Year-end snow causes closures

DEBORAH MOON

The Jewish community hunkered down under winter storm warnings the last week of 2021. Some synagogue and agency buildings were closed or had shortened hours for all or part of the week, but the virtual and remote world that has evolved during Covid allowed work and services to continue for many.

While snow ranged from just a dusting on the valley floor to a few inches in higher elevations around the city, it was relentless in its reappearance each morning. The Mittleman Jewish Community Center closed on Sunday and Tuesday and had late openings a couple of other days. At Jewish Family & Child Service, telehealth allowed most counseling sessions to continue, and the snow had minimal effect on Holocaust Survivor Services ability to care for its clients. Some congregations closed their buildings for part of the week.

“We know that we can basically manage the day-to-day running of the shul from home if need be, without having to brave the roads,” says Shaarie Torah Executive Director Jemi Mansfield. “We can essentially shift everything to virtual (services, classes, etc.) as needed, plus admin work is already achieved remotely on a regular basis.”

Cedar Sinai Park never closes since the residents always need care, but the Jewish senior campus does try to make snow days fun for staff. Yoga, or snowga, anyone?

Learn & laugh at Weekend in Quest

BY DEBORAH MOON

If a laughter- and fact-packed phone interview is any indication, participants at this year’s virtual Weekend in Quest are in for a treat in a program to explore “How the Soviet Jew Was Made” (see box page 8).

The weekend’s scholar-in-residence Sasha Senderovich comes by his knowledge of the subject through both his personal and educational history. He was born in the Soviet Union, came to the United States as an exchange student at age 15 and moved here when his family immigrated when he was 16. His interest in literature and culture, not necessarily Russian or Jewish, began when he was a comparative lit major in college. He has taught courses about Russian Jews for more than a decade, currently at the University of Washington.

“Getting sort of unsettled as a teenager can make you into a cynical but funny person,” he says, adding “My talks and teaching are usually entertaining.”

His humor will be particularly apparent in the first lecture on jokes by and about Soviet Jews. Sasha says that in the later Soviet years, the Soviet Jew in jokes became “a cipher for the..."
Neveh Shalom partners with Sharsheret for two cancer awareness programs

One in eight women and one in 1,000 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime, but for many that risk is even higher. One in 40 Ashkenazi Jews—men and women—are carriers of a BRCA gene mutation leading to a significantly increased risk for breast, ovarian, prostate, pancreatic, skin and male breast cancers.

Neveh Shalom Director of Congregant Connections Michelle Caplan was diagnosed in 2016. With support from her family and the Portland Jewish community, Michelle recovered and has taken an active role in spreading breast cancer awareness.

Now Congregation Neveh Shalom will partner with Sharsheret, a cancer organization with a Jewish focus, for two programs. Neveh Shalom is partnering with Sharsheret for a webinar at 10 am, Monday, Jan. 10, that will help integrate more healthful ingredients into our diets. “Sharsheret in the Kitchen” is presented by celebrity dietitian Rachel Beller, MS, RDN. Register at link.sharsheret.org/rachelbeller.

Neveh Shalom will also partner with Sharsheret for a “Pink Shabbat” on Feb. 11. Pink Shabbat will help educate about the increased risk of hereditary breast cancer among Jewish families, the impact of those cancers on the Jewish community, and Sharsheret’s support programs for Jewish women and families.

Sharsheret is a national Jewish nonprofit that provides one-on-one mental health support for women and their families touched by breast and ovarian cancer, as well as those with increased genetic risk. All their services are free, confidential and available by phone. For many Oregonians touched by this issue, Sharsheret and other organizations have been a source of comfort, support and education during the pandemic.

Contact Sharsheret at sharsheret.org or 866-474-2774. A local resource is Breast Friends: breastfriends.org or 503-598-8048.
In Oregon, roughly 5% of unselected pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (the most frequent form of pancreatic cancer) harbor mutations in genes labeled BRCA1 and BRCA2, and this number is higher across ethnic populations (e.g. can be double the amount in the Ashkenazi Jewish population). These select patients who harbor BRCA1 and BRCA 2 mutations can be susceptible to cancers that arise in the breast, ovaries, and pancreas. The discussion will focus on where science and medicine is at with understanding, detecting and treating these people.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26th
7:00 p.m. Via Zoom

Speakers:

Dr. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Dr. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Family Medicine at OHSU. She has served as the State Senator for Northwest Portland and Beaverton since 2012. She is a Senate Co-Chair of the Full Ways & Means Committee, which oversees Oregon’s state budget.

