

Rutgers remembers proud alum Alvin Rockoff

Before Israel lecture, tributes to a ‘mentor, friend, and supporter’



The late Alvin Rockoff speaks at Rutgers University’s Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life, which he helped found.

Photo courtesy the Bildner Center

by [Debra Rubin](#) NJJN Bureau Chief/Middlesex May 7, 2012

Alvin Rockoff was remembered April 22 as a man devoted to his family, the Jewish community, and all things Rutgers.

Speaking at a lecture series he helped establish, university leaders described a philanthropist with the ability to listen, counsel, and lead and whose determination helped set a course for what became Rutgers’ Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life.

Rockoff, a businessman and Rutgers alumnus, died Oct. 27 at age 84.

“He was the key person for getting the Bildners on board,” said center executive director Yael Zerubavel, referring to his food business colleagues and fellow philanthropists.

She recalled being “grilled” by Rockoff before being hired.

“Alvin turned out to be the best mentor, friend, and supporter,” she said. “He was always there if there was an issue.”

She and others paid tribute to Rockoff before the start of the center’s annual Ruth and Alvin Rockoff lecture on Israel, this year featuring three panelists discussing memory and its impact on Israeli politics.

Several generations of the Rockoff family were in attendance at the program at the Douglass College Center in New Brunswick.

A video presentation prepared by the Bildner Center showed Rockoff in his many roles in support of Jewish organizations and Rutgers life.

Born in New Brunswick, Rockoff was active in State of Israel Bonds, the Anti-Defamation League, New Jersey-Israel Commission, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County.

University president Richard McCormick recalled Rockoff’s dedication to his alma mater and other area institutions, characterizing him as “a truly irreplaceable member of the community.”

One of the only four people in Rutgers’ history to chair all three of its governing bodies — the boards of governors, trustees, and overseers — Rockoff was named a trustee emeritus in 1994 and overseer emeritus in 2004. In 1994, he was awarded a doctorate of humane letters. Rockoff Hall, a residence on George Street, was named in his honor in recognition of his long association with the university and the New Brunswick Development Corporation.

“Alvin Rockoff was born in this city, lived in this city, and died in this city,” said McCormick. “He never stopped giving of himself to this city and its institutions.”

Rockoff was also a trustee of St. Peter’s University Hospital.

In addition to Zerubavel, the night’s panelists were Israel Bartal, professor of Jewish history at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a visiting scholar at the Bildner Center, and Michael Feige, a professor of sociology and anthropology in the Israel Studies Program of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

“I think Alvin would have loved to be here tonight,” Zerubavel said. Bringing together faculty, staff, community members, and, most of all, students would have brought Rockoff great joy.

“This endowed lecture will continue this bond,” Zerubavel said. “In a sense, Alvin will always be part of us here at the Bildner Center.”

<http://www.njjewishnews.com/article/9322/rutgers-remembers-proud-alum-alvin-rockoff>