



# HAFTR Heritage

Issue: #13

March 2013

## MAZEL TOV!

### ENGAGEMENTS

Tanya Wertentheil (HAFTR HS '03) on her engagement to Nathan Farber

Jordana Spector (HAFTR HS '08) on her engagement to Jason Jacobs

Josh Pianko (HAFTR HS '08) on his engagement to Lindsay Stadtmauer

Jonathan Maslow (HAFTR HS '01) on his engagement to Lauren Auerbacher

Welcome back to **HAFTR HERITAGE!**

We would like to wish all of our HAFTR alumni a wonderful Passover! Chag kasher v'sameach!

This is the 13th edition of our newsletter geared toward YOU, our HILI, HILLEL and HAFTR alumni!

It has been very exciting to hear all of your feedback! We also want to thank you for sending us your updated contact information. This has allowed us to build a stronger alumni database. Please continue to do so. We really appreciate it.

**Enjoy this issue and stay connected!**

**Melodie Scharf**, Chairperson, HAFTR Alumni Relations and Co-Editor of HAFTR Heritage

Elyssa Hirmes (HAFTR HS '07) on her engagement to Morris Sasson

Natan Nussbaum (HAFTR HS '03) on his engagement to Hillary Berkowitz

Ina Feinerman Schlessel (HAFTR HS '79) on the engagement of her son Zach (HAFTR HS '09) to Davida Shubowitz (HAFTR HS '09)

Jamie Parnes (HAFTR HS '08) on his engagement to Chana Spirn

Talli Gerut (HAFTR HS '03) on her engagement to Matt Levine

Alexa Kotowitz (HAFTR HS '11) on her engagement to Sammy Gelnick (HAFTR HS '09)

## **WEDDINGS**

Talia Stein (HAFTR HS '08) on her marriage to Zalman Baron

Michael Pinewski (HAFTR HS '98) on his marriage to Elizabeth Krieger

Michael Brenner (HAFTR HS '97) on his marriage to Amy Seligman

Adam Hanau (HAFTR HS '08) on his marriage to Emily Pisem

**Rise (Davidoff) Kaufmann**, Hillel Elem. '73, Hillel High School '76, Vice Chair, HAFTR Alumni Relations

**Leslie (Reis) Gang**, HAFTR Elem. '99, HAFTR High School, '03, Director of Admissions & Communications, Co-Editor of HAFTR Heritage

# HAFTR ALUMNI FEATURE



## **Matthew Ratz (HAFTR HS '01)**

### **1. WHAT YEARS DID YOU ATTEND HAFTR?**

I entered Morah Rosenfeld's Kindergarten class in September of 1987 and I graduated from HAFTR High School in June of 2001.

### **2. WHAT COLLEGE AND GRADUATE**

### **SCHOOL DID YOU ATTEND?**

I didn't attend yeshiva in Israel in order that I could attend the University of Maryland, College Park. I earned my Bachelor of Arts in English Literature in 2005 after spending a year living and studying in Sheffield, England. I then continued on to earn my Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction from Maryland in 2006.

### **3. TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT YOU DO**

Eliana Bavli (HAFTR HS '03) on her marriage to Samuel Tisch

Avery Ratz (HAFTR HS '07) on his marriage to Shoshana Hershkop

Tova Sackett (HAFTR HS '04) on her marriage to Rafi Muller

Amy Small (HAFTR HS '09) on her marriage to Brian Getzler

## **BIRTHS**

Melissa Enbar Benzel (HAFTR HS '02) and her husband Irwin on the birth of their daughter

Simon Livi (HAFTR HS '03) and his wife Gila on the birth of their son

Pamela Rapoport Frand (HAFTR HS '96) and her husband David on the birth of their daughter

Leora Lent (HAFTR HS '04) Machlis and her husband Chaim on the birth of their son

Jonathan Katz (HAFTR HS '00) and his wife Jessica on the birth of their daughter

Stephanie Michael Bendrihem (HAFTR HS '04) and her husband JJ

## **TODAY?**

Today I have a very rewarding career; I develop and implement vocational training curricula for adults with autism at a community-based training center in Maryland called CSAAC.

