

Benjie & Alexi Baker



If not for Santa Barbara Hillel, Alexi and Benjie Baker would not be together today. Benjie was in his senior year at UC Santa Barbara and Student Board President of Hillel and wanted to extend a branch of friendship to the new Engagement Associate on staff. A game played on their phones led to longer conversations, which was quickly followed by clandestine meetings. A romance blossomed, much to the dismay of Rabbi Goodman and the Hillel Code of Ethics, but it would prove to be only one of many great impacts Santa Barbara Hillel had on Alexi and Benjie's life.

Benjie grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles. As the son of a Jewish communal professional, he had no desire to participate in Jewish extracurriculars. At UCSB, he only started coming to SB Hillel after taking a job as a front desk attendant. However, he quickly fell in love (literally and figuratively) with the people who dwelled in the building and made Hillel his second home. After graduation, he briefly worked at Congregation B'nai B'rith but soon enough ended up back in Los Angeles. As a person who loves people, Benjie has chosen a career in commercial real estate. He is honored to be a member of SB Hillel's Board of Trustees. Benjie spends his time eating, talking about eating, deciding where to eat next, cooking, baking, and rooting for the LA Dodgers.

Alexi grew up in a different suburb of Los Angeles to parents who emigrated from Romania by way of Israel. Alexi attended San Diego State University, where she studied to be an early childhood educator. Her extracurricular involvement with Hillel and the Jewish Student Union ignited her desire to work for the Jewish community. As a result, she worked for three years at SB Hillel as an engagement professional, helping to create “Aha” moments and meaningful Jewish experiences for students at UCSB and SBCC. Since leaving Santa Barbara, Alexi earned dual Masters’ degrees from USC in Social Work and HUC-JIR in Jewish Non-Profit Management. Alexi has spent the last five years working at the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles building and overseeing the organization’s emerging philanthropy efforts.

Benjie and Alexi now live in another suburb of Los Angeles. Since what began almost ten years ago in this community, they have changed cities, gotten new jobs, travelled, hosted festive parties, gotten married, but have never lost sight of the impact that SB Hillel had on them and the thousands of students who consider Hillel a home away from home.