Dr. Brett Sheppard
Dr. Brett Sheppard is a Professor of Surgery, Division of Gastrointestinal and General Surgery; the William E. Colson Chair of Pancreatic Disease Research; and the Vice Chair for Quality and Clinical Operations at OHSU.

Dr. Jonathan Brody
Dr. Jonathan Brody is the Vice Chair of Research for the Department of Surgery and is the Associate Director of Translational Research of the Brender-Colson Pancreatic Center for Patient Care.

Register at jewishportland.org/genetic-matchmaking
Young adults invited to apply for Pathways

BY DEBORAH MOON

“"I would like the experience to be a connection, and I think connection is best in person.”
~ Sonia Marie Leikam, PDX Pathways facilitator

Applications are now being accepted for the sixth cohort of PDX Pathways, a mentoring and leadership program for Jewish young professionals ages 21 through 35ish. In hopes of returning to an in-person format, the launch of the sixth cohort of PDX Pathways will be later this spring.

Pathways is a project of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, which has contracted with Sonia Marie Leikam to facilitate the program. She encourages young adults who are interested in self-growth through a Jewish lens to apply for the program.

“Pathways is an incredible entry point for Jewish young adults to get more involved in our Jewish community,” says JFGP President and CEO Marc N. Blattner. “The incredible relationships and mentorships developed during the program can last a lifetime. We look forward to the program leadership of Sonia Marie Leikam and the tremendous skills and talents these young people will bring to our Jewish community and its organizations.”

The application is available on the JFGP website at tinyurl.com/pathwaysPDX6. Applications will be due in mid-February with interviews to be completed by mid-March, with the cohort likely convening in April. Leikam will match those accepted with a mentor. If large group gatherings are still limited by Covid, she said triads of a mentor and two mentees should be able to meet for in-person connections.

“I would like the experience to be a connection, and I think connection is best in person,” says Leikam of the delayed start (typically the program runs January-May). “I do think that there is a longing right now for connection and community.”

She says the pandemic has changed how we interact with community and how we want to engage.

“We have new questions and new ways of doing things,” she says. “Now that we have this knowledge, now that we’ve lived through this space and place, I want to explore: How do you as an individual want to engage with this Jewish community? What do you need from the community? And what can you give to the community? Those are really the core questions that I would like to have folks work on.”

Leikam was executive director of the Oregon Holocausit Resource Center before it merged with the Oregon Jewish Museum. In 2015, she joined the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation to work with teens and young adults. She recently became director of development for Kairos PDX, a nonprofit in northeast Portland whose mission is to close the achievement gap for kids of color.

In addition to facilitating Pathways, Leikam is a PJ library parent ambassador.

The two part-time roles with Federation “are a way for me to continue to connect and be a part of the Jewish community, since I’m not working professionally full time in the community anymore,” she says.

“Pathways is an opportunity for folks in that age range to explore their Jewish values in relation to leadership and how they want to show up,” she says. “The last piece is really to connect into the organizations and Jewish life here and help find a space that feels rewarding – whatever that might look like.”

Oregon Hillel House reopens common spaces

BY DEBORAH MOON

Oregon Hillel has reopened the Hillel House at the University of Oregon for students from 9 am-5 pm Monday through Thursday and will host refriflach services and Shabbat dinners on Fridays. To-go dinners will continue to be available for students who prefer that option.

For the winter term that began Jan. 3, UO requires all students, faculty and staff to receive a Covid-19 booster shot as soon as they are eligible. For fall term, UO required students to be fully vaccinated for Covid-19; exemptions are available, but more than 95% of students, faculty and staff are vaccinated.

“We feel very good about the vaccination rates,” says Oregon Hillel Foundation Executive Director Andy Gitelson. “So, with the caveat that we’re still watching what’s going on with Omicron, we are officially reopening Oregon Hillel’s space to all students for studying, wellness and small programs.”

Hillel is redesigning three of the common areas. A seldom-used upstairs library will be revamped as more of a “wellness space and study space – a space where students can kind of decompress a little bit.” Two downstairs spaces will be a more social – spaces where students can put on small programs or socialize.

“We know that there are students who live on our end of campus that would really like to have a quiet place to study,” says Gitelson. “Masks will still be required in the building at all times regardless of vaccination status, and we will still continue to check vaccines and new boosters to ensure that the people who are coming to our space are fully compliant with university rules.”

