As we look back on the last year we note that it was one of intense transition and change at Central Florida Hillel (CFH). Challenges we met head on with dynamic and innovative programming that kept students engaged during the hardest of times. We found ourselves dealing with both the negative impacts of the pandemic and the positive energy of staff and board transitions. Five months into my tenure as Executive Director, I am happy to say that everyone is settling into their roles, we are re-engaging in new ways and are stronger than ever.

We would not be where we are today without the leadership of Aaron Weil over the previous eight years. Thank you Aaron, for your time, dedication, and commitment in making CFH a national model on college campuses for Jewish student engagement. We wish you and Sharon all the best as you make Aliyah.

While we held programs virtually or safely distanced in a tent during the worst of the pandemic, the summer saw CFH carefully and strategically reopen the doors of the Ginsburg Center to students for most programs, culminating in the complete reopening including meals, for the first time since before the pandemic started in March 2020.

We have embraced the programmatic style of “Student Lead, Staff Supported.” Our programs are now fully developed and driven by student leaders. We encourage students to follow their passions while teaching them the skills needed to make great things happen. From thinking up the idea and developing a budget, to marketing, recruiting and hosting the actual event, we empower students to dream big, and instill the concept that if they can dream it, they can do it!

With 85% of UCF students remaining in Florida after graduation, Central Florida Hillel is truly building the future leaders of the Florida Jewish community. We would not be able to do this without the guidance of our Board of Directors and the support of you, our donors. Thank you all for your ongoing commitment to the Jewish students of Central Florida.

Central Florida Hillel is celebrating its 20th year, and what a year it has been! The roller coaster ride of events that have taken place all across the world have certainly left us all changed—as individuals, communities, and organizations. In our work at Hillel, we faced these challenges with a firm commitment to our goal of creating Jewish community for college students while helping them prepare for their Jewish future.

But as an agency, we faced more challenges than just a worldwide pandemic. In the past 22 months, we have also undergone a significant transition with our staff. This included the departure of five staff members and welcoming four new staff members who were all onboarding at the same time, including Hunter Gold, our new Executive Director. Yet even with a pandemic and staff turnover we were able to provide a safe and engaging environment for our students while making significant large-scale inroads to position us for a bright future.

During this past year...

• Hillel students and staff worked with the UCF Student Government to pass a resolution encouraging UCF to formally adopt the IHRA definition of Anti-Semitism, which passed Student Government unanimously at three separate votes
• We contracted with a kosher caterer, Eden Fresh Cafe, to lease the kitchen/cafe space at Northview, bringing delicious kosher food to campus on an ongoing and consistent basis
• Jewish Family Services and Hillel partnered to provide much needed mental health and wellness services to students
• Hillel continued to offer services and kosher food for students on campus
• And so much more

We hope you feel as inspired reading this report as we did putting it together. We are proud of our achievements, and we know we can accomplish even more in the future with your continued support. We are grateful to you for your past generosity and look forward to our continued partnership in serving Jewish students and shaping our shared Jewish future.

Daniel B. Harris
2021-2022 CFH Board Chair
The Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc across the world, and the lives of college students were completely upended. With classes suddenly online, on-campus activities all but halted and practically no opportunities for creating and feeling part of a community, students were miserable. Then came Central Florida Hillel! With a 3200 square foot tent erected in the Northview parking lot, our passionate staff and students found ways to safely foster community in the most difficult circumstances. Some of the many safety features we enacted included hosting all activities outside, everyone staying masked except while eating, everyone distancing from each other, and serving individually wrapped pre-packaged meals. Though many programs have since moved back indoors, we will take the lessons and memories from Covid long into the future.

AN UNUSUAL YEAR

The trials of the pandemic helped strengthen our Hillel’s community simply because we persevered through it. There is a famous joke used to sum up the story of nearly every major Jewish holiday: “They tried to kill us, we won, let’s eat.” The COVID-19 pandemic tried to kill the Jewish community at UCF, but we won; and we have been feasting this entire year. I cannot thank UCF Hillel enough for ensuring that I have a Jewish community at UCF, for giving me the opportunity to meet new students, for continuing to help me develop my identity both as a Jew and a college student, and for helping me spread a comforting light in the darkest of times.

