



## Davis Academy Alumni Making a Difference

The Davis Academy established the Alumni Tzedek Grant in 2016 to recognize and support outstanding charitable projects that fulfill the school’s Menschlichkeit value of *Tzedek*, a Hebrew word which means righteousness or justice. The grant opportunity was originally open to high school-aged alumni, but for the 2017–2018 school year, this opportunity has been extended to include college students as well. In year two of this meaningful grant program, The Davis Academy is proud to honor three recipients: David Antonino, Class of 2014, Nikki Berne, Class of 2010 and Zoe Light, Class of 2012. Antonino, Berne, and Light will be presented with a grant, which will be used to advance their charitable initiatives.

### David Antonino: Homelessness

Currently a senior at Riverwood High School, Antonino has a passion for writing. After publishing his first novel, *The Mystery Girl: or The One-Sided Love Affair*, he quickly realized that wherever his journey takes him after graduation, writing will be a primary component.

In January 2018, Antonino walked out of an interview to find that his car had been vandalized. A man named Sheldon approached him and asked if he needed help. It turned out that Sheldon is homeless and lives on the streets in Midtown Atlanta. Inspired by the time that they spent together over the course of a single evening, and overwhelmed by Sheldon’s willingness to help, Antonino developed the concept for his next project, uncovering the stories of the homeless in Atlanta. By conducting interviews, Antonino plans to develop these stories into excerpts to help modern society relate to and understand the

homeless’ situations. “Even in what appeared to be the toughest of times, Sheldon was an incredibly positive person. He went out of his way to help me, and I want to help tell his story and the story of the many others who are living on the streets,” said Antonino.

“My ultimate goal is to open the eyes of society on the issues of homelessness in Atlanta and across the country.”

Antonino reflects on his time at The Davis Academy as one that provided him with a solid foundation



and the right toolset to develop into a sympathetic and compassionate human being. Building on this foundation, he has learned to appreciate people from various backgrounds and he is eager to continue to learn more and continue to connect with the greater world around him. Launching his new project this summer, Antonino plans to conduct a series of interviews with homeless people in Atlanta. He will be using the funds from the Tzedek grant to help pay for a meal with interviewees as well as to offer compensation for the time they spend with him on the project. “My hope is that with the release of my new novel I can be the voice for those who are not able to have one for themselves,” said Antonino.

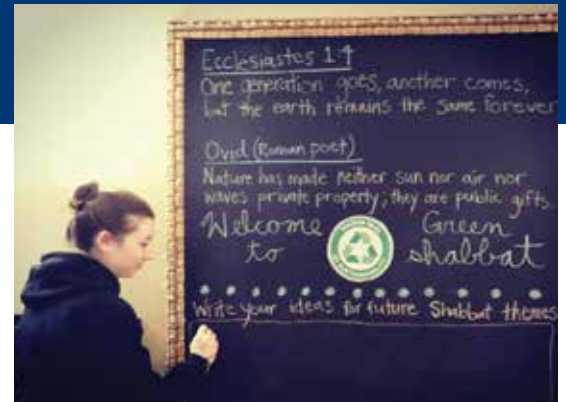
### Nikki Berne: Miracle Children

Nikki Berne is a senior at Georgia State University. Berne has a passion for helping children with serious illnesses, disabilities and other life challenges. She attributes much of her desire to help others to her early years at The Davis Academy. “At The Davis Academy I learned a lot about leadership and the importance of making the world a better place,” said Berne. For the past four years, Berne has been a devoted volunteer for Camp Twin Lakes, a year-round, fully accessible, and intentionally designed camp that teaches campers to overcome obstacles, while creating shared experiences with other children who face similar challenges. Inspired to support these children outside of her volunteer work with Camp Twin Lakes, in the fall of 2016, Berne co-founded the Georgia State University Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals Dance Marathon, benefitting

the local Children’s Miracle Network Hospital (CMNH), Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta.

The Dance Marathon is a one-day event that involves dancing, entertainment, games and stories for “Miracle Children” who have benefited from CMNH services. Berne had a desire to help others, and she used her leadership skills, confidence, and drive to make her dream a reality. Berne will be using the funds from the Tzedek grant to help underwrite the costs of The Dance Marathon, which includes food, activities, a bouncy house, drinks, family gift baskets, and more for the Miracle Children and their families to enjoy. “I am very passionate about these children,” said Berne, “I want to do everything in my power to help and support them and what better way than throwing a big party for them, while we fundraise on their behalf at the same time.”

This year, the event took place on April 14th and was once a great success. To date, Berne and her organization have raised over \$10,500 for Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta.



### Zoe Light: Green Team

Zoe Light is currently attending the University of Oregon, where she is the Sustainability Chairwoman for her sorority and the Green Chair for the Oregon Hillel. The Hillel Green Team was established last year in an effort to bring more sustainable practices to the organization. Through their partnership with Hazon, an organization that works to create a healthier and more sustainable Jewish community, Light and her team have replaced a large majority of the cutlery and dishes used for weekly Shabbat dinners with reusable glass and metal, and they are in the process of implementing a recycling program throughout the Hillel house to decrease waste. Their goal is to become the first zero waste religious organization at the University of Oregon.

“I strive to live by the values that I learned during my time at The Davis Academy,” said Light, “Gratefully, through my position on the Hillel Green team, I have been able to make a meaningful impact on my community.

**“I strive to live by the values that I learned during my time at The Davis Academy...”**

– Zoe Light

Combining my two passions, Judaism and environmentalism, has been incredibly rewarding. I do not know who I would be without the grounding of my Jewish values, and I am proud to be able to bring change to a community that means so much to me.”

Light plans to use the Tzedek grant to help fund the final steps needed to create a zero waste Shabbat dinner experience. “With these funds, Hillel will purchase glass, reusable cups, and cloth napkins,” said Light. “The grant will benefit the Hillel community through building a culture of sustainability, inspiring others to give back to the earth, which ultimately represents our core value of *Tikkun Olam*.”



*In reflecting upon the Davis Alumni Tzedek Grant, Rabbi Micah notes:*

**“During their years at The Davis Academy many sacred seeds are planted in the hearts and souls of our students. This grant is intended to signal to our alumni as well as our current students, that The Davis Academy is eager to nourish these seeds as they take root and grow, even after our students have graduated and continued on their amazing journeys.”**

– Rabbi Micah Lapidus,  
Director of Jewish and Hebrew Studies