

Hillel works to reach out to grad students

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Jewish Graduate Students have made it onto Maryland Hillel's radar as staff tries to find more ways to bring them into the community, according to Beth Greenberg, Senior Jewish Student Life Coordinator.

Right now, listservs are the best way for such a diverse and scattered contingent to stay in the loop. "We have a lot of graduate students on our News4Jews listserv, so they find out about the events that are going on," Greenberg said, who started her job in July. The listserv currently has 70-75 subscribers.

In the wake of High Holidays, graduate students have proven their interest in staying involved. Greenberg recounted receiving 10 to 12 calls from graduate students who were interested in attending High Holiday services. Ten more joined the graduate listserv after Greenberg made an announcement in News4Jews, and a handful of grad students "just wander into the building in the middle of the day, looking for somebody to talk to about graduate student life."

But the hardest thing to break, perhaps, will be the traditional viewpoint that Hillel is only meant for undergraduates.

Becky Zonies, who works as a internship coordinator at the Career Center, spent both her undergraduate and grad-

uate years as a student at the University of Maryland. Though heavily involved in Hillel during the former, she recounted a shift while in grad school.

"When I graduated from undergrad, in my brain, Hillel was for undergrads," Zonies said. "That actually that might be some of the reason I wasn't as involved as I could have been."

But Zonies sees things more positively for current graduate students. Calling Greenberg "outstanding," she said, "They realize what wasn't working and they're trying again."

Greenberg uses the graduate listserv to send out information about everything from Hillel events to opportunities in the larger Jewish community. Hillel's options for students include religious services and Shabbat dinners, Happy Hour with other Jews, and providing a minyan for saying Kaddish. Graduate students are also referred to networking websites like GesherCity and ShalomDC.org, which reach out to professional Jews in the Washington D.C. area.

"Our aim is to reach out to Jewish students, and show them that we have something for all of their needs and if we don't have it, we'll help them find it," Greenberg said.

Hillel is also looking to expand its initiatives. A mentoring project is in the works, where graduate students can reach out to rising seniors interested in entering their academic programs.