Hillel staff have worked with student groups to redesign the areas and devise a wish list of items to make the spaces more “habitable, more mellow.”

“There’s things like some small chairs and some nice rope lighting and beanbag type things that are easily disinfected,” says Gitelson. The aim is to create a space “where they can come and read a book, and if students want to do yoga together, they can.”

Even with the house reopening, Gitelson says Oregon Hillel will continue the programming and outreach on campus that was so successful in the fall. The team will continue to have a big presence on both the UO and Oregon State University campuses.

“We want to continue to be there – that was working really well in fall term,” he says. “We’ve already seen as many students at UO and OSU as we did the entire year last (school) year; we’re only about 30 students away on each campus from our best year of engagement ever. We’re seeing a lot more students than we’ve ever seen, and we’re connecting a lot more students with each other.”

But while continuing that successful presence on the campuses, Hillel again will provide space for “those students who really would like to have actual physical space in the Hillel building to be able to connect and have meetings and group workshops and projects.”

Though the space opened Jan. 3, Gitelson says the wish list students have created is still relevant.

“This is a work in progress … and we may be adding to that wish list over the term as we hear more from students as they start using our space,” says Gitelson.

To help Oregon Hillel refurbish the common areas, visit mailchi.mp/oregonhillel/redesigning-a-space-for-community.
Start saving recyclables for May collection

BY BONNIE NEWMAN

When Adam was told by G-d to “tend and guard” the Garden of Eden, the world was a simpler place. Adam didn’t have plastics or electronics to dispose of or rules about curbside bins to decipher. But as the world has become more complex, so has the process of disposing of waste.

Two organizations will help ease the recycling task for community members this spring by hosting a collection of some hard-to-recycle items. The James Recycling Drop Off Event will be held at the Middleman Jewish Community Center on Sunday, May 15, from 10 am until 12:30 pm.

The event is a project of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland’s Climate Action Committee, which is part of the Jewish Community Relations Council. Encouraging recycling dovetails with the Climate Action Committee’s mission to help preserve our irreplaceable planet. Joining in the effort, Portland Jewish Academy students will collect items for recycling over the next several months.

Everything must be clean, dry and sorted according to instructions in this video: jshrecycling.com/recycling-drop-off-event/. Each type of item must be in a separate bag. Items that will be accepted are:

- Plastics #1 PET clamshells and other clear, #1 plastic items
- Plastics #2, 4, 5, 6
- Styrofoam blocks or sheets, including packing peanuts, cups, meat trays and egg cartons
- Plastic utensils, straws and bread clips
- Plastic screw-on caps
- CD and cassette tape cases
- Empty contact lens blister packs (foil removed)
- Empty tape dispensers
- Small appliances of less than 30 pounds
- Laptops, desk towers, cell phones and other small electronic items
- Power cords
- Holiday/string lights
- Straws
- Utensils
- Caps
- Contact lens blister packs
- Breadclips
- CD containers
- Tape containers
- Cassette containers

James Recycling provides a visual list of items accepted at recycling events such as the upcoming May 15 event with the JCRC’s Climate Action Committee. This image of unnumbered plastics is one of three pages. See the full list at jshrecycling.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Event-List-Updated-June-2021.pdf

Know your recyclables before you go

To help curb confusion about recycling and prepare for the James Recycling Event on May 15, James Recycling features several resources on its website jshrecycling.com.

Find which items can go in curbside recycling at jshrecycling.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/curbside.pdf. Items that can be recycled curbside will not be accepted at the event.

A video of how to sort items for the James Recycling Event can be seen at jshrecycling.com/recycling-drop-off-event/.

In addition, Metro, oregonmetro.gov, offers many resources. Metro Central Transfer Station and Metro South Transfer Station accept many items not taken at curbside, e.g., batteries, hazardous waste (including paint) and motor oil. There is a charge to accept some items.

Metro’s Find a Recycler search tool oregonmetro.gov/tools-living/garbage-and-recycling/find-a-recycler and oregonmetro.gov/tools-living/garbage-and-recycling/ask-expert inform the community how to dispose of all sorts of waste – from printer cartridges to unwanted vehicles. Metro’s website also includes an extensive list of local sites that accept various materials.

James Harris, right, at a James Recycling Event.

James Harris, 24, and his mom, Kathi Goldman. With help from Denton Plastics, Agil-lyx Corp., a Metro grant and a crew of volunteers and staff, the duo have been in the recycling business for seven years. Not only does James Recycling offer monthly drop-off events, the company also provides a weekly pick-up service that complements curbside recycling in some Portland neighborhoods. Goldman says the enterprise has been growing.

