

# CHABAD UVA

## The Jewish Spark

### YOU'VE FILLED ANOTHER YEAR WITH WARMTH

What can we tell you? The ones who never forget the Jewish students here at UVA?

The ones who provided endless support and a haven for all to feel the warmth and glow of Judaism—who always have our backs?

You made this year so successful!

Experiencing another bustling year's end causes one to glance back and think, "How have we effected change?"

Let's take it a little further this year. What was the most effective initiative we did 15 years ago to bring us to this spot? Ironically enough, it was done sitting, without any physical effort or food involved! Carefully drafting a mission statement was the crux of it all. It sounded so boring 15 years and "full of energy" ago. Why bother with such a dull activity when there was a world to light up out there?! We were raring to sky dive right into the heart of the UVA Lawn holding a neon sign proclaiming our love of the Jewish people! But, against our passion-fueled better judgement, we acquiesced to our elders and began to draft. Several all night visionary debates and just two existential crises later—we were done!

What was our our mission? "Chabad House at UVA provides a warm, open, Jewish family atmosphere. Chabad works daily to assist, educate, and inspire university students and the greater community in expanding their Jewish knowledge, practice, and pride in a non-judgmental environment."

Those few words have been our rock in recent years. An ever-present reminder of what we do. We model strong Jewish family and love of both Israel and Jewish people. That's it. No fancy names or activities can showcase it better than that. The unadulterated truth.

These goals, while lofty, have grounded our work here into easily measurable data. If people of all levels of observance and practice are showing up and feel comfortable listening and/or asking questions, then we were moving in the right direction. If not, then it would be time to recalibrate.

Thank G-d, after 15 years of work and several breaks for GPS realignments, we can say we are still on the right path. This school year saw many a "packed house" nights at Friday dinners, coupled with overflowing classes of community members. The Jews and their souls desire the warmth of Judaism—it's just a tricky path to delivering it in the right way.

But who is actually the one to feel good about all of this—not us—it's YOU! You made it all happen. Not one smile or plate of food "happens" without your hands on our backs! We are ever grateful for all the support we receive combined with protection from the One Above! May we all see revealed blessings in all of our endeavors!

With Wishes for a Happy and Safe Summer!

*Shlomo & Channa*





# VIRJEWNIA IS FOR LOVERS

Mar 24th VA Shabbaton • Chabad  
ON CAMPUS

## Event Brings Jews From 5 VA Campuses Together

Being a Jew in America, on campus, and especially in Virginia can make one feel a bit, well, misplaced. And socialization among fellow Jews, research tells us, raises the chances of participation in Jewish communal events exponentially. So what's the answer to combat that locally, at a grassroots level? The Virginia Chabad on Campus Shabbaton was born! Armed with the knowledge there's 5 Chabad Houses on Campus in Virginia, we envisioned one weekend a year where students from all the different universities could meet up and be "shevet achim b'yachad (sitting with brothers and sisters.)"

You provided over 100 college students with a weekend of: mixing and mingling, delicious food, and world-renowned speakers on topics like Torah & Science, Mysticism, and Jews in Hollywood. Everyone left not only with an adorable VirJEWnia is for Lovers shirt, but also a newfound pride in being a Jew on campus in this great state!

## 2016-2017 Programs » »

### Passover Provides to Hundreds

Passover in college is hard. Many students rely on us to keep them connected to their traditions—which is why sometime in March we start to get nervous. Passover is coming. Thousands of dollars in bills will be here, and the crowds will be showing up. How can we make sure those who want to keep our thousands-of-years-old heritage intact will have the chance?

So we turn, as always, to you—the most gracious people on the planet. When we sent out our Pesach appeal, we had no idea you would be this generous! With your bountiful gifts, we ensured another successful year fed over 500 meals to Passover dedicated college students. We all enjoyed packed-house Sederim and week-day meals that drew from all parts of the University.

Each year we worry that more and more students will ignore the holiday due to lack of options, but you never forsake them. You make it so every Jewish soul, regardless of observance level or knowledge has what they need both physically and spiritually—like one man with one heart.

We are humbled by your generosity and thank you a hundredfold for your unbelievable kindness.



### Café Chabad

Does the warmth and camaraderie that Shabbat brings have to be relegated to once a week in Chabad House? No! For 10 years you've helped us bring the same warmth of Friday night in the Chabad House living room straight to Grounds on a Monday! Finding a welcoming environment waiting for them in Newcomb Hall as soon they walk into the room is the main reason we do it.