Jake Gould
Class of 2023

CFH CELEBRATES 20th ANNIVERSARY

The year 2021 marks the 20th year that CFH has been recognized as a Jewish organization, and kicking off the celebration was a summer tree planting ceremony. CFH has supported thousands of Jewish knights as well as students from Stetson University, Rollins College, Valencia Community College, Seminole State University and Full Sail University on their Jewish journeys over the past 20 years. Not only are we a place for students to feel comfortable, we act as a catalyst for students to become the next generation of leaders. The tree planting offered a gathering at which alumni, present and past board members, as well as the Orlando community could feel proud of how far CF Hillel has come.
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A HULCK?

The Hillel Undergraduate Leadership Cohort of Knights (HULCK) is CFH’s student leadership platform. Now in its 3rd year, HULCK has grown from 16 student leaders to almost 60! These incredibly motivated students are the driving force behind all the programming at Hillel. Looking for the theme and menu for Shabbat dinner or Hump Day Nosh? Ask the HULCK Shabbat and Nosh teams. Want to help with Tikkun Olam projects or plan a wellness event? Ask the HULCK teams. Interested in traveling to Israel? HULCK Israel ambassadors can help with that! HULCK leaders work hard to engage with new students and ensure that Jewish educational, religious and social programs happen on campus and that students know about them.

For me, Hillel equals comfort. Not that students get to do whatever they want, but because Hillel is an open, welcoming Jewish place where every student can find a way to immerse themselves. Whether it’s social, religious (pluralistic), educational or any other type of opportunity, Hillel has Jewish students at UCF covered. They listen to us and help make what we want actually happen, and that is worth so much!

Sam Levy
Class of 2024

Hillel is my second home. It’s the place I go to study, to socialize and also to snack! Through Hillel, I’ve been able to combine my passion for philanthropy and my Jewish heritage, by creating a Hillel Knight-Thon team to raise money for Arnold Palmer Children’s Hospital. And bonus - Hillel is where I met my best friend!

Rebecca Levy
Class of 2023

I attended Hillel’s Fresh Fest my freshman year and am so glad I did! Not only did I make a ton of lifelong friends, but it opened the door for me to take advantage of all that Hillel offers. Through the amazing staff and my experience as an Engagement Intern, I have been given the tools and opportunities to help meaningfully engage others with Judaism. Now, as our Hillel writes a new, post-Covid chapter, I am working with fellow student leaders to lay the foundations for the future, giving back to the organization that’s given me so much!

Noah Jackson
Class of 2023

From the second I toured Hillel I knew UCF was the school for me! I am severely immunocompromised, so Covid was very hard for me, but I was able to form so many close friendships at Hillel and it has been my safe place. Through Hillel, I have a place I belong. I help lead our Egalitarian Shabbat services, making sure they are warm, inviting and accessible for everyone. And I work with friends to organize fun social events to keep us connected to one another. I’m so grateful that Hillel has given me a place at UCF to connect with my Judaism and share it with others!

Kayla Israel
Class of 2024
HILLEL BY THE NUMBERS

149 Highly Engaged Students
2523 Kosher Meals Served
298 Coffee Conversations with Staff and Student Leaders
57 Student Leaders and Student Interns
39 Students Traveled to Israel
Judaism is about community, not the individual. CFH is very proud of the partnerships we have cultivated over the years, and the tremendous benefits those partnerships provide our students.

The partnership with Central Florida Hillel is one that makes tremendous impact on our students. With the third largest Jewish student population outside of Israel, UCF is enriched by Hillel as it provides this vibrant student population with a facility that is a home-away-from-home and programs that build community, engagement, and opportunities to develop personal identity.

Alexander N. Cartwright, PhD. UCF President

Hillel has been an important partner in developing student leaders. Through various leadership opportunities, students have used their voice to make impactful changes on campus and in the local community. We are grateful for the accomplishments that we can achieve together.

Germayne C. Graham, Ph.D. Director, Student Programs and Outreach

Coming to Orlando from Ohio, I was nervous about fitting in, but from my first Hillel experience at Hillel I not only made tons of friends but gained so much more. Now I am a leader in Hillel, working with other students to plan future Freshfests, social events, and Holocaust awareness programs. I am also fortunate to serve as the Jewish representative on the President’s Student Advisory Council where I help impact the entire campus community and make UCF a more welcoming place for Jewish (and all) students. If not for Hillel, I would not have had these opportunities to make such a positive difference on campus.

