

## ELLIE GOLDENBERG'S LEGACY TAKES CENTER STAGE THROUGH THEATER PROGRAM

Whether belting out a high note or reading a Shakespearean monologue, Ellie Goldenberg felt her most at home when performing in the theater.

“Ellie found herself through the stage,” says her mother, Renee. “The first time she performed, she knew that that was where she was supposed to be.”

A gifted singer, actor, and athlete who took up acting in the third grade, Ellie set sports aside when she reached high school, wanting to focus on honing her craft on the stage.

“She decided that that was what she would do with her life,” says her father, David. “Throughout high school, she appeared in twenty-three productions and won an award at the Cappies of Baltimore (a high-school arts awards program).”

But beyond her achievements, which include graduating from the University of Miami magna cum laude with honors, she was known as a warm, deeply caring person who took her art seriously.

“Everything she did, she sang it - and she shined,” David says. “Her classmates would call her ‘the Queen’ because she was that kind of person - Ellie was also the funniest person we ever knew.” She would do anything for a laugh and could have her family and friends in stitches. But Ellie was as much at home starring in comedies like *Thoroughly Modern Millie* as she was reciting Shakespeare at Theatre Harrisburg.

Ellie tragically died at the age of 22, the day after her college graduation, in an accident while on a family boat outing in the Everglades with her parents and her sister, Dana. Despite her much-too-short life, she is remembered as a bright light who was always eager to help her family and friends, even those auditioning for the same roles.

“There was always enough glory to go around - she was that confident,” David says. “Had she lived, we’re sure she would have ended up on Broadway - we still have tapes of her callback from when she auditioned for *Hamilton*.”

Ellie was born in Israel, spoke fluent Hebrew, and spent a gap year in Israel ahead of college, where she worked with underprivileged women. Soon after Ellie’s passing, her parents set about to keep Ellie’s memory alive through causes that she cared about - including theater, Israel, and Judaism.

“Very shortly after her death, we decided that it was our obligation and duty to ensure that Ellie’s legacy lived on, even after we’re no longer present - and so we’ve taken it upon ourselves to do as many things in her memory as possible that would be meaningful to her,” Renee says. “When we visited the Grass Campus and learned about the JCC’s theater program, we planned to



Ellie Goldenberg was a passionate and talented actress. Now, the theater program named in her memory will help community members to hone their craft on the stage.

see how we can help it grow and be more meaningful for the community while memorializing our dear daughter.”

Renee and David have made a substantial gift through the Grass Campus Capital Campaign to name the Ellie Goldenberg Theater Program, which will enable the program to expand by offering more shows and workshops, rent theater space, reduce costs to participants and increase production value, and improve the resources available to staff and participants.

“Ellie would take great pleasure and pride in knowing that we’re helping to take an already-successful theater program and make it more successful and opening it up to more people to be able to do what she loved so much,” David says.

Renee adds that the theater program - which combines Ellie’s love of the stage and Jewish identity - is a perfect venue for the Goldenbergs to be able to perpetuate Ellie’s memory and have a meaningful impact in the community.

“It’s important for people to know her story,” she says. “She would be thrilled to know that young people have a place to find and explore their passion.”

*The Jewish Federation is deeply grateful to the Goldenberg Family for their generous contributions in naming the Ellie Goldenberg Theater Program.*

*For more information about the Grass Campus Capital Campaign, contact Marty Rogoff at [m.rogoff@jewishfedhbg.org](mailto:m.rogoff@jewishfedhbg.org). For more information about the Grass Campus, visit [www.grasscampus.org](http://www.grasscampus.org).*