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# STETSON UNIVERSITY

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Stetson University Dedicates Jeffrey and Diane Ginsburg Hillel House

*“Like any good Jewish boy, Jeffrey started with bagels.”*

**DELAND, Florida**, Dec. 10, 2019 – When Jeffrey Ginsburg arrived at Stetson University in the late 1980s, he “discovered that the Jewish community he had grown up with didn’t seem to exist at Stetson.”

He decided to create that community by starting Stetson’s first chapter of Hillel, the international Jewish campus organization. A plaque inside Stetson’s new Jeffrey and Diane Ginsburg Hillel House reveals how he did it: “Like any good Jewish boy, Jeffrey started with bagels.”

“Jews love bagels, bagels love Jews – it’s a symbiotic relationship,” Stetson junior Joseph Ginsburg jokingly told the crowd during the dedication of the newly renovated, red-brick, 1930 Tudor-style home on Florence Avenue. “My dad was just one guy who really wanted to grow a community where people could have good interactions with each other. He went around with a red wagon and he would just hand out bagels to everyone. That’s how the first Hillel community started here.”

The opening of the building, which bears the names of his late parents (both Stetson graduates), marks the first time Stetson Hillel has had its own dedicated place on the DeLand campus.

Renovation of the Stetson Hillel House was funded with a \$2 million gift from the Winter Park-based Ginsburg Family Foundation, chaired by Joseph’s grandfather, real estate developer Alan Ginsburg. Joseph Ginsburg is on the foundation’s board.

The establishment of a physical Hillel House “was really kind of Joe’s idea,” Alan Ginsburg said of his grandson during his remarks at the dedication. “We are very, very proud of this.” He also praised Stetson President Wendy B. Libby, PhD, who gave the opening address at the ceremony and attended with her husband, Richard.

“Wendy, you are leaving a legacy here for everyone and for Jewish students,” Alan Ginsburg said. “You have taken such an interest in preserving, promoting and advancing Jewish life here in DeLand and at Stetson. Not a lot of people would think about Stetson University having a true Jewish life program, but it really does and it’s very, very exciting.”

Sam Friedman, director of Hillel at Stetson, told the audience that “when I was growing up, my mother always told me that the best part about being Jewish was that no matter where you go, if you find the Jewish community, you will find family. The Jeffrey and Diane Ginsburg Hillel House is the promise that the Jewish community makes to itself,” he said noting that, “This house is the physical manifestation of the Jewish value that ‘all of Israel is responsible for one another.’ It’s also the modern version of Abraham’s tent: open on all sides and welcoming to anybody who passes by and anybody who needs us.”

“I just want to try to do the right things for the right reasons as my dad did so long ago starting the Hillel community,” Joseph Ginsburg said. “I hope that many great memories are had in this building.”

Stetson Hillel benefactors Gus Gibbs and his sister Marcia Berman, who President Libby described as “among the very first if not the first Jewish family here in DeLand,” each addressed the crowd.

“I grew up in DeLand and I didn’t think there would ever be a Hillel House here at Stetson University,” Gibbs said.

Berman expressed a similar sentiment: “I used to take piano lessons around the corner and play my recitals in Elizabeth Hall. Who ever thought there would be a Hillel House on this campus? Never in a million years.”

More of [the story](#) about Stetson Hillel, the Jeffrey and Diane Ginsburg Hillel House with a video of the dedication ceremony and [photos](#) can be found online.

#### About Stetson University

*Founded in 1883, Stetson University is the oldest private university in Central Florida. Stetson focuses on intense learning experiences in a supportive community that allows students to develop their voice in a connected, inclusive environment. [Stetson University ranks](#) No. 5 on U.S. News & World Report’s 2019 list of Best Regional Universities (South), and has been recognized as one of The Princeton Review’s 385 Best Colleges, 2020 edition. [Stay connected](#) with Stetson on social media.*

