

# SCHECHTER ALUMNI

## Spotlights



MAYA SCHOLDER ('15)

“I will forever be an advocate for Jewish education. Sending your children to Schechter is not just a gift to your children, but also an opportunity to help transform the Jewish future.”

**Maya Scholder (SSDS '15)** can trace her love of writing back to her grade school days at Schechter. “I knew even then that I wanted to go into a profession that would let me exercise that passion,” she said. After attending Rochelle Zell Jewish High School and earning a BA in Communication at Tulane University, Maya currently lives in Columbus, Ohio where she works as a media specialist at Hunter Marketing, and is responsible for trafficking clients’ paid social media ads and strategizing media campaigns.



Maya (left) with her family at her sister's Rochelle Zell Jewish High School graduation

“I get to work with amazing clients to enact change in the Columbus community every day,” she said. “What excites me most is that I work for a woman-owned company with values that align with my own. The tagline of our company is ‘extraordinary work delivered with joy.’ I truly feel that quote informs all of the work we do.”

Maya is quick to express her gratitude for the role that Schechter teachers played in helping her achieve her goals. “My relationship with my teachers at Schechter is unparalleled,” she said. “They are not just educators, they are mentors for life. I will never forget entering 3rd grade—nervous about being ‘upstairs’ for the first time. Mrs. Tatz helped me to come out of my shell and emerge as a confident learner and leader. Ever since, I've kept in touch with her. We even got lunch this past summer!”

Maya's drive to utilize her writing skills to enrich the Jewish community and enact social change led this Northbrook-native to take on a host of leadership positions and community-building projects. “I felt confident entering high school, not just academically, but also personally,” she said. “Schechter taught me how to advocate for myself, ask difficult questions, and engage with others who may not agree with me.”

During her time at Rochelle Zell Jewish High School, Maya served as the varsity tennis team captain, participated in Model UN, volunteered at Gidwitz Place, and took part in two highly-esteemed JUF educational leadership programs: Seed613 and Write On for Israel. Continuing full-steam ahead, Maya worked as an intern at JUF, a public relations firm in Tel Aviv, and Bully Pulpit Interactive, a political and social change advertising agency. At Tulane, in addition to excelling academically, Maya found time to serve as Standards Chair for her sorority, Sigma Delta Tau, president of Tulane for Israel, and staff for WAVEMUN (the Tulane Model UN conference).

Maya believes her educational and spiritual foundations at Schechter paved the way for her future choices. She explains, “having a dual curriculum at Schechter exposes students to a rigorous workload and an exciting breadth of material,” she said. “At Schechter, I learned how to not only embrace my Judaism, but also how to be a good friend, an engaged global citizen, and the best version of myself.”

“After nine years of an enriching educational experience, I knew I didn't want my Jewish learning to end,” she added. “I chose to attend Rochelle Zell for high school and then looked for a university that would embrace my Jewish self. It was important to me to feel comfortable being Jewish and enriching the Jewish landscape at Tulane.”

Still a newcomer within the Columbus community, Maya looks forward to carving out her place within the local Jewish community. Attending events sponsored by JewishColumbus—a non-profit offering robust city-wide programming—has proven a great starting point. Outside of her job and involvement in the Jewish community, Maya loves spending time outdoors and attending live music concerts. She is also a self-professed foodie and enjoys cooking, watching food shows, and trying different cuisines at new restaurants.



L to R: Helen Spellberg (SSDS '15), Maya, and Sari Stone (SSDS '15) as Schechter 5th graders



Maya in Tel Aviv with 20 former Schechter classmates, all 2015 alumni

Maya's connection to Schechter remains strong. “The Schechter community is like family,” she said. “Whether I spent all nine years with someone at Schechter, had one class with them, or met them after my graduation, nothing bonds you like the shared experience of being connected to Schechter. To this day, my best friends are still my Schechter friends. When I was on the Onward Israel program in the summer of 2021, around 20 of my Schechter classmates met up in Tel Aviv for a reunion! I can always count on the Schechter community to support me, guide me, and root for me.”

The Schechter community even proved comforting as Maya navigated a challenging time when war erupted in Israel earlier this month. She was reminded that **Rabbi Josh Warshawsky (SSDS '04)**, formerly Rabbi in Residence at Schechter, now lives in Columbus with his family.

“On Simchat Torah, I learned about Hamas' egregious acts against Israel,” she said. “At a time like this, when the Jewish people are threatened, there is only one thing to do: come together. My boyfriend and I went to Congregation Agudas Achim, where Rabbi Warshawsky serves as Rabbi in Residence, and we sang, danced, and celebrated receiving the Torah. The synagogue was filled with proud Jews exuding immense joy. I am forever thankful to Schechter for such an incredible connection to Rabbi Warshawsky, as well as countless others I've met as a result of Schechter connections.”

Maya's two younger sisters are currently attending universities. **Naomi (SSDS '17)** is a junior at Tulane University majoring in public health, and **Talia (SSDS '19)** is a freshman at University of Wisconsin in Madison with plans to major in journalism.