## **4. HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED?**

Since 2005, I had been teaching at various levels-high school, middle school, and community college. At all levels, I was working with students with various learning disabilities-both documented and undocumented. For 18 months I was the sole special educator at a Jewish school in Silver Spring, MD that desperately wanted to ignore its learning disabled students. When the opportunity arose to concentrate on this population-adults with autism-and to work outside of a formal schoolhouse setting, I was eager to jump at it.

## **5. WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF YOUR CAREER?**

As a teacher, I strove to connect with my students; I feel very strongly that personal relationships can make even the most boring academic content have a glimmer of interest. Autism, as a developmental disability, makes forming meaningful relationships very difficult for the individuals I serve. I find it challenging and rewarding to prove to these individuals that I have their best interests in mind. Even though most adults with autism have unpredictable communication styles, I find that, even after the few months I've been working with them, most of my clients show me-in their own ways-that they know I care about them.

## **6. WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY DIFFERENCES**

on the birth of their daughter

Lisa Cooperberg Kuflik (HAFTR HS '04) and Daniel Kuflik (HAFTR HS '04) on the birth of a daughter

Aliza Goldofsky Kalton (HAFTR HS '03) and her husband Ari on the birth of their son

Danit Cohen Zerykier (HAFTR HS '96) and her husband Aaron on the birth of their son!

Jackie Fiedler Weiss (HAFTR HS '06) and her husband Shlomo on the birth of a daughter

Nina Cohen Bondarsky (HAFTR ES '00) and Eric Bondarsky (HAFTR HS '03) on the birth of their son

Avery Maron (HAFTR HS '00) and his wife Robin on the birth of their daughter

Evan Stulberger (HAFTR HS '00) and his wife Rebecca on the birth of their son

Samantha Glaser Orenbuch (HAFTR HS '05) and her husband Uri on the birth of their twin daughters

Ashley Kotowitz Hammer (HAFTR HS '05) and her husband Moshe on the birth of their daughter

**If you'd like to include your simcha in the next edition of HAFTR Heritage, send an e-**

## **BETWEEN SUCH PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS AND PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN?**

The biggest difference is the structure of the programs. When working with youth with autism, typically services are delivered in a school setting that has its own built-in structures (for better or for worse). When providing services for adults, the primary goal is to build their skills so they can live and work as close to independently as possible. There is no pre-existing structure, but there is a much more concrete goal. Many of the approaches that work with youth with autism-such as Applied Behavior Analysis and reinforcement schedules-work with adults too, but the lack of a formal structure gives way to a lot of experimentation.

## **7. WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GIVE TO FELLOW ALUMNI ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT YOU ARE DOING?**

I remember growing up among my HAFTR peers there was tremendous focus on earning large sums of money in our careers. Now there's nothing wrong with earning money, but it is not the only factor that contributes to living a happy life. Working as an educator, and now for a non-profit organization, I realize I am limiting my earning potential. But I am affecting the lives of those who struggle to learn and function in the world; I am making their lives better and I am showing them that I care about them. When I come home from a day of work, I find I take less for granted. Serving this population makes me want to live more vigorously, and I see clearly that money is not the only factor that contributes to a meaningful life.

## **8. WHAT IS THE LATEST PROJECT YOU'RE WORKING ON?**

At the moment I am conducting original research to see if I can find an overlap in the scholarly fields of adult education-primarily andragogy and heutagogy-and

mail to  
[haftralumni@haftr.org](mailto:haftralumni@haftr.org)

**Become a Class  
Ambassador!**

Class of 1975 (Hillel)  
[Jonathan Alter](#)

Class of 1976 (Hillel)  
[Rise Davidoff Kaufmann](#)

Class of 1977 (Hillel)  
[Suzanne Berkowitz  
Gurvitch](#)

Class of 1978 (Hillel)  
[Karen Schiffman Baker  
Alyssa Davidoff Sterba](#)

Class of 1983  
[Felcia Feder Bernstein](#)

Class of 1984  
[Aleeza Steinhorn Lauer](#)

Class of 1985  
[Simona Vogel  
Lumeman](#)

Class of 1986  
[Estee Berman Stein  
Carolyn  
WallachRosenberg](#)

Class of 1987  
[Royce Feld Maron  
Michelle Golub Shari  
Haim Kaufman](#)

Class of 1988  
[Stephen Wallach  
Jennifer Wiessen Zwiebel](#)

Class of 1989  
[Wendy](#)

autism education. I am trying to develop a unified philosophy of education for adults with developmental disabilities because one does not yet exist. I find the more I search, the less I find, so I am hoping I can contribute something meaningful to the scholarly debate on how to teach adults with autism.

