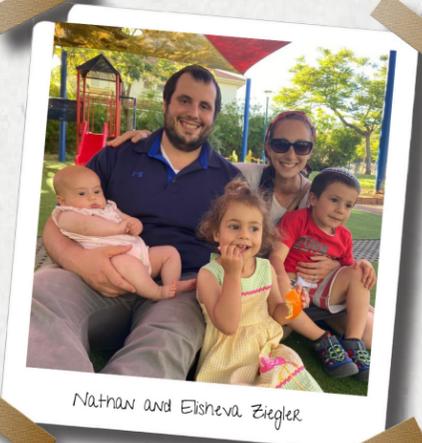
"Dan and I met our freshman year at the Kosher Dining area in Franklin Dining Commons. We quickly became friends and had many meals together. We spent almost every Shabbat at Hillel and served on the KHH (now Degel) board together too. Our friendship grew over the years and we started dating our senior year. We graduated together in 2013 and got married July 2016."



Cynthia Levin and Norman Gessman

Cynthia Levin ('59) and Norman Gessman ('57)

"We actually were at the same Seder on April 4, 1954. I was in the class of 1957; Cynthia was in the class of 1959. We were neighbors. My fraternity and her sorority was right across the street. We never met at UMass, but our lives paralleled. I met Cynthia about 10 years ago when our spouses were in assisted living."



Nathan and Elisheva Ziegler

Nathan ('15) and Elisheva ('14) Ziegler

"Nathan and I met at Hillel on Rosh Hashana our first year at UMass. We both became involved in Hillel and JLIC. We cooked shabbat meals together and helped coordinate holiday programming. We started dating during our third year and Nathan asked me to marry him during his graduation weekend. We have been married for 5 years, we have been blessed with three children, and are currently living in Israel."



Our Legacy Society members are individuals or couples who indicate that they have made provisions for UMass Hillel through their estate plan for the benefit of future generations of Jewish students. UMass Hillel is a proud participant of the Life & Legacy program made available through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and The Jewish Federation of Western Mass. To learn more about how to make a legacy gift and join our Legacy Society, please contact Melanie Gerard at 617-319-5235 or mgerard@umass.edu.

- Richard T. Alpert
- Steven Aronson
- Joel and Mozelle (z"l) Berkowitz
- Betsy and Joel Bertuzzi
- David Braune
- Rabbi Daniel and Hannah Braune-Friedman
- Jane and Howard Breslau
- Gerald L. Canter
- Hilary Sohmer Dalin
- Carrie Fischbein Darsky and Family
- Dr. Lloyd David
- Dan and Amy Deutsch
- Sarina Ergas and Allan Feldman
- Scott A. Farber
- Andy and Robin Feldman
- Marlene G. Fine
- Richard Gaberman
- Randi Dubno Gardner
- Joseph I. Goldstein (z"l)
- Edward Greenbaum
- Howard C. Greene
- Harold Grinspoon
- Haim and Yaffa (z"l) Gunner
- Lawrence Hott
- Alison Husid Strausberg
- Robert and Pamela Jacobs
- Sumner Z. Kaplan (z"l)
- Jacob Karas
- Steven J. Kassels and Nancy A. Thompson-Kassels
- Mr. and Mrs. Gary Kaufman
- Carol and David Krentzman
- Samuel Krentzman
- Sophie and Jonathan Krentzman
- Dr. Mitchell J. Kupperman
- Geoffrey Kurinsky
- Aaron and Gail Lansky
- Jack M. Leader and Judith C. Haber
- Elyse Lichtenthal
- Aaron Lyon
- Julie Plaut Mahoney, Ph.D.
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- Elliott and Caryl Margolis
- Phillip G. Marsh (z"l)
- Erica Mattison
- Michael L. Mendelsohn
- Leah Nagar
- Janet Nirenberg
- Saul Perlmutter
- Avi and Courtney Pupkin
- Eric Rosenthal
- Joan B. Rosner
- Janice Rittenburg Rossbach
- Ariella Ruderman
- Lynne Satlof-Karas and Steven Karas
- Dr. Rachel Schechter
- David Schimmel (z"l)
- Marc and Debra Schultz
- Murray and Peggy Schwartz
- Sgan Family Charitable Fund
- Gary and Caryl Shaw
- Fred and Marcy Shuster
- The Family of Samuel Skerker
- Terry and Julie Smily
- Herbert and Paulina Stark
- Jennifer Storey and Howard Wein
- Maurice and Eliane Tonkin (z"l)
- Liat and Michael Wasserman, Family Trust
- Gwen P. Weisberg
- Beth M. Whitman
- Matthew and Debra Zieper
- Anonymous supporters (10)

LIFE EVENTS

Rafi Yagudin ('08) married Lauren Fagnani in September 2020.

Alex Maslow ('09) got engaged to Samantha Raizel Zarkower on Aug. 19, 2021.



Karen Podorefsky ('15) was legally married to Daniel Pearlman in May 2021. Their Jewish wedding will be in May 2022.

Sydney Weinberg ('15) got engaged to Branden Taub in November 2020.

Elisha Goldstein ('16) got engaged to Jake Weiser in April 2021.

Gregory Herman ('18) married Talia Berkowitz (Mt. Holyoke '18) on June 14, 2020.



Aliza Yailen ('18) was married to Josh Gross in August 2021.

Jacob Wyner ('19) got engaged to Noa Buimsohn in December 2020.

Heidi Cowen ('19) graduated from SUNY Buffalo State with Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology in May 2021.



STAY CONNECTED!



Are you coming to Homecoming?

Join us for Bagel Brunch on the Hillel lawn, on Sunday, November 7

Stop by Hillel, grab a bagel and schmear and chat with Alumni Council members, staff and students. Learn about all the exciting programs UMass Hillel is organizing - and even grab some swag! Sign up [HERE](#).

We're planning some great alumni events this year



- Virtual Town Hall
- Pub Nights
- Red Sox game at Fenway Park

If you are interested in being on the event committee to help plan these great events, contact the alumni council at umasshillelalumni@gmail.com

(Dates and times to be determined for all events)

Join the UMass Hillel Parent Council!

Our Parent Council members help to philanthropically support Hillel's Annual Fund and create community with fun events. To become involved, please contact [Melanie Gerard](#), our Director of Advancement. We hope you will become an active member of our community.

MEET THE UMASS HILLEL STAFF

Our Mission: UMass Hillel empowers students through the vitality of Jewish life to cultivate purposeful, healthy lives and relationships that better our community and world.



Rabbi Aaron Fine
Executive Director



Rebekah Steinfeld
Assistant Director



Melanie Gerard
Director of Advancement



Rabbi Raffi and Ariella Leicht
OU-JLIC Educators



Rob Kaufman
Director of Operations



Sapir Ben Zvi
Israel Fellow



Emily Kopka
Director of Student Leadership and Communication



Emerson Finkle
Director of Engagement & Outreach



Rich Kassirer
Office Manager/Development Associate

GET IN TOUCH! Want to reach out to a staff member? Click [HERE](#) to email us!

FOLLOW US



For weekly updates on what's happening at Hillel, sign up for our [News4Jews newsletter](#).

Connect with your former classmates on our [LinkedIn Alumni page](#).



The Harold Grinspoon Hillel House

Our students are counting on you!

UMass Hillel is a 501(3)c nonprofit organization and relies on the generosity of our friends and community to fulfill our mission.

To make a donation on our secure website, go to umasshillel.org/donate or send a check made payable to UMass Hillel to UMass Hillel, 388 N. Pleasant St., Amherst, MA 01002

Also, check out additional [ways to give](#), including a donation of stock and [planned giving](#).



“I can’t imagine life at UMass without **Hillel**. It is truly a fantastic and welcoming community for everybody.”



- Sam Wiesman ('22)

“**Hillel** is literally the rock of UMass. Whenever something was wrong, I always went to **Hillel**.” - Stephanie Margolis ('20)



UMass Hillel Newsletter Staff

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email umasshillel@gmail.com,
subject line “newsletter”