

UT freshmen discover Chabad through pizza

By Jori Epstein

AUSTIN — As fresh faces eagerly approached the home of the Rohr Chabad Jewish Student Center near the University of Texas at Austin on Sept. 12, intriguing aromas of equal excitement greeted them. Juicy red tomatoes, savory orange bell peppers, emerald and black olives, and shredded mozzarella cheese sat in crystal-like Styrofoam bowls spanning four tables length.

Balls of dough lay beside them, ready for these Jewish freshmen to join and knead them into personal pizzas. Add the spice of Italian seasoning and bitter chopped onions and Chabad's gourmet pizza oven popped out the most delicious of cuisines.

"[The pizza-making event] was a lot of fun," said Cari Cohen, a psychology freshman from Deerfield, Ill. "Everyone bonds over food and we could just talk about anything. It's interesting to see where everyone's from and what they're doing."

This year's Freshman Connect opening spun off last year's pizza-making event, *Pizza in the Hut*: gourmet pizza making in the Sukkah. Chabad co-director Rabbi Zev Johnson knew that previous Freshman Connect success mandated the continuation of the program this school year.

"I know as an alumnus of UT that freshman year can be a little overwhelming," Johnson said. "To be able to gather together with peers and experience things in a warm, friendly and Jewish environment enables a healthy structure and balance amongst the students."

Planning meticulously to ensure an open time slot for the event, Johnson strived for maximum turnout. Attendance totaling 60 freshmen surpassed expectations.

"It was the largest Freshman Connect ever," Johnson said. "It is an amazing and well-rounded freshman class and we are pleased that they have decided to make Chabad their home away from home, for this event and so many others we put on."



Photos: Courtesy UT Chabad

Reuben Veytsman, right, of Plano and Cari Cohen of Deerfield, Ill., were among attendees at the UT Chabad Freshman Connect pizza-making party last month.

Though some, including Cohen, had already ventured to Chabad for Shabbat dinners and a back-to-school barbecue, many freshmen entered the haven the first time for the Freshman Connect event. The event showed students of all affiliations and hometowns the religious opportunities available.

Journalism freshman Corey Schneider from Dallas hadn't been to Chabad before the event, but returned quickly for Rosh Hashanah and plans to continue attending.

"[The Freshman Connect program] seemed like a very welcoming activity and I created connections I wouldn't have made otherwise," Schneider said. "[Chabad] is a great way for students of the same faith and age to socialize while remembering the Judaism by which they're connected. I will be attending Shabbat services as well as High Holiday festivities in the future."

Chabad board members volunteered to make the event a success, from organizing logistics to cooking the pizzas. Though sophomore blog editor Kayla Sokoloff wanted to give back after Freshman Connect brought her to the Chabad family last year, senior and Pizza and Parsha volunteer Andrew Pansick came with different motives. He wanted to make sure freshmen know to take

advantage of the Chabad he heard little about until his later years.

"The Freshman Connect program lets our freshmen know that Chabad is there for them for anything they might need," Pansick said. "Rabbi Zev asked me to come help out because it centered around pizza making, something I've come to know through my work with Pizza and Parsha. I really enjoyed the fantastic turnout from freshmen from a wide variety of Greek organizations and other groups, giving them a chance to get to know each other on good terms over a great meal."

In addition to the numerous holiday services and meals Chabad features in the upcoming weeks, its latest Freshman Connect event was S'mores in the Sukkah Wednesday.

"Chabad is a home away from home coming from so far and having a welcome Jewish connection has been really nice," Cohen said. "Everyone's so inviting and open, you just want to keep going back to be a part of it."

To stay up to date with latest happenings at UT Chabad, visit www.JewishLonghorns.com and the Chabad at UT page on Facebook.

Jori Epstein, a 2012 Yavneh Academy graduate and UT-Austin freshman, does public relations for UT Chabad.



Shannon Peskind of Dallas, right, made fast friends with Lauren Barash of Los Angeles during UT Chabad's freshman event.



DISCOVER OUR RETIREMENT LIVING TRADITION

For generations Treemont Retirement Community has served your family members by offering Independent Living featuring an exceptional blend of hospitality, trust and peace of mind. Our tradition of caring continues today, and there's never been a better time to get acquainted with our proud past and bright future.

Carry on the tradition by
calling (866) 795-0259 today!

TREEMONT
Retirement Community

a BROOKDALE® managed community

Your story continues here...

Independent Living
5550 Harvest Hill Road, Dallas, Texas 75230
www.brookdaleliving.com



© Reg. U.S. Patent and TM Office. 20435-ROP02-0612 DS

Hillels of NT celebrate new year

Hillels of North Texas brought in the Jewish New Year with frozen yogurt and apples and honey.

Students from the University of Texas at Dallas and Collin College Hillel met at Zinga with

Rabbi Rafi Cohen and ate frozen yogurt while talking about the meanings and symbols used to bring in the New Year.

Also, Hillel at the University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University in Denton held a

Rosh Hahannah event at UNT. Rabbi Levi Dubrawsky shared the meanings of Rosh Hashanah and spoke about its symbolism and why Rosh Hashanah is the only Jewish holiday to be two nights everywhere.