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your Torah
portion.
Not your service hours.**

Because We Care offers fun and fulfilling volunteer opportunities for busy b'nai mitzvah students.

Have a group you'd like to help or an idea for a project? We'll help make it happen with step-by-step guides and ongoing support. Give back on your own schedule or join us for one (or more!) of our Monthly Mitzvot such as:

Playing with a Purpose

Sunday, September 18, 2016 • 1-2:30pm

Make the JFS Play Therapy Room even more welcoming by creating a puppet theater, organizing games, making stress balls and more.

Sundaes in the Sukkah

Sunday, October 9, 2016 • 1-2:30pm

Decorate the JFS sukkah so families coming to the agency for services will have a sukkah to visit during the holiday. Enjoy a sundae while learning the story of Sukkot.

Visit jfsdetroit.org/becausewecare to learn about upcoming Monthly Mitzvot.

For more information or to register for a monthly mitzvot contact Natalie Kahn at 248.592.2264 or nkahn@jfsdetroit.org.



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BACK TO SCHOOL

21st-Century Learning

Hillel Day School completes update of its facilities.



Stacy Gittleman | Contributing Writer

Hillel 1-2 Commons

Taking cues from educational studies that show how learning environments impact student engagement, motivation and achievement, this summer, Hillel Day School of Metropolitan Detroit in Farmington Hills continued renovations with complete updates of its facilities for students in grades K-6.

The \$4.84 million overhaul — \$2.64 million for the K-2 David and Nanci Farber Learning Community and \$2.2 million for the 3-6 William Davidson Learning Community — continues the school's transformation into a place equipped to educate for the 21st century.

Two major gifts in 2015 made way for the completion of Hillel's complete renovation. They followed an initial gift in 2014 for the first phase of Hillel's renovation, which included an "Innovation Hub," maker space, greenhouse, and new art, science and music rooms to teach across disciplines of science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM).

Just as in previous phases of the school renovation, care has been taken to use energy-efficient LED lighting, maximize natural lighting and use materials that are recycled and recyclable, according to James Seaman, principal at Fielding Nair International, the architecture firm responsible for the renovation.

That first gift was followed by another to renovate the upstairs 7-8 wing where static cinderblock classrooms gave way to open-plan and interchangeable learning studios to encourage student collaboration. With each phase of the renovation, Hillel officials stress that it recognizes the days of kids sitting in straight rows with worksheets while a teacher lectures from up front are becoming a thing of the past.

"An innovative environment is conducive to teaching lifelong skills that students will need to collaborate effectively and solve problems with others," said Head of School Steve Freedman. "These environments promote creativity, are warm, welcoming and comfortable. They are a necessity. The luxury is to be in a community that makes these things

possible."

This is the first major update to the kindergarten classes since 1996. When they start, schoolchildren in the earliest grades can practice reading beneath the "Learning Tree" on beanbags and climb in an indoor play structure when the weather turns colder. Upper elementary students can try out a math concept by getting messy with a project in the Davinci Studio.

Melissa Michaelson, K-8 principal, said that throughout the summer, teachers have been preparing to teach in the new spaces and have been meeting on how to best put in place creative approaches to learning.

"A teacher's mind never stops, even in the summer," Michaelson said. "Our new learning communities add additional excitement to our curriculum as well as increasing our faculty's collective desire to learn and grow as educators. We will devote time to this as well during professional development weeks before the students return to school after Labor Day," Michaelson said.

Gabriella Burman, communications director for Hillel, said that the new facilities will take into account the problem-solving focus of educating in the 21st century where "the learning and honing of skills begins at conquering the obstacle."

"The 21st century takes a more energized approach to learning, and Hillel is evolving right along with these trends," Burman said. "Today's educational theories understand there is more than one way to learn something. It is not just the content children absorb, but how they will use it to hone problem-solving and creative skills. In this way, the learning actually starts at the obstacle." *

details

Hillel will be dedicating its new learning communities at a ceremony at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 1, at the school on 32200 Middlebelt in Farmington Hills. Open to all, RSVP to Ariella Shaffren at ashaffren@hillelday.org.