**9. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE?**

I'm not the type of person who willingly kowtows to supervisors whose ideas are antiquated. I have found, operating within the field of public and private K-12 schooling that many administrators are trapped by ancient ideas about students and learning. As a high school, middle school, and college teacher, I endeavored to shake things up, and often, I would butt heads with folks who were in positions to fire me. I think my biggest challenge has been standing up for my students and sacrificing my positions for the sake of affecting change in small but meaningful ways. It's hard to appreciate that mission when you're unemployed, but in retrospect, it has been a rewarding journey.

**10. NOW THINKING BACK TO HAFTR, CAN YOU REMEMBER ANY FUN OR EXCITING MOMENT IN THE CLASSROOM OR WITH A TEACHER?**

I remember Judge Goldman's Public Speaking class was both incredibly rich with content and a lot of fun. The class was all seniors, and by the third week, 80% of the students just skipped every day. I and a few friends, four of us in total, would attend religiously, and Judge Goldman would take advantage of the small class to share really powerful life lessons with us. I think I owe a lot of how I present myself now and how I speak publicly to his teaching.

[Austan Ottensmeyer](#)  
[Nicole Beck Spivak](#)

Class of 1991  
[Steven Ackerman](#)

Class of 1993  
[Elyse Dorkin Sharon](#)

Class of 1994  
[Art Zoklan](#)

Class of 1995  
[Chari Schwartz Herman](#)

Class of 2000  
[Tamar Ausubel Scharf](#)

Class of 2001  
[Ariella Schulman](#)  
[Weitzman](#)  
[Craig Weitzman](#)

Class of 2002  
[Jamie Rohde Scharaga](#)  
[Sondra Scharf](#)

Class of 2003  
[Leslie Reis Gang](#)

Class of 2004  
[Allison Rohde Rahmani](#)

Class of 2009  
[Jennifer Lauer](#)  
[Jessica Shapiro](#)

Class of 2010  
[Alana Warbit](#)

Class of 2011  
-volunteers needed

Class of 2012  
-volunteers needed

**Friend us on  
Facebook!**

to the reunion.

## 11. ARE YOU STILL IN TOUCH WITH ANY OF YOUR HAFTR CLASSMATES?

Yoni Samlan (HAFTR '01) and Mick Axelrod (HAFTR '02) were groomsmen at my wedding. Also, while preparing for our 10-year reunion which happened in 2011, I reached out to Yoni Samlan and Yaakov Dworetzky, both my classmates. We had formed HAFTR's music club in 2000, and we regrouped to play a medley of '90s and early-2000s pop songs as the opening act of the reunion. It was really great jamming with them in the days before the get-together; it was like nothing had changed in 10 years

---

## HAFTR FACULTY FEATURE

### Wendy Kaplan Friend (Hili HS '73)



#### WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE HILI?

I graduated from HILI in 1973.

#### WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT WHILE ATTENDING SCHOOL?

History- because Mrs. Phillips taught it.





Like the Official  
HAFTR Page  
on Facebook!



Follow us on  
Twitter!



**WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE YOU INVOLVED IN? DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY CLUBS OR SPORTS?**

Swimming club.

**WHAT SCHOOL(S) DID YOU ATTEND AFTER GRADUATING FROM HILI?**

Stern College, Bankstreet, UCLA

**WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT HAFTR?**

Computer Graphics teacher, I teach AP computer graphics, regular computer graphics and animation.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER AT HAFTR?**

The students are inquisitive and happy. Each student's individuality thrives in my classroom. They beat to their own drums working collectively together.

