



# Hillel Alumni...Defining Success

**H**ow do Hillel alumni define their success? For an alumnus of Hillel, there is no one definite answer. Whether they've become parents, teachers, lawyers, or doctors, it didn't take long for our alumni to stop, reflect, and comment, "...yes, I owe that to Hillel."

That success is evident when meeting Hillel alumni and looking at their statistics. Since the school opened its acclaimed high school in 1984, its graduates have gone on to the nation's finest universities and programs, and have secured positions at prominent companies and institutions. Students in Hillel's 2006 graduating class are currently attending such schools as Columbia, Barnard, NYU and Rutgers. Others have chosen to spend the year continuing their Judaic studies and Torah learning in Israel.

Graduates credit Hillel's rigorous academics, dedicated faculty, and warm atmosphere for much of their academic and professional success.

"I was exceptionally well prepared for college," says Yair Listokin, a member of Hillel's 1993 graduating class. "I was blessed with excellent teachers who really

pushed me. It was a joy to learn and to be at school."

That joy resulted in Dr. Listokin being considered "the most hotly pursued entry-level professor on the law school market," and "...a rising star," according to Dean Harold Hongju Koh of the Yale Law School, where Dr. Listokin is currently an associate professor.

Following his Hillel graduation, Dr. Listokin attended Harvard University and graduated with a degree in economics. He studied science and Ulpan in Israel for seven months, then earned his Ph.D. in economics from Princeton University. From there, he earned his law degree from the Yale Law School, where he was three times named the John M. Olin Prize Winner for the best student paper in law and economics. In 2005-2006, Dr. Listokin clerked for The Honorable Richard Posner of the United States Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago.

"I had truly excellent teachers at Hillel," says Dr. Listokin. "They had real personalities and were involved in our lives. Now, as a teacher, I see myself trying to emulate them."

While at Hillel, Dr. Listokin was on the basketball team and was co-editor of the school newspaper. He notes, "I write now for a living. I can see how my Hillel experience prepared me for this. I patterned myself after my Hillel teachers."

Another Hillel graduate, Michael Rishty, echoes Dr. Listokin's feelings. The 1994 graduate notes that "Hillel certainly helped prepare me for leadership roles later in life."

At Hillel, Mr. Rishty was the captain of the basketball team and the debating team, as well as co-editor-in-chief of the yearbook. Mr. Rishty graduated from Princeton University with a degree in economics, and the Harvard Law School. He is currently an associate specializing in real estate transactional work with the prominent law firm Greenberg Traurig in Manhattan.

Says Mr. Rishty, "I would definitely give

*Continued on page 2*



*Dr. Yair Listokin*

## EDUCATION

## Hillel Alumni...



*Mr. Michael Rishty*

credit to Hillel for developing my writing skills. The ability to write persuasively was very important during both college and law school, and continues to be important in my professional career."

Mr. Rishty also credits his Talmud studies for preparing him for a legal career. "I learned how to think logically," he says.

"I had intelligent classmates who took academics seriously," continued Mr. Rishty. He attributes the dual curriculum in both Jewish and secular studies to his preparation—in college and in his career—for preparing him for hard work, long days, and tight deadlines.

Mr. Rishty also recognizes the value of Hillel beyond the classroom. "My experience playing basketball taught me a lot about teamwork and sacrificing personal goals for team goals." That sense of community had an impact on Mr. Rishty. We looked out for each other and helped each other succeed. This makes you comfortable striving for the next level.

Mr. Rishty is part of a family with a deep commitment to Hillel. His father, Joel Rishty A"H, is a past president of the school's board of directors, and all three of his younger brothers graduated from Hillel. They, too, have achieved success: one is an attorney with a large New York law firm, a second is a student at Harvard Law School, and another will graduate this year from Rutgers. He notes, "We learned the values of community service, giving back, and getting involved."

Since graduating from Hillel, Michael Rishty has remained committed to the school. He has spoken at Hillel fundraising drives for many years and organized the Top Gun basketball tournament for Sephardic Bikur Holim, turning it into one of the largest fundraising events for the organization.

Abe Cohen and his wife Terri represent typical Hillel graduates, ones who returned to the community and are now the parents of Hillel students. A member of the class of 1988, Mr. Cohen is also "returning" to Hillel by serving as the treasurer of the school's board of directors.