Our on Grounds weekly home-made Kosher lunch "Café Chabad" has grown exponentially! Unbelievably, this year,

we saw our records smashed week after week. At first we struggled to bring the right amount of food—then we got it—we. need. TONS! That's it. Plain and simple :) Some weeks more than 60+ students showed up in Newcomb Hall looking forward to a delicious kosher lunch, some mingling with fellow Jews, and a short swap of life in the "college world" for some "with family" feeling. We view this as one of most successful programs because we go to the students instead of expecting them to come to us!



## Laughter & Learning Light the Way

Sometimes all that's missing from a proud Jewish Identity is knowledge. Which is why we count the Sinai Scholars Society such an integral part of our programming. Through a generous grant, we are able to offer 8 intensive learning sessions once a week with a kosher dinner to college students. Providing the inspiration of young Jews to live a well thought out and knowledgeable Jewish life is integral to Our People's survival. But we gotta keep it fun and honest too...which is why we are always looking for new ways to have fun!

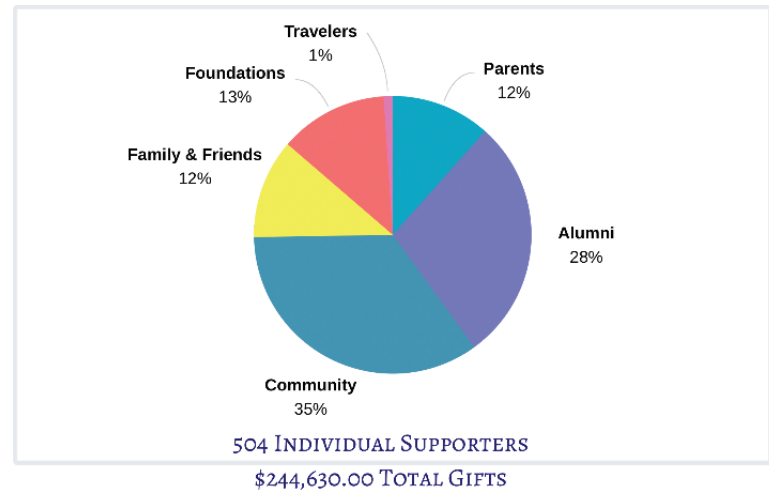
**A New Tradition:** A Kosher Scavenger Hunt through Wegmans! Students were challenged to find as much kosher food as possible in 15 minutes. The Prize? A gift card to Wegmans specifically to buy some kosher snacks for the week! We followed the hunt with some good food (bought and eaten in the store!): kosher cold cuts, hummus, pita, grapes, babka, and tortilla chips! Thanks for providing us with such a great opportunity, Wegmans!



## Charidy Day of Giving

It started like any other day—but didn't end like one! It is unreal what can occur when THREE dedicated friends of Chabad House get together and match each other to bring in much necessary annual funds for Chabad at UVa. And THEN challenge the rest of the fans of Chabad at UVa for the 4th piece of the funding puzzle. Yes, in just 24 hours Chabad had raised 127k from 184 loyal friends. What a whirlwind of emotions felt on that day. We laughed, we cried, and we were humbled. 72 Alumni, 47 Parents, 39 Community, 16 Current Students & 10 Family & Friends = ONE great family that has our back! So proud to be a JHOO!

### GIFTS TO CHABAD AT UVA IN 2016



## Sinai NEXT

What happens when you've taken the first Sinai Course and loved it? Well, it used to be...NOTHING! Not anymore. Now there's Tier Two for those who love Jewish learning (and Channa's cooking :) and want to fill their tanks on Jewish knowledge. The Course this Semester was called Paradigm Shift: How the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe changed the World. 14 Students participated in 5 courses filled with animated discussions allowing a bit of a deeper delve into Jewish topics than the first course allows. Students walked away with a newfound perspective on viewing both personal and global challenges. May they be the key to bringing True Peace to this seemingly fractured world!

## Chabad + AEPi Collaboration

How's this for a collaborative effort? Chabad loves teaching Judaism—AEPi has a lot of Jewish members—Chabad finds a generous sponsor to provide them with a stipend for their efforts! Sweet deal! And so it began: eight 30-minute learning sessions with Rabbi Shlomo with a few Shabbat Dinners thrown in for good measure! AEPi received the "Learning and Earning" grant Chabad worked to create earlier in the year from an anonymous source whose passion is dedicated to the future of the Jewish people! Congrats guys-use it in good health!



