STUDENTS RETURNING to campus for the start of the spring semester were thrilled to find a gleaming new Hillel House ready to host its first Shabbat dinner. The Hillel House, one of President Mitchell Reiss’s early initiatives, will serve as a hub for social events, religious services and intellectual discourse for Washington College’s growing community of Jewish students.

The College is planning a dedication ceremony for later this spring.

The creation of a Hillel House has implications for both undergraduate admissions and philanthropic support for the College, notes President Reiss. “As the College seeks to recruit top students, we are competing with institutions that have already committed the resources to provide an inviting and lively environment for Jewish students of all backgrounds—both religious and secular,” he says.

“A Hillel House also represents keeping faith with our Jewish alumni,” continues Reiss, who notes that Jewish students once comprised a much larger segment of the student body. “As we make a commitment to greater diversity among our student body, it’s important that we honor all faiths.”

In the spirit of tzedakah, several alumni have made gifts and pledges brought in more than $208,000—enough to cover the cost of construction and to begin to build an endowment to support permanent programming for Hillel. For additional giving opportunities, see page 6.
Student Abroad Extends Her Stay in Israel

“T
there are times when I just have to pinch myself so I can realize I really am in Israel,” Cortnee Doll ’13 wrote on the blog she maintained during her fall semester at Ben-Gurion University (BGU) of the Negev. “I can’t get enough of this remarkable country.”

Doll had planned to spend just a semester at BGU as part of Washington College’s Study Abroad Program. A junior, she is majoring in international studies and minoring in anthropology. But she was so enthralled with the experience she decided to extend her stay at the university, which is in the Israeli desert town of Beersheba, through the spring semester.

The Ginsburg Ingerman Overseas Program in Beersheba began with six weeks of intensive Hebrew—five days a week, four hours a day. Then BGU’s regular semester commenced and Doll, who lived in a dorm with Israeli students, embarked on a full load of classes (in English) on everything from Israeli culture and politics to the history of terrorism.

She also took advantage of the Overseas Program’s many weekend excursions—to the Dead Sea and to the Golan Heights, where she stayed in a kibbutz. And she says that “everyone should experience Israel” during the holidays. “On Yom Kippur, no one drove on the roads, so even the major highways were bare. It was probably the coolest sight I’ve ever seen.”

A Voice of the Jewish Experience

THREE PROSE POEMS by Jehanne Dubrow, assistant professor of English and interim director of the College’s Rose O’Neill Literary House, won first place in the 2011 Anna Davidson Rosenberg Prize for Poetry on the Jewish Experience.

“It’s wonderful to be recognized not only as a poet but also as a voice in American Jewish culture,” says Dubrow, who is the author of three books of poetry and whose work has earned her numerous awards. Her fourth book, Red Army Red, will be published by Northwestern University Press this fall.

Dubrow’s winning poems—“Rules for Passover in the Tropics,” “Land of Milk and Honey” and “Mosquito Days”—are from her manuscript-in-progress, The Arranged Marriage. They evoke a child’s memories of growing up Jewish in a tropical place.

Celebrating Passover: “Tell stories of the mango tree, the tin-roof sound of rain on the tiny synagogue.” Celebrating news in 1948 of the birth of the Jewish state: “Outside, a parrot starts its recitation of the daily news.” Praying: “The days of awe were needles on her neck. My mother sat behind netting and learned to pray by swatting wings.”

The Anna Davidson Rosenberg Award was created in 1987 by Nedda Fratkin, Marvin Rosenberg and Violet Ginsburg in memory of their mother, a community volunteer who moved to California at the turn of the 20th century. The competition is sponsored by the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco and administered by the Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union at the University of California, Berkeley.

You can read Dubrow’s poems online at Zeek: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture. (http://zeek.forward.com/articles/117449/)
Hillel President Awarded Roy Ans Fellowship

“VE ALWAYS been interested in income inequality, and in inequality in society in general,” says Ashley Carol-Fingerhut ’14, who has been awarded one of the College’s $2,000 Roy Ans Fellowships to study Jewish-American attitudes about this timely issue.

Carol-Fingerhut finds it interesting that, while religiosity in the U.S. seems to be most often associated with conservative politics, Jews have long been more generally aligned with the Democratic Party. She plans to examine and compare attitudes toward income inequality among various Jewish sects to determine if there is a consensus on the issue. And she is asking a number of salient questions: Are attitudes toward income inequality among Jews based on ideology, on their own socioeconomic standing, or on, perhaps, Jewish identification with other minority groups?

