

HUC's Tribute Dinner raises \$375,000

by Avi Milgrom
Assistant Editor

The Cincinnati Associates of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) held their 26th Annual Cincinnati Associates Tribute Dinner in the ballroom of the Hyatt Regency in downtown Cincinnati on Nov. 23.

Toward the end of the dinner, HUC-JIR's president, Dr. David Ellenson announced that the dinner had raised \$375,000.

This in itself is considered a major achievement in today's economy and should be read as a sign of the level of commitment by companies and individuals in Cincinnati for interfaith collaboration, according to HUC-JIR.

The other major announcement is that there is a major donor that will join Macy's Foundation. Macy's made an anchor gift of \$750,000. This donor will be identified soon.

In his speech, Ellenson credited HUC-JIR's Dean Kenneth Ehrlich with the idea of the collaboration between Xavier and HUC, as well as two others from Xavier.

After dinner, Rabbi Lewis Kamrass, Senior Rabbi of Isaac M. Wise Temple, introduced Xavier's president, Father Michael J. Graham and HUC-JIR's president, Rabbi Ellenson. Both presidents were in chairs on stage, facing one another.

Kamrass' message in his introduction was that the value of Jews

learning about Catholicism and Catholics learning about Judaism was that such studies would expand each faith's understanding of their own faith.

Rabbi Ellenson expanded on that point, explaining that he had been raised Orthodox. However, while in college at William and Mary in Virginia, he took a course on Christianity. It made a big impression on Ellenson and invigorated his interest in Jewish studies.

Father Graham expressed the opinion that dialogue between faiths should raise the bar for each.

Ellenson noted that the two met in 2001, and that he feels blessed to have the friendship.

Later, when Kevin T. Kabat, president, CEO and chairman of the

board of Fifth-Third Bank, was honored for his leadership in charitable endeavors to strengthen Cincinnati's communities, Kabat revealed that his grandfather was Jewish, but he was raised Catholic.

While attending college at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Kabat befriended a judge, Judge Hammernan, who encouraged Kabat to look at all faiths. He believed that all faiths held at their cores guidelines on how to live in harmony with others.

Kabat was presented with a letter from the president of Johns Hopkins that complimented him on his devotion to philanthropic work, sweatshirts from Johns Hopkins and HUC and a stone from a 3000 year old archeological site in Israel.