**NOT ONLY ARE YOU A FACULTY MEMBER AND ALUM OF THE SCHOOL YOU ARE ALSO A PARENT OF HAFTR ALUMNI. WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO SEND YOUR CHILDREN TO HAFTR?**

Because HAFTR is a strong academic environment and a warm inviting place to learn and socialize.

**IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU SEE THE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE IN SCHOOL THAT YOU WISH YOU HAD THE CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN WHILE BEING A STUDENT?**

I wish we had computers in our day. It is a valuable skill that everybody needs.

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?**

I am a sculptor, working in various mediums. I sculpt in marble, hand forge and weld in metal and fused glass.

### **TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.**

My husband David is a TV journalist, my son Matthew is a business man dealing in high-end technology, his wife Gealia is a speech pathologist, they have a daughter named Nili Sarit. My daughter Elianne is a TV journalist; her fiancé is in money management. My daughter Alexia is a landscape architect and her husband Harris is a lawyer.

### **NOW THAT YOU ARE WORKING AT HAFTR, CAN YOU TELL US HOW THE SCHOOL HAS CHANGED SINCE YOU WERE A STUDENT HERE?**

There are a large variety of AP courses available to the students. They have a student lounge and a great G.O. store.

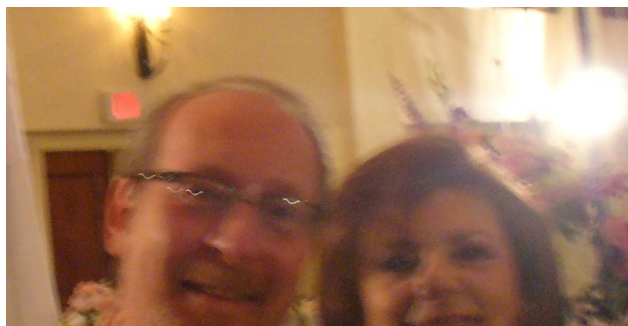
### **DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS THAT YOU MADE WHILE YOU WERE A STUDENT AT HAFTR?**

I have maintained friendships with students from the elementary school Hillel as well as the high school HILI.

---

## **HAFTR ALUMNI COUPLE**

**Ira (Shaya) & Rona Sturm**  
(Hili HS)

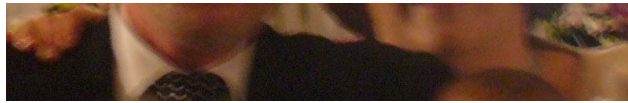


**How many years did you attend HILI?**

**Ira: 12 years**

**Rona: 10 years**





**What year did you graduate HILI?**

**Ira:** 1969

**Rona:** I left HILI after junior year.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT WHILE ATTENDING SCHOOL?**

**Rona:** Math

**WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE YOU INVOLVED IN? DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY Clubs or SPORTS?**

**Ira:** If you check the 1969 yearbook, you will see that I excelled in every nonexistent team.

**Rona:** G.O. Officer

**How old were you when you two met each other?**

**Ira:** 17

**Rona:** 15

**HOW AND WHEN DID YOU BECOME A COUPLE?**

**Rona:** Ira was involved in the Young Israel of Far Rockaway youth program. I was involved in the White Shul program. We met on a joint program where we visited the local hospital and nursing homes to blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah.

**WHEN DID YOU KNOW HE/SHE WAS THE ONE?**

By the second Tekiah Rona knew that Ira was the one. Ira is still not sure.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HAFTR MEMORY TOGETHER?**

Prom night, going to the city, having dinner at Lou G. Siegle's and then going to a night club to see Flip Wilson. That was probably the last time either of us went

to a night club.

**IF YOU COULD HAVE LUNCH WITH ONE TEACHER TODAY, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?**

**Ira:** Rabbi Medetsky, so I could apologize for what my class put him and the other teachers through.

**Rona:** Rabbi Krasner impressed me with his vast math knowledge and enthusiasm.

**WHAT ITEM WAS ALWAYS IN YOUR LOCKER/BACKPACK?**

**Ira:** That stupid tie that we were forced to wear every day.

**IF YOUR FRIENDS FROM HAFTR COULD DESCRIBE YOU IN ONE WORD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

**Rona:** Happy and friendly

**WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE CLASSROOM MOMENT (WITH A TEACHER?CLASSMATE?)**

**Ira:** Hanging a dressed mannequin out of the second floor window of "D" Building and the resulting commotion it caused.

