



July 1, 2017

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

It is hard to believe that Leila and Rabbi Uri Romano have been with us at Hillcrest Jewish Center for almost an entire year. For those of us who see the Rabbi and his family every week, and learn with him and from him, the positive transformation that their presence brought to the Hillcrest Jewish Center community is tangible and doesn't need too much explanation. Many of our members, however, have not been exposed to Rabbi Uri and are not familiar with the many new activities and programs that took place at Hillcrest Jewish Center under his leadership. With that in mind I asked Rabbi Uri to write a short and, I am afraid, incomplete summary of his work at Hillcrest Jewish Center during this "shul year," which is coming to an end. I take this opportunity to thank the leadership of Hillcrest Jewish Center for trusting in this project, to Matt Resnick, president of Youth and Family and to the Youth and Family members for their support, and last but not least, to Rabbi Uri and his family for the blessings their presence brought to us.

Have a restful and meaningful summer.

Rabbi Manes Kogan

A Year in the Blink of an Eye

By Rabbi Uri Romano

I often think about August 1, 2016 when I moved to Queens. It seems to be very far away, but it has only been 10 months – 10 months since I began working at Hillcrest Jewish Center. We did a lot in these 10 months. We added a lot of new and exciting programs to Youth and Family adding to the great social programs Matt Resnick had been coordinating during previous years. Now that the school year is coming to an end, we are slowly closing the 2016-2017 programs in order to start programming for the year 2017-2018. Let me take this opportunity to share with you some of the programs we did over the last 10 months:

Every month we had a special Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat dinner for different age groups (Elementary School, Middle School, and High School). At each dinner we had between 15-20 kids davening, singing, eating, playing and learning together. With the teens we also had great Havdalot at the teen lounge throughout the year.

We also enjoyed together, as Youth and Family, each one of the holidays of the Jewish calendar. Starting with Rosh Hashanah we did a special Shofar class for elementary school. and special classes for teens and young adults during Yom Kippur. We also planned a Tashlich program for the entire Shul. During Sukkot we did our special "Hop on – Hop off" in three houses of young families with games and activities

at each stop. We also enjoyed a great inside "bonfire" during Lag B'Omer, a great party in honor of Yom Yerushalaim and a special Tikun Layl Shavuot only for teens on the second night of Shavuot.

One of the most exciting programs of the year was our now traditional "Shabbat Lunch and Learn". Over 85 parents and kids gathered once a month to have a *flaishig* Shabbat lunch sponsored by one or more of the young families. We started all together, then divided ourselves into different groups (parents, teens, and younger children) to study about each one of the Ten Commandments, one commandment each month. Besides this learning program we started a new study group for parents on Sunday morning called: "Fresh Start." During the winter, we also had a program only for Youth and Family parents, called: "Drinks, Desserts and Stories." As the name suggests, each month we gathered at someone's house to share drinks, desserts, and amazing stories from the Talmud. Another very entertaining program of the year was "Ping-Pong and Pirkei Avot" where every other Sunday night some parents with their kids would come to play and then stay to study.

Only ten months... and these are just the programs exclusively for Youth and Family. In addition, we put together a program with the HJC Sisterhood called: "Moonlights," a monthly gathering for women of all ages to celebrate Rosh Chodesh.

We also joined, as Youth and Family, many of the wonderful existing and new programs at HJC. To mention only a few of them, the Challah Bake, the Tu B'Shvat lunch, the Yom Ha'atzmaut lunch, and many other moments celebrated together as a community.

When I close my eyes and start to think how much we did in only 10 months I must confess that sometimes I cannot believe it, but some way or the other, here we are, looking forward to many more months and years filled with meaningful programs focused on Torah, prayer and Chesed with Youth and Family.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Matt Resnick, president of Youth and Family, for all his years of dedication to help building this group at HJC and for his constant support. I also wish to thank the leadership of the synagogue and Rabbi Kogan for believing in the importance of Youth and Family, not only as the future of the synagogue, but also its present.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank the parents of Youth and Family for their commitment, their effort, their participation, and their trust.

May we grow from strength to strength!

Rabbi Uriel Romano