It has become “more than a full-time job,” she says. But that doesn’t stop her or her son, who has Asperger’s syndrome, from wanting their operation to continue to expand – both in staff and service area. Goldman says their goal is to put more people with disabilities to work doing good for the planet.

Bonnie Newman is a newcomer to Portland and the Jewish Federation’s Climate Action Committee. She will be leading the new community engagement subcommittee of the Climate Action Committee. Previously, she has worked as a freelance writer, copy editor for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and copy and section editor of the Austin American-Statesman.
Author Series mixes virtual, real worlds

BY DEBORAH MOON

The Mittleman Jewish Community Center will bring at least six authors to Portland (in person, on Zoom or both) for this year’s Author Series. For now, the program includes one hybrid and four virtual programs as well as one in-person event with a post-talk event (see box at right).

The authors are selected from about 250 authors in the annual guide of authors on tour curated by the Jewish Book Council, of which the MJCC is a member. Virtual and hybrid programs will be available on both Zoom and Facebook Live. Each event will include a presentation by the author, a moderated conversation with the presenter and a Q&A session with the audience.

“We consciously left the schedule open so we have the opportunity to bring in more authors in person in late spring or early summer as the world, hopefully, opens back up,” says MJCC Arts & Culture Manager Lenny Steinberg.

“It feels like a grand reopening,” says Lenny. “We are figuring out what people want – what gets people out to an (in-person) event and what they are willing to sit on Zoom for. As the JCC, we are committed to providing arts and culture programs for the community.”

The first two programs in the Author Series this year are partnerships, another area the J hopes to expand.

On Jan. 13, the J will partner with Israel360 and Congregation Neveh Shalom for a 6:30 pm Zoom event with Daniel Sokatch, author of Can We Talk About Israel? A Guide for the Curious, Confused and Conflicted. The program also partners with PDX Hillel and the Portland State University Judaic Studies Department to provide free registration for students. Students can register at oregonjcc.org/arts-culture/upcoming-events/authorseries/sokatch.

On Jan. 20, the MJCC will present Catherine Ehrlich, author of Irma’s Passport, in a hybrid program in partnership with Eastside Jewish Commons. Ehrlich will speak at the EJC at 6:30 pm. Those not comfortable with attending in person can participate on Zoom or Facebook Live. Part personal memoir, part historical drama, Irma’s Passport is narrated alternately by Irma’s granddaughter, Catherine, and Irma herself. You can read about it in the Sept. 30, 2021, Jewish Review.

Lenny is particularly excited by the May program, which he hopes will mark the return of the popular mahjong tournament the J launched in 2019. The tournament was “wildly successful,” and the center planned to make it an annual event until Covid intervened the next year. The author portion of the May 22 event will feature Mahjong author Annelise Heinz, an assistant professor of history at the University of Oregon. Her book explores the American history of the Chinese parlor game mahjong in the first half of the 20th century.

“We will host her in the ballroom for a typical author talk and hope to follow that with a mahjong tournament and lunch, pandemic permitting,” says Lenny. “If a tourney is not feasible, we may offer an open play mahjong experience instead.”

“This is another effort to bring back to the community events that were successful before the pandemic and that people have asked for,” he adds.

Lenny encourages people to contact him with program ideas and suggestions. He can be reached at 503-535-3555 or Lenny@oregonjcc.org. For more information on the Author Series and other in-person and virtual arts and culture programs, contact Lenny or visit oregonjcc.org/arts-culture/upcoming-events.

MJCC hires new fitness program manager

Jaynie Frost is the new fitness program manager at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Jaynie has an extensive background in fitness, health and wellness, leadership, people management and customer service. She has a bachelor’s in psychology and is certified through the National Academy of Sports Medicine as a senior fitness specialist.

Jaynie is very excited to join the MJCC team and to work with Head Trainer Joe Seitz as the MJCC continues to expand and grow its fitness offerings.

The J’s announcement notes, “Jaynie and Joe will make a dynamic team, as they both have extremely positive energy, a sense of humor and a genuine desire to help others. The MJCC is thrilled to have this fitness team in place to kick off 2022.”