**Rona:** Trying to convince a teacher that my parents worked for an airline, my dad as a pilot and my mother as a stewardess.

**WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL ONCE YOU GRADUATED?**

**Ira:** I went to Yeshiva University and then to Hofstra Law School.

**Rona:** After leaving HILI, I doubled up at to finish high school early at Far Rockaway High School. Then I went to Brooklyn College, graduating with a major in early

childhood education.

### **TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR LIVES TODAY?**

We live in Woodmere and have three children who are all HAFTR graduates. Our oldest, Elana, is married to a HAFTR graduate, Michael Szafranski. They live in Florida with children Alexa, Bennett and Emma. Our middle daughter, Allison, lives in Riverdale with her husband, Jeff Miller and daughter Annie. Our youngest, Jonathan, is single and soon to graduate Hofstra Law School.

### **DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS THAT YOU MADE WHILE YOU WERE A STUDENT AT HAFTR?**

Many of the people who we were close with at HILLI reside in Woodmere From Ira's class there are Elliot Feinerman, Michael Salamon, Gaye (Sicklick) Hoffman and Joan (Rosenthal) Gurtman. From Rona's class there are Miriam (Alson) Mehl, Danny Frankel, Allen Ganz and Avi Haar.

There are others, who although not close, when we meet, it is as if no time has passed since our previous meeting. For example, a few years ago we went to the West Coast to attend the wedding of one of Ira's partner's daughter. We stayed at the same hotel in L.A. as Adina (Haar) and Norman Misher (both of the Class of '69) who were in L.A. for the aufruf and wedding of their son. The Mishers invited us to join them in the Simcha and it was like we were back in HILLI, just enjoying each other's company

### **ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO ADD?**

**Ira:** When I was in HILLI, I was constantly in the principal's office or Dr. Shimkin's office, the subject of some disciplinary issue. It was get back time when I

became president of HAFTR and met the principals in their offices at my request, not theirs. It was such a pleasure not having to defend my actions. Kidding aside, when we attended HILI, it was a relatively small school. You knew everyone and you formed a kinship that is hard to describe. While we had different cliques, what we all had in common was that we were the Class of '69 and the world was ours to conquer.

---

## **The Jacob Greenberg Memorial Basketball All-Star Game**

**To Benefit the Victims of Hurricane Sandy**

**Sunday, April 14th**

**6:00pm**

**The Hawks' Nest at HAFTR Elementary School**

33 Washington Avenue, Lawrence

The HAFTR Hawks 2004-2007 all-stars take on the HAFTR Hawks 2008-2011 all-stars  
in the biggest basketball event of the decade!



**Admission: \$10**

**1 Free Raffle Ticket Included With Admission**

**Additional Raffle Tickets: \$5**

---

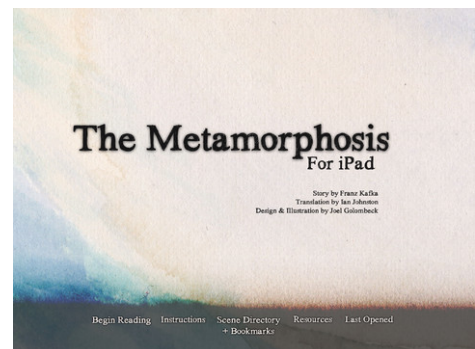
## HAFTR GRADUATE ILLUSTRATES APP FOR IPAD



**Joel Golombeck  
(HAFTR HS '03)**

The Metamorphosis for iPad brings an entirely new reading experience to the iPad, presenting Kafka's masterpiece like it could not be told on any other platform. Using the tablet's exploratory, multimedia features, this app was built as a launching point for imagining and shaping how stories could and will be told in the digital age. For readers coming back to The Metamorphosis, this illustrated, interactive app brings a fresh perspective, leveraging new technological platforms to create a more immersive reading experience. And for new, technology-inclined readers diving into Kafka's world for the first time, The Metamorphosis for iPad offers a reading experience built for their contemporary tastes and expectations, while also staying completely true and respectful to the magic, beauty and history of literary tradition.