## ALUMNI *Reflect*



### **Talia Pouratian UVA '01 & Masters 03'**

I first started coming to Shabbat dinners at Channa and Shlomo's apartment when they moved to Charlottesville. I was one of the first people who Shlomo ever called in Charlottesville. I believe that was around 2002. Fast forward to 2005, after many Shabbat dinners and a new Chabad house, Channa invited me to a bagels and shmooze event. At that event she introduced me to Nader, who turned out to work steps away from my office. We ended up going to lunch together every day and eventually ended up dating and engaged within a year. In May 2007, we were married.

Since then, we have lived in New Zealand and Los Angeles and have three children ages 4, 6 and 8. We were so fortunate to have the Mayers. If not, we never would have met one another. We were so thrilled to have Channa dance at our wedding and she was delighted because we were the first couple she successfully made. And we are forever grateful to them for their efforts in the Charlottesville Jewish Community.

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS *Speak*

### **Susan Lozano Fairhunt Farm LLC**

So many lives here in Charlottesville would suffer a huge deficit without UVA Chabad. First, the students who look for a place that's a home away from home, and who are enfolded into your generous, and nourishing Chabad house to enjoy holidays, Shabbat, and friendship. That means a lot to young people who are living away from home for the first time. Everyone is welcome - so vital to a young person - loving acceptance.

You are a friend and mentor to people of all ages. You've listened to me and given guidance through some painful parts of my life. You have the wisdom to allow a person to unravel the issues that are troubling by listening carefully.

You and Channa are pillars in our society, and I don't think it's just for us who are Jews. I think it enriches all of us, because everything you both give goes back out into the community and becomes fertile ground for positive living and kindness toward each other. We would be lost without UVA Chabad!





# MY CHABAD AT UVA *Story*

## How You Help Reconnect Those Who Are Far | Keenan Davis

When I first arrived at the University of Virginia, knowing nobody but my new roommate whom I'd just met at orientation, my most deeply held convictions were in the process of shifting dramatically. I had uprooted myself, moving a few states away from the world in which I grew up, and it seemed that I no longer had any real responsibilities or accountability. Suddenly, I could be anyone at all and do anything.

Initially this felt like a liberation, like I had finally achieved absolute freedom. It wasn't long, though, before it began to feel increasingly tinged with aimlessness. I did enjoy being swept up in the excitement of meeting new people and learning and trying new things, but underneath it all there was still a profound lack of connection. Amidst all the newness, I was in need of something deeper and more enduring, some constancy and community. My soul was longing.

Though I wasn't doing much to actively meet this need, G-d seems to have been keeping an eye on me, or at least one of His representatives was. Walking by myself on the Lawn, deep in my own thoughts and trying not to look particularly Jewish, I was approached by Rabbi Shlomo with members of his family—a little one being pushed in a stroller—and a small entourage of Jewish students. He walked towards me with a smile and asked if I would like to shake the lulav. I had completely forgotten that it was even Sukkot,

but I will never forget that moment.

That was the first of many serendipitous encounters and the start to one of the most important relationships in my life. I soon found myself attending programs, coming to Shabbat services and meals, and going on trips around the country and to Israel with Channa and Shlomo. At a time when my faith was close to being extinguished, the Mayers kept the

flickering flame alive and even strengthened it. With the utmost sincerity, they provided me with hospitality and the opportunity to reconnect with Judaism and with the Jewish community. They reminded me of the bonds that exist whether we choose them for ourselves or not and revealed to me how to nurture those relationships of care, responsibility, and meaning. In fact, knowing that I would always find sanctuary in the Chabad house, I gained courage and renewed purpose for all my other pursuits. Almost paradoxically, it was only once I understood responsibility that I could be truly liberated.



I can say with confidence that I am a committed Jew living a spiritually meaningful life largely because of the warmth and love that I received (and continue to receive) from the Mayers at Chabad of UVA. My wife Erica, my daughter Orli, and I now look for any excuse at all to come back to Charlottesville to visit. Thank G-d for Chabad.



# SINAI SCHOLARS *Reflection*

## Giving Young Jews the Tools for Rich, Purposeful Living

Elana Silverstein



Being a part of the Sinai program has been an extremely positive experience and I'm grateful for the opportunity to partake in it. The unique program has enabled me with the capacity to surround myself with other Jewish teenagers of varying backgrounds and levels of Jewish identity to gain new perspectives and learn

how I can intricately Judaism back into my life.

I grew up at a conservative temple, went to Hebrew School through high school, went to day care at our Jewish Community Center, a Jewish camp in the summer, and engaged in teenage activities such as BBYO. I still remember for my Hebrew School confirmation, our Rabbi had us write and read out loud our personal interpretation of Daniel Pearl's last words, "I am Jewish." My essay back then consisted of my social identity rather than the religious aspects.

