



Gratz Insider, July 2012 - Story Continuation

[To return to the newsletter, close this page.]

Danielle Selber: Building Community through Gratz Roots

“Gratz is 100% the reason I’m able to do what I do today,” says Gratz alumna Danielle Selber. And what is she doing? Organizing excursions to Phillies games, concerts and exhibits; coordinating visits to a summer Shore house; participating in clothes swaps, charity runs and other social action activities; arranging happy hours and Shabbat dinners.

And the Gratz connection? Selber is orchestrating all of these events in her position as project director of The Collaborative, a program under the umbrella of the nonprofit organization Tribe 12, with the goal of creating social and cultural connections among young adults in their 20’s and 30’s within the Philadelphia region’s Jewish community. “Right now my job is to be a community builder, and I learned what it takes to make a thriving Jewish community at Gratz,” explains Selber.

Not only is she on the pulse of current happenings in the region, but Selber is also tapped into ideas for improving the future of the Jewish community through her role as project director of the Social Entrepreneur Fellowship. The Fellowship represents a collaboration among Tribe 12, the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and the organization Presentense. Each year, the Fellowship selects a group of Jewish young adults with enterprising ideas for social change within the Jewish community, and provides them with skill-building, mentoring and networking opportunities to support their proposed for-profit or nonprofit ventures. In fact, in its two-year history, the Fellowship has already graduated at least three former Gratz students - one of them being Selber herself.

Selber pursued her fellowship while enrolled in the master’s program in Jewish Studies at Gratz. “My roots at Gratz are very deep,” says Selber. “My experience changed the way I looked at learning.” In fact, she still remembers her first class at Gratz, a class on the Jewish life cycle and sign language, taught by Rabbi Daniel Grossman, which she took as an undergraduate. Selber was so impressed with Rabbi Grossman’s teaching that she maintained contact with him over the years and invited him to officiate at her recent wedding.

Gratz is not solely responsible for Selber's commitment to Judaism. Well before she ever entered the halls of Gratz College, she spoke Hebrew and had a Jewish upbringing, given that her mother, also a Gratz alumna, was born and raised in Israel. However, Selber emphasizes, "Until Gratz, I didn't fully appreciate everything that was my history. Before Gratz, Judaism was a part of my life; now, it is my life."