Jaynie has worked within the field of health and wellness since 1997 in a variety of positions. She has worked in health rehabilitation centers, assisted-living facilities and with integrative fitness programs. Jaynie has an extensive background in managing teams and expanding programs. Her most recent roles have included health and wellness director, executive director and personal trainer/exercise specialist.
New children’s books from local Jewish women

Author Chari Smith & illustrator Elle Smith

A new children’s book, The Piano, by Portland writer and pianist Chari Smith is scheduled for release by Black Rose Writing on Feb. 3. She is a member of Havurah Shalom.

The Piano shows that learning to play an instrument is more than practicing and performing – it’s a lifelong friendship. From the first time they meet, young Katie and the Piano become best friends. But one day, Katie leaves for college leaving the Piano behind. What happens next brings their kindred friendship full circle.

Chari studied at Berklee College of Music and has been a writer/composer/pianist most of her life. She is also a published playwright – Extraordinary Women from U.S. History: Readers Theatre for Grades 4-8 (Teacher Ideas Press/ Libraries Unlimited, 2003) and Little Plays for Little People (Teacher Ideas Press/Libraries Unlimited, 1996). She is currently working on a musical, Freedom, based on the life of Moses.

The Piano is illustrated by Chari’s daughter, Elle, who participated in the ORA Jewish Art Fair for two years. A high school senior, Elle plans to attend art school in the fall. Elle became a bat mitzvah at Havurah Shalom in 2017.

The duo started working together on this story when Covid-19 hit, channeling their creative energy into something positive during a difficult time.

Thinker Toys of Portland has called the book, “a sweet melodic story celebrating growth, dedication, and love.”

Portland Youth Jazz Orchestra Director Ben Medler says it is “a captivating story for young readers from start to finish.”

The Piano will be available at major booksellers, including Black Rose Writing, Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Sarah Rohr appointed to Beaverton Arts Commission

Sarah Rohr, a multidisciplinary artist and active member of the local Jewish community, starts a three-year term as a Beaverton Arts Commissioner this month.

“Trained in painting, stone sculpting, poetry, songwriting and playwrighting, my work is focused on the preservation, cultivation and reclamation of human dignity,” says Sarah.

She is an at-large member of the Jewish Community Relations Council, where she serves as vice-chair of the Climate Action Committee and is an active member of legislative advocacy committee. She has served as a mikvah guide for more than 35 girls and women ages 12-94 using the Rachel’s Well community mikvah, which is owned and operated by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

At Congregation Neveh Shalom, Sarah is the sixth-grade Judaic studies teacher and leads Kiddush Club services for kindergarten through fifth grade. She attends Neveh Shalom’s virtual morning minyan almost daily and participates in two Torah study groups. She also studies the art of writing d’vrei Torah with Rabbi David Kosak and poet Merridawn Duckler.

“My interest in serving on the Beaverton Arts Commission was sparked by working with a group of parents at Portland Jewish Academy for the school’s community-wide art project,” says Sarah. “The synergy between the group members was energizing. Our serious and detailed conversations about public art was personally instructive about an area where a confluence of passions coalesced.”

The commission’s mission is to enhance, unite and celebrate our diverse community through art. The BAC does this by advocating for the arts; supporting city arts events and programs; spreading the mission of the BAC at outside events and gatherings; and advising staff and city council on arts-related issues.
When the Chabad House on SW Vermont Street was destroyed by fire in August 2020, about 2,000 holy books were ruined. Holy books, papers and ritual objects dealing with sacred subjects are traditionally stored in a genizah, storage area, until they can be buried in a Jewish cemetery as a sign of reverence and respect.

“It is respectful to put the burned books into boxes and bury them in a cemetery,” says Chabad of Oregon Rabbi Moshe Wilhelm.

Now Chabad of Oregon has arranged with Riverview Cemetery to create a burial plot in the Jewish section of the cemetery for the holy books. Chabad of Oregon has begun to gather the books damaged in the fire and will bury them in a public ceremony once a concrete box with a removable lid is built in the plot. The removable lid will enable more damaged holy books to be added in the future as needed.

Community members can contribute to the creation of the book burial plot at chabadoforegon.raisegiving.com.

Professor Sasha Senderovich

Sasha already has a connection with Portland. Bob, Jack and Dan Heims and Joan Heims Whitcher are cousins he met for the first time last June in a lull between pandemic waves. The four are the grandchildren of Misha Zugman, the older brother of Sacha’s great-grandmother, Mira Zugman. Misha and one brother emigrated in the 1910s and ended up in Portland, while the other six siblings remained in what would later become part of the Soviet Union. The different branches of the family lost all contact during the Soviet years but re-established contact in the 1980s, before Sasha’s family immigrated to Boston in the 1990s.

