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John Boccacino:

Hello, and welcome back to the Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, Senior Internal Communications Specialist at Syracuse University.

Ethan Bair:

We're very fortunate, I feel, at Syracuse Hillel. Of course, we're a religious organization in a certain way, but we're also a cultural organization. This is space for Jewish community, and most of the programs that we do on a regular basis are really about building community first. Then we also have opportunities for Jewish education, and we have opportunities, I hope soon, for group support and more of a wellness environment and social justice activities like community service, and so forth. So far, the last couple weeks, it's just been great getting to meet students.

John Boccacino:

Our guest today on the Cuse Conversations Podcast is Ethan Bair, the new rabbi here at Syracuse University. Ethan, we are so pleased you took the time to join us here on the podcast. How are you doing these days?

Ethan Bair:

I have a staff of multiple people, and so I have teammates who have been keeping me abreast, and just like bootcamp, telling me about Syracuse and what to expect and planning the year, so that's been really helpful. Then last week, we had our FreshFest, our pre-orientation program for Jewish students. It was really an amazing way to start the semester and meet a ton of students, because we had 280 freshmen who participated and 90 upper class mentors. It was really energizing to meet so many students and to

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Ethan Bair:

Sure. I am from Boston originally. I grew up in the city and attended some private schools, some public schools. I then went to Oberlin College for college, which is a small liberal arts college in Ohio. It was the college farthest from Boston that I applied to when I was applying to college, and it was a great school for me. It was probably very different than Syracuse, because it's small and doesn't have fraternities and sororities and that kind of thing, but I had a very close relationship with my Hillel rabbi and was very active in Hillel there.

I think I actually attribute my college experience very much with why I became a rabbi. There was a lovely Jewish community and the largest Jewish community that I was really ever a part of was in college. I became a rabbi because I was considering, I was a religion and Jewish studies major in college, and I was considering going into academia. I did a Fulbright in Berlin right after college. I was considering going down a more academic route and realized I wanted to teach, but I liked the idea of teaching in a

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have the real talk conversations about what they're going through and building relationships not just based in proving how cool students are to each other, but also really with vulnerability and being able to support each other. I think in order to get there, there's a lot of trust and a lot of the social community-building that we have to do first to be able to form those relationships and build that trust with students.

John Boccacino:

You seem like such an energetic person to lead us here at Hillel as our new rabbi. You mentioned before you've been trying to get to know the students. What are some other ways you plan on going out there into the community on campus to make people see who you are and how you can help them with their development?

Ethan Bair:

That's a great question. We park ourselves at People's Place at Hendricks Chapel on a weekly basis, a wonderful spot for coffee on campus, also student-run and cheap coffee. That's great, and I'm hoping to

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all of us on campus, and I think you're in the perfect place at Hendricks Chapel. I believe Hendricks was the first multi-denominational campus center of faith on a university in this country, and you mentioned how many great interfaith partners you've got at Hendricks. How special is it to be a part of that team?

Ethan Bair:

I think it's really important. I think it's really important because the community that we build as interfaith chaplains, even just among ourselves, I think permeates out into the campus community. It's a wonderful group of people who serve as chaplains at Syracuse through Hendricks, and it's a blessing to get to know them and to work with them and to think together how we can do things together. I think sometimes, we all emphasize our own programs in our own community and wanting to be available in that way, but I think the interesting work is also whhhhhhhhhhh,that we wn pnity and'rea (r own coi)1 (J)ur own i

