



CENTER FOR
SMALL TOWN
JEWISH LIFE

December 2017/Kislev 5778

Dear Friends of the Center for Small Town Jewish Life,

On an unseasonably warm November evening, nearly 200 people flowed into the Waterville Opera House to hear Neshama Carlebach and the Glory to God Gospel Singers. By the end of the night, Colby students and professors, and community members of all faiths from central Maine, rose to their feet to dance and sing together. The night was an electric endnote to a Shabbat filled with singing, hiking, learning, and being together.

Two weeks later, Colby and University of Maine at Farmington students came to Beth Israel Congregation for Home Hospitality Shabbat, continuing a tradition of cultivating multigenerational Jewish community and lasting friendships between students and Beth Israel Congregation families. We rounded out our fall programming with the first session of our Community Conversations series.



College students joined community members for a musical Shabbat service with Neshama Carlebach to open the Fall Shabbaton.

Colby student leaders, community members, Waterville's mayor, Christian clergy, and Jews from around the state came to hear a discussion between the dean of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Daniel Nevins, and Maine's first African-born, Muslim elected official, Pious Ali, on the value and limits of political diversity. Beth Israel's building was illuminated and warm for the weekend before Thanksgiving, filled with vitality, study, and civil discourse.

The Center for Small Town Jewish Life has ensured that the quality of Jewish education throughout Maine



Pious Ali (left) and Rabbi Daniel Nevins with Colby student Marcques Houston at Community Conversations.

can rival that of any major urban Jewish community. With the support of Colby College, the contributions of an incredible staff gathered from across the state, and the stellar work of dedicated student fellows, we are actualizing our core commitments:

- Everyone is entitled to the best of Jewish education, regardless of geography, socio-economic status, denominational affiliation, or age.
- Our tradition is too precious to keep within the Jewish community; it can, and should, enrich the educational landscape for people of all faiths and backgrounds.
- We can foster the most dynamic and vibrant Jewish experiences when we bring institutions and generations together in a spirit of camaraderie and shared ownership.

Our supporters know the myriad difficulties of sustaining Jewish life in Maine, but our Center is driven by a dogged determination to increase the light of Jewish life and learning. With increasing success, we are turning our challenges into opportunities for innovation and synergy, building a model of collaborative Jewish life that is garnering attention far and wide. As Rav Avraham Kook taught, "*The pure righteous do not complain of the dark, but increase the light... they do not complain of ignorance, but increase wisdom.*"

On these last days of Hanukkah, and as our secular year comes to a close, I invite you to join us in increasing light and wisdom in every corner of our state, and spreading the luminosity of our small-town Torah to every corner of our country.

To donate to the Center for Small Town Jewish Life, [click here](#). Please choose "Center for Small Town Jewish Life" in the drop-down menu.

With warm wishes for a joyous Festival of Lights. *Chag Urim Sameach.*

Rabbi Rachel M. Isaacs
Director, Center for Small Town Jewish Life
Dorothy "Bibby" Levine Alford Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies

[Center for Small Town Jewish Life](#)
4271 Mayflower Hill
Waterville, Maine 04901
JewishLife@colby.edu



Center for Small Town Jewish Life, Colby College,
4271 Mayflower Hill, Waterville, ME 04901

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