“So, I have this strange connection to Portland, because this is where, in some alternative life, some version of me might have been born,” he says.
Jan. 13, 7 pm: Sephardic Film “Romaniotes”
The 15th Annual Sephardic Winter Film Series continues with the documentary “Romaniotes” at 7 pm, Jan. 13, at Congregation Ahavath Achim, 6686 SW Capitol Hwy., Portland. Films are shown the second week of each month (Wednesday or Thursday) through April 2022 at 7 pm. Admission is free and open to all (proof of vaccination and masks required). Films are followed by a guest speaker and Sephardic desserts.
The English-language film “Romaniotes” explores the distinct Greek-Jewish community of the city of Ioannina, with customs and traditions different from the Sephardi and Ashkenazi. For more than 1,000 years, from the Byzantine era through today, the Jewish community has been an integral part of the multicultural mosaic of the city of Ioannina. Discussion after the film will be led by Marcia Hadad Ikonomopoulos, director of Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum, and Ethan Marcus, director of the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood Foundation. RSVPs are required. RSVP to info@ahavathachim.com. For more information, contact Ron Sidis 503-750-0888.

Jan. 14, 6-8 pm: MLK Jr. Shabbat
A particularly joyous Congregation Beth Israel tradition is our annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Shabbat Service, where leaders of the Civil Rights Movement (previous speakers include Congressman John Lewis, activist and journalist Myrlie Evers-Williams and acclaimed public interest lawyer Bryan Stevenson) speak, and our choir joins with the NW Gospel Choir to honor Dr. King’s memory, work and enduring legacy. The year 2022 sees this service resume in person (though all are welcome to gather with us online, as well) and will feature remarks from guest speaker Reverend Dr. Gerald Durley. All attendees will be required to wear masks regardless of vaccination status.
Congregation Beth Israel, 1972 NW Flanders St., Portland, OR 97209. bethisrael-pdx.org/mlk/

Jan. 16, noon: Living a Sustainable Life
What is sustainability? Does it connect to climate change? Join the Neveh Shalom Sisterhood for this talk about sustainability, presented by CNS member Sara Safdie, a professor of English. How does farming, both of fruits and vegetables as well as raising animals, affect the health of the Earth and its people? When many of us think of sustainability, we tend to think of recycling or biking instead of going someplace in our cars. But it’s much more than that, and there’s plenty we can do, individually, to ensure that the Earth will continue to sustain us in the future. For information, visit nevehshalom.org/event/sustainability-program-presented-by-sara-safdie/

Jan. 17: Tu B’Shevat
Tu B’Shevat, the Jewish new year for trees, is often called the Jewish Earth Day. In 2022, the holiday begins at sundown Jan. 16 and ends at sundown Jan. 17.
PJ Library notes, “According to Jewish tradition, all trees share the same birthday on Tu B’Shevat. Although it’s a lesser known holiday, observance of Tu B’Shevat is growing due to the rising importance of Earth stewardship.”
You can read more about the holiday, its ancient Jewish connection to contemporary ecological issues and the seder that has gained popularity in recent decades at myjewishlearning.com/article/tu-bshevat-2022/ and tabletmag.com/sections/holidays/tu-bshevat.

Life-cycle events
Submit life-cycle news and photos to editor@jewishportland.org

ENGAGEMENTS
Eitan Northman-Simone Marocco
Ms. Holly Litwin and Mr. Tod Northman of Shaker Heights, Ohio, are thrilled to announce the engagement of their son, Eitan Northman to Simone Marocco.
Eitan is a junior at Yeshiva University. He enjoyed a wonderful childhood in Portland surrounded by the love and support of the Jewish community at Maimonides Jewish Day School and Congregation Kesser Israel. The Litwin-Northman family lived in Portland from 1994 to 2011. Simone attends Yeshiva University’s Stern College For Women. She is the daughter of Mrs. Karen and Dr. Avi Marocco of Beachwood, Ohio. Eitan and Simone met when they became classmates in sixth grade at the Fuchs Mizrahi School. They plan to marry on Sunday, June 12, 2022, in Chagrin Falls, Ohio.

Alex Mansfield-Shani Plunkett-de la Cruz
Greg and Jemi Kostiner Mansfield are thrilled about the engagement of their older son, Alex, to Shani Plunkett-de la Cruz, daughter of Celeste de la Cruz. Kvelling grandparents are Tony and Priscilla Kostiner. Alex is a member of the Life Enrichment team at Cedar Sinai Park and teaches Hebrew and Jewish studies at multiple congregations in town.
Shani works with Providence Healthcare in insurance verification.