“I hope to ultimately discover what Jewish people think the role of government should be in creating policies to address this issue,” she says.

Carol-Fingerhut grew up in a tightly knit Jewish community in Skokie, IL, and is this year’s president of Hillel. She is majoring in economics and political science, with a minor in philosophy.

The Roy Ans Fellowship in Jewish American Studies, supported by retired physician Roy Ans ’63, is available to any sophomore or junior completing a research project related to the Jewish-American experience in any area of study offered by Washington College.

The Phenomenon of 1861

ADAM GOODHEART has a gift for bringing the past to life. Ask the students who fell in love with history the day he took them to the Kent County courthouse to read for themselves the old manumission papers tied in now-faded red ribbons and squirreled away in the bowels of ancient file cabinets. Or the students who, with Goodheart, discovered and reclaimed a 300-year-old cache of documents that ended up in the state archives and made news around the world.

Travel writer, journalist, historian (and member of the Chestertown Havurah), Goodheart is the Hodson Trust-Griswold Director of the C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience at Washington College. He has written for numerous publications, from The American Scholar to National Geographic. But last year he also published his first book—and the response was electric.

An original and spellbinding retelling of the outbreak of the Civil War, 1861: The Civil War Awakening was not only a New York Times bestseller, it also won critical acclaim. The great Civil War historian James M. McPherson called Goodheart “a Monet with a pen instead of a paintbrush.” A New York Times reviewer called the book “exhilarating” and wrote that, “like many of the best works of history, 1861 creates the uncanny illusion that the reader has stepped into a time machine.”

A New York Times Notable Book of 2011, 1861 is one of Amazon’s Top Ten History Books of 2011, and Barnes and Noble named it one of the 25 best nonfiction books of 2011.

In honor of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, Goodheart also wrote regularly for a popular New York Times blog, “Disunion,” that used contemporary accounts to follow the conflict as it unfolded. One blog entry tells the little-known story of a rabbi who became infamous at the time for publishing a sermon in which he asserted that, according to the Hebrew Bible, the enslavement of Africans was the will of G-d. To read Goodheart’s full account, visit http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/07/the-rabbi-and-the-rebellion/.

Ashley Carol-Fingerhut, the 2012 Ans Fellow, will examine Jewish attitudes about inequality.

Adam Goodheart, acclaimed author of 1861: The Civil War Awakening, has a gift for story-telling.
Hillel Activities Draw Interfaith Community

It was a busy fall semester for the Washington College chapter of Hillel. Under the leadership of this year’s president, Ashley Carol-Fingerhut ’14, there have been weekly meetings, two Shabbat dinners, a cooking class, Adam Sandler movie nights, a Chanukah party and field trips to the new Hillel House to decide on paint and tile colors.

“I felt like I was on HGTV,” says Carol-Fingerhut of the chapter’s venture into home decor. “It was scary, but everyone helped and the house looks beautiful.”

Now that Hillel has a house of its own, future chapter presidents won’t have to contend with emergencies like the one Carol-Fingerhut faced in December when, at the last minute, the Chanukah party had to be moved across campus. “We’ll have our own place, everyone will know where it is, we’ll have kosher food and a kosher kitchen—it’s going to be wonderful,” she says.

It will also be easier to hold the Challah Back Cooking Class, which last fall featured lessons in preparing an Israeli salad. And Carol-Fingerhut hopes to have another Nosh ’n’ Learn, a night of discussion and eating like the one Hillel hosted in December, featuring latkhs from Chestertown’s New York Kosher Style Deli.

The chapter also hopes to get involved in more charitable activities. In December, they participated in the College’s Adopt-a-Bear program, which provides Christmas gifts for children who wouldn’t otherwise have them.

The most successful event of the season, though, was probably the Interfaith Bonfire in November, with kosher s’mores and guitar accompaniment. “It was such a blast,” Carol-Fingerhut says of the evening co-sponsored by Hillel, Catholic Campus Ministry and Campus Christian Fellowship. “We had a huge turnout, even though it was really, really cold. And now people want to do it every semester!”

Visit Washington College Hillel on Facebook.

Resources for Jewish Students

Washington College offers a welcoming community for students of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds. Close faculty mentoring helps students sort through an array of special classes, fellowships, internships and study abroad opportunities.