The version of The Metamorphosis for iPad in the iTunes store today is the first publication of Joel's recently formed literature technology company, Rocket Chair Media. However, this specific app was in development for about 2 years.



It began with an earlier prototype (only the first chapter of The Metamorphosis, less features, cruder functionality) that was the product of his MFA thesis at Parsons, where Joel studied design and technology. But really, the idea of multimedia storytelling - of combining text, images and interaction into a new reading experience - has been something that gradually developed throughout his educations in art, writing, literature, design and technology. Designing, illustrating, and serving as Creative Director on The Metamorphosis for iPad is truly a culmination of all the paintings and drawings Joel has made and seen, websites and apps Joel has used, studied and designed, games he has played, and stories and poems he has read, written and illustrated.

"This app is something I am absolutely proud of on its own, but my real excitement is in knowing that it was only the first of many literature+technology projects to come."

For more information about the app, [click here](#).

---

## **HAFTR SENIORS VISIT ALUM IN NYC** **GOOGLE OFFICE**



A select group of HAFTR High School senior essay contest winners had the privilege of visiting the Manhattan offices of internet giant Google on Monday, March 4. This unique field trip was conceived, developed, and organized by our own HAFTR senior, Evan Margolis.



The seniors chosen to participate in this exciting trip were Evan Margolis, Mathew Maron, Avery Feit, Austin Feit, Alexandra Gluck, Adam Lifshitz, Michael Sosnick, Atara Schein, Eden Hoffman, Rebecca Jedwab, Samantha Weissman, Allison Wanderer, and Rebecca Alenick. Home to over 3,000 Google employees, the Manhattan office is the second largest Google office, rivaled only by Google's headquarters in Mountain View, California. To put some perspective on the size of the office, the building's footprint is as long as the Empire State Building lying on its side.

In order to be selected for the trip, HAFTR seniors were required to enter an essay contest sponsored by Google. Students were asked to write about what they thought was the most innovative Google product, and the reasoning behind their decision. Selected students were then notified of their acceptance by Google.

Students began the day by touring the New York City office. The tour was conducted by Google employee and HAFTR High School alumnus Lee Bienstock ('01).

The tour's first stop was an interactive exhibit depicting the evolution of computing. Students were able to see and touch various computers, some dating back to the early 20th century. It was an enlightening illustration of the advancement



of technology. Students then toured some of the facilities, including one of the employee lounges. From video games to videoconference-enabled treadmills, each employee lounge is filled with technology and equipment for Google employees to enjoy. Sleep pods are also located throughout the building, enabling Google employees to catch up on some rest during their long working hours.

Another part of the tour was Google's renowned micro-kitchens. Each micro kitchen is uniquely themed, and every kitchen has food unique to its theme. Our students

enjoyed making Lego creations in the Lego micro-kitchen. There is a micro-kitchen every 150 feet in every Google office. At Google one never fears going hungry while on the job - because the food is free and plentiful! Traveling within the building is not difficult. Scooter stations line the hallway and enable every employee to quickly get where they need to go. HAFTR students had lunch at Google's Hemisphere Café, which has glatt kosher food for Google's observant Jewish employees.

Following lunch, students had an innovation session with Mr. Bienstock. The session consisted of an overview of Google, its products, innovations, company culture, and an explanation of how Google uses its advertising technology to generate and consistently increase revenue. All the HAFTR students found the trip fascinating, fun, and informative.

---

### **HAFTR Heritage is all about you!**

Tell us about your latest news and update your personal information so we can keep you posted about your classmates and their journey since graduating from HAFTR. You can do this by friending us on Facebook or by emailing us at [haftralumni@haftr.org](mailto:haftralumni@haftr.org).

Send us your recommendations of people you know whom we might want to profile for Alumni Features, Alumni Teachers and Alumni Couples, along with other interesting alumni story suggestions.

[Forward email](#)



---

HAFTR | 389 Central Avenue | Lawrence | NY | 11559