

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2018

Contact: Rabbi Jake Rubin

(434)295-4963

info@brodyjewishcenter.org

Hillel at UVa launches campaign to restore historic house

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA -- The Brody Jewish Center, Hillel at the University of Virginia announces the *Make Our House a Home* Capital Campaign, a project to raise necessary funds for the renovation of the Center's historic 1914 home.

This campaign begins following a period of unprecedented growth for the Jewish community at the University, and focuses on the need to create spaces that respond directly to student needs. Fundraising efforts are already underway, with \$1.95 million of the \$3 million needed to complete the project pledged in donations from alumni and community members, and a naming gift from 1988 alumnus Doug Berman and his wife Jodi.

"Jodi and I feel that it's critical for Jewish college students to have a safe, comfortable, inviting place to express their Jewish identity and to interact with other Jewish students," Berman said. "Going away to college can create a gap in students' Jewish connections, and we believe that Hillel is uniquely positioned to fill that gap."

This is the second of such capital campaigns Hillel at UVa has undergone in the last ten years. The previous campaign, which began in 2006, was to raise funds to build a ten thousand square foot addition to provide larger spaces for services and gatherings. The project concluded in 2011, and has significantly changed Hillel's ability to welcome and serve large and increasing numbers of students.

"The focus of the last campaign was really about outgrowing our space. What makes this campaign different, is that it's really about close, interpersonal relationships," said Rabbi Jake Rubin, Executive Director at the Brody Jewish Center. "We want to create intimate spaces for studying and for group work, places for students to gather in informal settings. That's where community really begins."

The Center's published Case Statement for the Campaign makes the same case, saying: "The Capital Campaign to Make Our House a Home is about providing our students with the informal spaces they need to connect, to study, to meet, and to interact with staff in ways that foster community-building. This project champions the need for close relationships and aims to create welcoming and informal spaces where students can better forge the connections that make up our Jewish community."

New floor plans for the proposed student spaces include transforming current office space into two private group study lounges, a student commons with individual study areas, a library, and a reading room. Staff will be relocated to the first floor, with offices that are more visible and accessible for students.

Other changes include the creation of an RA-style apartment in the upstairs of the building, allowing for 24-hour access to the historic building throughout the whole school year and upgraded security features to go along with the new availability.

Talia Sion, a fourth year student at the University, is especially excited for the all-hours component of the renovation. "24-hour access to the building will make a huge difference in the way we're able to interact with this community," she said. "It will give us more independence as student leaders, and would increase the variety of events we're able to offer the Jewish students at UVa."

And it's exactly that sense of student autonomy, combined with innovative staff engagement initiative, that makes the campaign and the restoration necessary.

The Brody Jewish Center, during the 2016-17 school year, saw 712 undergraduate students at least once, employing student-centric techniques to help match students with programs that aligned with their interests. Hillel staff worked to help empower students to become the true leaders of the community, aiding the planning and execution of countless events, initiatives, and ways to give back to the University community and greater city of Charlottesville. For these efforts and Hillel's measurable impact, The Brody Jewish Center was honored by Hillel International with the The Phillip H. and Susan Rudd Cohen Outstanding Campus Award for being one of the two most excellent Hillels in the world.

"Hillel at UVa has received well-deserved international recognition for being one of the strongest [Hillels] in the world," Berman noted. "The leadership, programming, inclusiveness, and overall impact that it has on the Jewish students at UVa is second to none.

"We believe that we should also have a facility which is second to none."

To be able to create that incomparable facility, the Brody Jewish Center looks to raise \$3 million - a number that includes construction and an endowment to cover the costs of future maintenance and upkeep of the 100+ year old building.

"We're getting close, and we expect to break ground on construction in May," Rubin said. "We still have naming opportunities and need support, but I'm confident that we can raise what we need.

"We've come so far in what Jewish life looks like at UVa. For alumni coming back, they realize it's so different from what Hillel could offer when they were here. And people want to invest in that - invest in our students and in future Jewish leaders."

Berman agrees.

“My father was a Jewish student at UVa in the 50’s,” he said. “Back then, there weren’t a lot of opportunities for Jewish students to express their identity and spend time with other Jews. And so by creating a space for Jewish students to gather and feel comfortable, Jodi and I are honoring his memory in a way that would have made him proud.”

For more information on the *Make Our House a Home* Campaign, visit www.brodyjewishcenter.org/capital or reach out to Rabbi Rubin at (434)295-4963 or by email at jake@brodyjewishcenter.org.