They will be married at 2:22 p.m. on Feb. 22, 2022, at Congregation Beth Israel.

MAZEL TOV
Aliza Zeff
Aliza Zeff, daughter of Laurie and George Fendel of Portland, is the incoming Director of Tichon Ramah Yerushalayim. TRY is a spring semester study abroad program for high school students, located in Jerusalem.
Aliza is a graduate of Wilson (now Ida B. Wells) High School in Portland, the American Jewish University and Bank Street College of Education.
In addition to working for many summers at Camp Ramah in the Poconos, Aliza served as TRY’s interim Director of Academics in 2019 before taking on the position permanently. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband and four children.
For more information, contact Aliza at alizaz@ramah.co.il or read about the program at try.ramah.org.il.
Agency Column: JFCS
Shining a spotlight on mental health

The Jewish Review has offered the 18 organizations that receive allocations from the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland the opportunity to write a column during the coming year. The following column is from Jewish Family & Child Service.

BY RUTH SCOTT

As the pandemic continues, so does the challenge of prolonged social isolation.

At the beginning of Covid, Jewish Family & Child Service’s Counseling program introduced a weekly group called Community Connections. Conducted via Zoom with very experienced licensed clinical social workers – Douglass Ruth and Missy Fry, with input from Caitlin DeBoer – the group continues to meet the needs of so many throughout Portland’s Jewish and greater communities.

What made it so successful?

The answer is benefits such as very low boundaries for attendance, engaging with others during each guided hour and learning how to support peers while receiving support for oneself.

This month, JFCS introduces Mental Health Spotlight. It is an addition to JFCS’ expanding Counseling offerings.

It shines a light on areas where all people – children through older adults, including members of our community with a self-identified disability – struggle and can seek help. Spotlight sessions will highlight, for instance, social skills and navigating group dynamics, and resiliency against loneliness and isolation. Some of our new workshop-style groups also are curated for those wanting to learn how to help their friends and loved ones through challenging times.

Mental Health Spotlight provides group sessions and workshop options in the style of both Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent debut – a weekly group called Community Connections and our recent
development.

HEAT Oregon), where she helped assess and re-

ruth scott has been JFCS Executive Director since August 2020, after more than two years as interim executive director. Ruth came to JFCS from Lift Urban Portland, where she stabilized and nearly doubled its revenue stream, and before that from the Oregon Energy Fund (formerly HEAT Oregon), where she helped assess and restructure the organization.

In keeping with JFCS’ focus on inclusion, Mental Health Spotlight also provides access to a therapist on a sliding scale, as well as resources one may need outside JFCS’ areas of expertise.

JFCS is engaged with B’nai B’rith Camp about shining a spotlight specifically on children and their increased mental health needs during the pandemic. Both organizations have seen an increase in anxiety and a need to support children in processing these changing times.

In partnership with the Eastside Jewish Commons, JFCS is planning a Mental Health Spotlight hybrid option for an in-person experience with separate engagement opportunities for children.

But until the time comes where society opens up a little more, I invite our community to log in and lean on Mental Health Spotlight sessions and workshops to acquaint – or reacquaint – yourself with Jewish Family & Child Service by visiting jfcs-portland.org.

Our expanded mental health services may do wonders for your own mental health or for that of your loved ones. May 2022 bring you, Portland’s Jewish community, the best of physical and mental health.
**The Holistic Process of Grieving**

BY RABBI BARRY COHEN

As we continue to struggle with the pain of grief and the challenges of the grieving process, this time of year is especially hard. I imagine we all have plenty of memories of New Year’s reunions with family and friends, whether at private homes, restaurants, hotels or public spaces. Our observance of New Year’s 2022 was most likely very different than in years past, and did not meet our expectations, hopes and dreams.

Our brains are not hardwired to live in a near constant state of uncertainty, stress and even fear. These past nearly two years have taken a toll on us psychologically, physically and spiritually. Our grief has been amplified, and our grieving process has been disrupted.

But this is part of the human condition. The more we understand the relationship among grief, grieving, the brain and the body, the easier navigating our world will become.