◆ Roy Ans Fellowship in Jewish-American Studies
◆ Institute for Religion, Politics and Culture (irpc.washcoll.edu)
◆ Study Abroad In Israel
◆ Washington College Hillel (hillel.washcoll.edu) and on Facebook
◆ Chestertown Havurah (chestertownhavurah.org)
◆ Temple B’nai Israel in Easton, MD (bnaisraeleaston.org)

For more information, contact wc_admissions@washcoll.edu

Last semester, Hillel members (above) learned to make an Israeli salad and gathered with friends of all faiths (top right) for a bonfire.
PETER MANSEAU is fascinated with what he calls “the fringes of religion.”

The prolific and award-winning young author is this year’s Patrick Henry Writing Fellow at Washington College, teaching in the philosophy department and working on his fifth book, a history of the United States that challenges the notion of its origins as a fundamentally Christian country.

Twenty Gods or None: The Making of a Nation from the Margins of Faith, to be published by Little, Brown and Company in 2013, will be the first history to explain American culture as a product of religious diversity—from “secret Jews” who sailed with Columbus to Chinese Buddhists who built the railroads.

The title is from a quote by Thomas Jefferson: “It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are 20 gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”

Manseau, who was raised Catholic (a story he relates with great elegance in his acclaimed memoir Vows: The Story of a Priest, a Nun, and their Son), has also written a dazzling novel about “the last Yiddish poet in America.” Songs for the Butcher’s Daughter won the 2008 National Jewish Book Award and the American Library Association’s Sophie Brody Medal for Outstanding Achievement in Jewish Literature, among other honors.

The dissertation he is writing for his doctorate in religion at Georgetown University is an examination of American Yiddish literature from the early 1900s. Manseau finds Yiddish stories and the stories of the people who wrote them thrillingly resonant with his own. “All these guys who wrote Yiddish literature in the 19th and early part of the 20th century, they had all been given very strict religious educations, but as they came of age as writers, and as they immigrated, they didn’t want anything to do with it. So, they pushed away from it, but they also found that they could never really escape.”

RECENT COVER STORY in the Baltimore Jewish Times featured President Mitchell Reiss and his support for Jewish education and culture at Washington College.

Describing Reiss’s initiatives as a kind of “renaissance,” Jack Gilden ’87 approvingly noted a host of changes at the College, from the Hillel chapter’s new house with its gleaming kosher kitchen to the study abroad program in Israel to the mezuzah now affixed to the door of the President’s 18th-century home.

Reiss has “young Jews and their parents davening toward the Eastern Shore,” he wrote.

A veteran journalist and marketing executive, Gilden attended Washington College some 25 years ago. “For the most part, everyone was very nice to me,” he says. But it was a bit of a culture shock, coming from a large Jewish family in Baltimore to the Eastern Shore, where “there was little to no Jewish presence at the school or in the town.”

“I’m very, very excited that Mitchell Reiss is there now,” he says. “He is energetic and accomplished and intelligent and it’s impossible not to admire him. And he is very proud of being Jewish.”

Gilden says fellow alums responded with enthusiasm to the Baltimore Jewish Times story. “I don’t think Gentile alumni were aware that there were so few Jews at the College in the old days or that it might have been in any way uncomfortable,” he says. “But everyone was excited that the school is generating interest among Jewish students and creating a Jewish presence on campus.”

To read the full article visit www.jewish-times.com.
College Seeks To Raise Endowment

Hillel Campaign Chair Roy Ans ’63 and his committee have raised $208,000 to date toward a $350,000 goal to renovate and provide programming for the Hillel House on campus. With the renovations now complete, fundraisers are now turning their attention to building endowment. Interest from endowed funds may be used to cover the cost of start-up purchases for Hillel, to support events and to sponsor leadership training and development.

The most immediate need is for Hillel House furnishings, including folding tables and chairs, furniture for offices and common spaces, small kitchen appliances and dishes and flatware.

Donors might direct their gifts to support the cost of hosting religious celebrations and meals, monthly Nosh & Learn brunches, a speaker series and Jewish cultural trips to DC, Baltimore or New York. Organizers also hope to send students to the summer Hillel Institute for leadership training.

To discuss your gift to Hillel, contact Barbara Heck, Senior Associate Vice President for College Advancement, at 410-778-7805.

Rielle Miller Gabriel ’02, a member of Lockheed Martin Corporation’s Ethics Analyst Staff and a former member of the Alumni Board, visited campus in February to talk to students about careers in ethics. The program was hosted by the Business Management Department and the Holstein Program in Ethics, created in 2007 by Richard Holstein ’68, a pediatric dentist practicing in Princeton, NJ. Dr. Holstein also sponsors the Holstein Senior Capstone Experience Prize for the senior thesis that best demonstrates an appreciation for ethics in a student’s chosen field of study.