Mr. Cohen graduated from NYU's Stern School of Business and is vice president of Conway Stores. He states, "The competition in the workforce is fierce. We have to do an outstanding job in educating our children for these challenges." Mr. Cohen is just one of many Hillel graduates who are assuming leadership positions at the school to ensure that all students will excel, thrive, and achieve success.



*Mrs. Beatrice Sutton and Mrs. Mary McMillan*

That love of learning has led other Hillel alumni back into the classroom, as teachers. Beatrice Sutton graduated from Hillel in 1998 and received both her undergraduate and graduate degrees in secondary education from New York University. Says Mrs. Sutton, "I was inspired by my teachers at Hillel. They treated us with respect and connected with us. I wanted to have that same relationship with my students."

Mrs. Sutton taught at Murry Bergtraum public school before teaching freshmen at Magen David Yeshiva High School in Brooklyn. For the past two years, she has been raising her two children. "But I miss having a classroom," she remarks.

Mrs. Sutton truly feels a connection to Hillel and knows that her high school experiences have led to her success as a teacher. "We really learned," she notes. "We were serious. I trusted the school to teach me and they delivered; Hillel gave me the confidence to be successful in college and in whatever career I chose afterwards."

Mrs. Sutton fondly recalls her English class taught by Mrs. Barbara Karen, who used funny voices and loving nicknames to make each of her students feel special. Mrs. Karen allowed her students to explore literature, own their own writing, and delve deep into a novel.

*Continued on page 3*

## EDUCATION

## Hillel Alumni...



*Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Tawil and Saul*

For Mrs. Sutton, this nurtured her love of English and allowed her to decide early on that when she did teach, this would be the subject she would master.

Mrs. Sutton's many activities at Hillel illustrate the wide array of experiences that Hillel students continue to enjoy. She was a member of the debate team, the math club, the fine arts society, the national honor society, and was co-editor of the yearbook. Still, it is the recollection of her participation in the drama club, directed by Yeeshai Gross, that elicits a smile from her, even today. Recalling how she donned a wig and became this whole other person when she was performing on stage, Mrs. Sutton realizes, "My acting background in high school gave me the guts to act things out for my own students. Sometimes making a fool of myself added a level of energy to the classroom that made the literature come alive."

Like Mr. Rishty, Mrs. Sutton is proud that Hillel introduced her to the joy and value of community service. Through Hillel, she participated in Yachad, where she built some of the most special relationships she has known. "Each and every time I went on a seminar weekend," Mrs. Sutton comments, "I gained more from the experience than what I put into it." After graduating, she continued with Bikur Holim, including hospital visits and volunteering at soup kitchens.

Mrs. Sally Tawil, a member of Hillel's class of 1994 and a current Hillel parent, admires the sense of security and the close knit community at Hillel. "Everyone feels connected to each other," she says. "Everyone feels responsible for each other."

Following her graduation from Hillel, Mrs. Tawil attended the Stern School of Business at New York University. She remembers thinking "how easy college was. We took college-level courses in high school; I was used to working hard." Mrs. Tawil worked for a Manhattan-based hedge fund before moving to New Jersey with her husband.

"I was in awe of my teachers at Hillel," says Mrs.

Tawil. "They showed me how much there is to learn. They opened up the world for me." The experiences of these early Hillel high school graduates are shared by more recent graduates. Nicole Mizrahi, who graduated in 2005, says, "I owe a lot to the amazing teachers I had at Hillel, and I especially feel grateful for the religious guidance I received. Hillel prepared me well for college and guided me to the best decision in my life, learning in Eretz Yisroel."

Nicole Dweck, a 2001 graduate, provides a concise summary of the impact of a Hillel education: "The classes were difficult, requiring work and attention, and taught me how to really strive and push my limits. They taught me what a feeling of hard-earned success feels like."

Isaac D. Massry, who graduated in 1992 and has been a member of the Hillel Board of Directors for more than ten years, summed up his feelings about being a Hillel graduate as follows: "I feel it's our duty to give back to the school that has instilled in us the importance of community involvement, recognizing that each and every one of us can make a difference."

Hillel will be holding a special Alumni gala event in July of 2007. Stay tuned. □