I recently read a fascinating article on the NPR website, “How your brain copes with grief, and why it takes time to heal,” by Berly McCoy. The author captured the work that Mary Frances O’Connor has done to understand what happens in our brains when we experience grief. O’Connor, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Arizona, will soon release her findings in her book, *The Grieving Brain*. She argues that grieving is a form of learning how to exist in a world in the aftermath of the death of a loved one. This learning literally changes the wiring in our brains.

One of her findings is that the relationships we have with others are encoded in our brains. Therefore, it makes perfect sense when grieving to say, “I feel like I’ve lost part of myself.” In our brains, part of us is not “me,” but “we” – the relationship we have with others. When a loved one dies, part of our brain-encoded sense of self must be reprogrammed.

Grieving is an aspect of that reprogramming. O’Connor learned through brain-imaging studies that in the midst of this process, our minds and bodies are affected. Our ability to recall memories, to empathize, to regulate our heart rate, and to experience pain and suffering are affected.

As we go through this painful, disorienting and stressful process, O’Connor explains that some of us may experience prolonged grief disorder. After six months or a year, we may feel locked in place. We struggle to run errands, prepare dinner or engage in activities that once gave us pleasure or a sense of escape. Of note, prolonged grief disorder was previously called complicated grief.

O’Connor shares one example of how the grieving reprogramming process can become unhealthily complicated: When recalling the death of our loved ones, many of us engage in “would’ve, should’ve, could’ve.” We repeat over and over what we could have done or should have done to reduce the pain of our loved ones or even prevent their deaths. O’Connor explains that engaging in these “counterfactuals” only denies the harsh reality that our loved one has died.

Fortunately, as we go through this process of reprogramming, we can remain hopeful. Part of remaining hopeful is understanding that it takes time and patience for the brain to reprogram – to heal – after we have suffered the traumatic loss of a loved one. In addition, we can understand that Covid has disrupted and delayed the grieving process. Arguably, this process now takes twice as long.

As our family and friends continue to grieve, and as we continue to grieve, O’Connor encourages us not to devise ways to wave a magic wand to make the pain go away. Instead, we can create opportunities to listen to each other and be with each other, regardless of what we may be thinking or feeling.

O’Connor adds that one of the complications of our grieving reprogramming is struggling with the fact that hospital restrictions prevented us from being by our loved ones’ side during their time of death. We were deprived of witnessing the decline of our loved ones, which would have better prepared us psychologically for their death. In addition, some of us are saddled with guilt that they died alone.

O’Connor argues that we should offer praise to family and friends who made the sacrifice of not being with their loved ones in their final moments. This sacrifice helped prevent the spread of the disease. This sacrifice kept those who survived safe and increased the safety of everyone around us. Recognizing the selflessness of this sacrifice can soften the reprogramming process and facilitate healing.

Let us all remember that grieving is a holistic process involving brain, body and spirit. And let us remain hopeful that healing will occur … we only need time, patience and understanding.

Rabbi Michael Cahana leads petition effort to prevent gun violence

Congregation Beth Israel Senior Rabbi Michael Z. Cahana is one of three chief petitioners on two gun violence prevention initiative petitions that are circulating for possible inclusion on Oregon’s November 2022 State Ballot.

The effort is being led by “Lift Every Voice Oregon,” an interfaith grassroots organization that Rabbi Cahana helped launch. “CBI’s Social Action Committee, under Sally Rosenfeld’s leadership, is training volunteer signature gatherers, and they are collecting signatures,” says Rabbi Cahana. “This is happening in various organizations, including houses of worship, around the state. We also have a number of teen leaders who trained to be circulators.”

Rabbi Cahana encourages others in the Jewish community to sign the petitions need about 140,000 signatures from registered Oregon voters by July 2022.

These measures will (1) ban manufacture, sales, imports and transfers of semiautomatic assault weapons and high-capacity magazines in Oregon; and (2) require a background check and safety training to be completed before a permit is issued to purchase a gun.

For more information, including the complete text of the initiatives and information for circulators, visit lifeveryvoiceoregon.com.
SNOW (continued from page 1)

Robert Furman, z”l, died at the hospital Dec. 21, 2021, surrounded by his wife, Na-nette; his sons, Ben and Jake; and daughter-in-law, Brooke.

Bob was a member of Congregation Kol Ami in Vancouver, Wash. He was related to many in the congregation, and so Kol Ami sends condolences not just to his wife and sons, but also to his brothers and sisters-in-law and nephews and grand-nieces, who are also in mourning.

Funeral services took place Dec. 23 at 1 pm at Kol Ami’s Kehillat Olam cemetery at Northwood Park in Ridgefield.