Neil Kalef, Class of 2023

When I first started hanging out at Hillel I was intimidated by all the students who seemed to have it so together, but I soon learned that everyone, from students to staff, was extremely welcoming and accepting. Everyone at Hillel wants to be there, and that is what makes it such an amazing environment! I am excited this year to have the chance to serve as President of Hillel at UCF, working with Student Government on scheduling and funding our programs across campus. And I have been working with the Hillel International President’s Council as well, collaborating with Hillel student leaders across the country, both opportunities that I’m so grateful for!

Julia Bedrin, Class of 2024

Central Florida Hillel is working in partnership with Jewish Family Services (JFS) of Greater Orlando to create opportunities for student wellness through counseling, group sessions, and designing a wellness lounge in CFH. With dedicated therapist Shaina Williams, students’ mental health and wellness has become a huge priority at CFH. Shaina holds individual and group sessions for students to focus on topics such as, but not limited to, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-esteem, communication, self-care, and more.

Shaina Williams, MSW

CFH is grateful for the support we receive each year from a group of Federations including Miami, Broward County, South and North Palm Beach County, Sarasota, Tampa, the Jewish Federation of Volusia County and of course the Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando. Together, these federations provide us with vital financial support and other resources that provide us with the necessary funds and resources to invest in these student’s Jewish futures across the State of Florida.

Florida Federations

Yehudi at UCF, in partnership with CFH, has skyrocketed to become a major influence on campus due to the deeply compassionate family of Rabbi Yisrael and Tamar Abisror. The food and learning have been a highlight, but the penultimate joy of this partnership are the amazing trips! From Poland and Israel, Rome and Jerusalem to Spain and Morocco, travels with Yehudi are an important part of the learning experience for the CFH community.

Yehudi

Whether through grants, professional training, networking opportunities for peer to peer learning or support for the incredible work we do each day, Hillel International is an important partner helping us to advance our mission locally and nationally.

Hillel International
TRAVEL TO ISRAEL IS BACK

CFH students have many opportunities throughout the year to develop a deep connection to Israel through immersive experiences, and sending students to experience Israel first hand continues to be at the core of the work we do to support our students. These opportunities include Birthright trips to Israel, intensive internships in Israel through Onward Israel and J-Internships, and our Perspectives trip, as well as semester long Israel classes.

Though trips to Israel were unavailable during Covid, we are thrilled to see that so many students are ready to travel again! This December alone CFH will send forty-five students on Birthright Israel with over 125 planning on attending over the summer. These fortunate students will taste the food, see the historic sights and immerse themselves in Israeli culture during their free 10 day trip!

I am beyond excited to be able to work as an Israel Ambassador for Hillel! Hillel has given me a family in Central Florida, especially during the pandemic, and has given me an outlet for my creativity and my faith. I know the Birthright trip I plan to attend with Hillel will strengthen my Jewish identity, allow me to become closer with my fellow UCF Jewish students, and give me a lifelong connection to my heritage.

Alyson Pepper
Class of 2024

This summer as an intern with Onward Israel I formed connections with other Jewish students, experienced Israeli culture, and gained valuable work experience. Living in Israel has been the most incredible experience of my college career! and surpassed all of my expectations. Tel Aviv felt like home and strengthened my connection to Judaism. This experience pushed me to step out of my comfort zone and see the world through a new lens.

Shani Ackerman
Class of 2022

FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

Total Income $982,192
- Federation Allocations $76,456
- Investment $13,818
- Contributions $458,911
- Grant Income $375,932
- Rental Income $57,075

Total Expenses $1,018,181
- Programming $714,380
- Management and Grants $147,041
- Fundraising $156,760

LIFE AND LEGACY CAMPAIGN

Please consider helping us preserve and sustain our mission for future generations via a deferred gift or bequest. Contact Jacqui McGrail for more information at Jacqui.McGrail@centralfloridahillel.org.
THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

+With gratitude to those that have made a commitment to Central Florida Hillel’s Life and Legacy Campaign.

+Special thank you to those donors who have a lasting impact on Central Florida Hillel and our ability to provide a Jewish home away from home for students at the University of Florida and Florida Atlantic University.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS