

Brotherhood

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A Seder Experience

Berkeley has a Bayit

A Dream Come True

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Take eleven active college students, and one large conveniently located house with ample living and community areas, mix it together with a lot of energy, enthusiasm, and creative vision, and you have a *Bayit* (house). Sounds easy? Well it is and it isn't, but that's what a few students at the University of California, Berkeley, did last Spring with the help of Len and Robbie Cohn, members of the UAHC College Committee, and Rabbi Morris Hershman, Director of the UAHC Northern California and Pacific Northwest Councils.

The house is a "dream come true" for its members and for the large Reform Jewish community which it serves. The *Bayit* is not only a dynamic living Jewish environment for its members, but it opens its doors to Reform and other Jewish students. It has become a center for Reform activities.

Many Jewish college students feel a tremendous void when they leave their communities, their youth groups, and their temples. Dormitory and apartment living can make meaningful Jewish expression difficult. College students may lack a sense

of Jewish *Chevr*a (fellowship) and the warm feelings (the aroma of Jewish cooking) that only a home can provide. The *Bayit*, a new concept in Jewish collective living, is an answer to that void.

Whether it's one of the many open Shabbatot, with singing and services, a Reform Zionist Kinus, or just a Wednesday afternoon, the *Bayit* is a place to meet, and to be with friends. The *Bayit* members have established for themselves a real sense of family, and they share it with others.

The Berkeley *Bayit* is especially lucky. It is an old Estate — The LeConte Mansion — which is preserved as a city monument. In spite of the beautiful surroundings, however, there is a lot of work to be done. The house is run collectively, so everybody must pitch in as an equal member. Weekly *asefot* (meetings), modeled upon the Kibbutz meeting, are held every Sunday night where all the business of the house is discussed. Everyone is a member of a house committee — kitchen, garden or finance — and has a weekly cleanup assignment. Dinners are cooked six nights a week by the members. Eating together has proved to be an important aspect of the *Bayit* community cohesiveness.

The Berkeley *Bayit* should serve as a model for other such houses with one additional point. Every *Bayit* will and should be different. A *Bayit* is not static. It is a living organic community which can only be defined by its members. No two *Bayits* will ever be the same.

With the help and support of community leaders and the generous donations of carpets, chairs, couches and old toaster ovens, the Berkeley *Bayit* is a reality. The members of the *Bayit* welcome you to visit at any time, but better yet, help start one in your own community. You'll be doing our college students a real service.

Jason Gwasdoff is a senior at University of California and plans to attend HUC-JIR Rabbinic program.