Partaking in the Sinai Program has enabled me to look at the religious side of Judaism and how I'm still able to relate it to my life. I know my morals, personality, and intentions will stay true to my identity as they align with my memories of my Jewish experiences and family, but there is a line between experience and acting. I believe I've experienced Judaism and have a secure interpretation, but the Sinai program has now shown me that I need to take the next step and act with Judaism. Whether that be making small choices such as grabbing the kosher brand item rather than the non-kosher at a grocery store, or maybe not buying the latest video camera to respect others' privacy, or larger ones like not using my phone on Shabbat or marrying another Jew, these choices require action.

My instructor and peers have creatively collaborated to explore the different options to intricately the religious aspects of Judaism into our chaotic lives to continue the generational lineage of what it means to be religious. Walking away from this program, I've realized what it means to be Jewish is more than a Jewish identity and choices, but they are intertwined. All of my actions, good or bad, are Jewish actions and who I am is the representation of my religion to the rest of the world. I am Jewish and Judaism is defined by me.

I had the unique experience that almost my entire Sinai class had just come back with me from Israel on Birthright. We had all just experienced being in the Holy Land on the life-changing event together. We decided we wanted to continue our journey with Judaism and the Sinai Scholars program

was an excellent next step. We were able to come to class with the Holy land, sites, cities, people, and experiences fresh in our minds. It made the class extremely relatable and present in our lives.

Personally, Birthright was a changing point in my life where I came back open and ready to absorb knowledge and question life. Our instructor definitely delivered what I was hoping to gain from this program. She continuously pushed our minds, fed us information, drew out questions we had never even considered before, and helped us form new perspectives.

Although I learned a great deal from the program and different topics of each class, the most important thing I learned was probably that you can still make the world a better place. Promoting Judaism just means doing whatever you can offer at your time in life. We learned that some is better than none and our history, lifestyle, and relationships are making an impact on the world. We can still be a "good" Jew and not keep Shabbat or not keep Kosher. When our instructor explained this aspect, I felt a burden of responsibility lift off my shoulders. I didn't have to disappoint my

“

the most important thing I learned was that you can still make the world a better place

”

ancestors and G-d, because I couldn't disappoint them. I just had to do whatever I could in each stage of my life.

One of the underrated advantages that the Sinai program gave me and my peers was a supportive community and a place where I know I'll always be welcomed. School has many pros and cons, and when the cons get a little heavy and the stress takes a toll, I know I can always get away and have a talk at the Chabad house. The Sinai program brought me to a place where I wouldn't have gone on my own, as my friends and I usually go to Hillel. Before Sinai, I always thought I was choosing between Hillel and Chabad, but in reality it's most beneficial to gain perspectives from both and attend services and events at both locations. It's been a great way to meet new people, get to know our instructor outside of the classroom environment, and make it a part of my college experience.

Moving forward, I aim to continue taking steps to search for knowledge and enhance my life by adding important aspects, such as Judaism, into it. Whether it be by taking the next program offered by Sinai Scholars, or returning to Israel, I'm at a point in my life where I can still shape who I am, and the person I want to be definitely involves Judaism.

I'm grateful for the opportunities and especially Sinai Scholars for giving me the opportunity to take the first steps, as those are always the hardest. I hope one day that I'll be able to raise my children with the same open-mindedness, love, and pride that comes with being Jewish. Judaism is a life-long commitment, and I've been fortunate enough to have a great foundation. Now it's up to me to create my future. No matter what the definition, as I'm sure it will continuously change throughout my life, I know that I am Jewish.



Introducing  
**THE 12TH ANNUAL**

**NATIONAL  
JEWISH RETREAT**  
6 DAYS / 180 WORKSHOPS / 75 PRESENTERS  
*A program of The Rohr Jewish Learning Institute*

AUGUST 8-13, 2017  
16-21 AV, 5777

at the  
**JW MARRIOTT DESERT SPRINGS RESORT & SPA**  
Palm Springs, CA

**REGISTER TODAY**  
FOR EARLY-BIRD DISCOUNT

Visit JRetreat.com or call  
1-877-JRETREAT (573-8732).

## YOUR HELP IS CRUCIAL!

Yes! Count me in for supporting a "Place where all Jews Belong" at UVa.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ In Honor/Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email/Phone \_\_\_\_\_

CC# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Code \_\_\_\_\_

Amount \_\_\_\_\_ (All gifts tax deductible 501c3 #38-3661207)

Gifts can be made online at [www.jewva.org](http://www.jewva.org)

THANK YOU!!

**THEY FOUND A**

*Haven*



**Chabad House at the University of Virginia**  
2014 Lewis Mountain Road  
Charlottesville, VA 22903