Suspect arrested in vandalism of Jewish, Muslim sites

A man has been arrested in a series of recent vandalism attacks on Jewish and Muslim buildings in Portland.

“An investigative team of local, state and federal law enforcement partners made an arrest late yesterday (May 6) and have confirmed the Beth Israel, Shir Tikvah/Eastside Jewish Commons and the NE Muslim Community Center vandalism were conducted by the same person, who is now in custody,” SCN Regional Security Advisor Jessica Anderson wrote in an email to community leaders. Secure Community Network is the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America.

The suspect has been charged with five counts of arson and criminal mischief. Anderson said Hate Crime charges, which take extra time to evaluate, also are being explored.

“Being a part of the Secure Community Network has kept us all informed and connected, and we are grateful to our Regional Security Advisor Jessica Anderson for her efforts,” wrote Beth Israel Rabbi Michael Z. Cahana in a message to congregants.

See ARREST, page 8

Civil Rights Journey

Portlanders learn to see "an-other"

BY JENN DIRECTOR KNUDSEN

Microphone in hand, Billy Planer stood at the front of the moving bus on its way to its first stop, Ebenezer Baptist Church, and said to his group, “Just talk to people. Those who don’t talk like you, don’t look like you, don’t think like you, don’t pray like you.”

The Jewish Atlantan and founder of Etgar 36: An American Journey often repeated that directive to his 39 charges from Portland during their recent three-day civil rights trip. The trip began in Atlanta, Ga., and continued across the state line to Montgomery, Selma and Birmingham, Ala. The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland’s Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) and Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church co-organized the late-April sojourn.

Organizers Bob Horenstein, Rachel Nelson and Pastor J.W. Matthew Hennessee didn’t write Billy’s script. But tour participants expressed before and during the trip exactly what Billy preached.

“Break down barriers,” Billy said, “so that the ‘other’ becomes just ‘an-other.’”

Said Pastor Hennessee, “What we need in this country and in this world is healing and coming together.”

Billed as the Portland JCRC Civil Rights Journey, the Federation and Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church co-organized the late-April sojourn.

When not touring sites key to the civil rights movement, trip participants chatted with each other every chance possible. Clockwise from bottom at their hotel in Montgomery: Michelle Bombet Minch, Trent Stewart, son Taylor Stewart, Daryl Stewman, Bob Horenstein and Jeff Reingold.

Pesach Shopping Survey

Oregon Kosher and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland invite the community to participate in a Passover shopping survey: forms.gle/YA4NE2C9dStIP3tVA. Deadline is May 26.

“Our goal is to increase the variety and quantity of Passover-certified products available,” says Rabbi Tuvia Berzow of Oregon Kosher. “Coming to our local partners with key consumer data will hopefully help inform their decisions for next Passover and beyond.”

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MJCC refocuses on youth and families, plans annual celebration – page 11

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The homeless urgently need safe shelter with services, but the homeless crisis cannot end without affordable housing, panelists told a group of legal professionals and students on May 3.

Solomon’s Legacy hosted the high-tech hybrid meeting to explore “Homelessness: The Complex Legal and Moral Challenges for our city, county and state.” Solomon’s Legacy Society is an affinity group of Jewish attorneys, judges and law students created by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

The program began with Solomon’s Legacy Chair Marshal Spector teaching a Jewish perspective on the topic. Deuteronomy chapter 15 notes “there shall be no poor,” yet a few lines later adds if there are poor, “don’t harden your heart or shut your hand.”

He noted that the Torah does not waste words, yet it stays open in two different ways. “Opening hands to those in need is emphasized … Rashi says that means don’t stop, do it as often as needed.” He adds that even if people don’t look like us, “they are still in the image of God and are like us.”

The program then turned to what is going on, what is being done and what legal claims have arisen around homelessness in Oregon. Those three questions were addressed by Ed Johnson, Director of Litigation at the Oregon Law Center, and Marc Jolin, who recently completed a nearly six-year stint as the first executive director of the Multnomah County-City of Portland Joint Office of Homeless Services.

“People living outside are just like those living inside – all kinds of people,” said Johnson. He said he learned about the diversity of the houseless community by listening “without preconceived ideas.” They include families, individuals of all ages, those struggling with addiction, those pursuing dreams. What they all have in common is an inability to afford a home.

“Portland and Oregon are becoming one of the least affordable places to live,” said Jolin. “Most households are not able to keep pace with the increased cost of living. Those on a fixed income have no access to housing in the current market. … We cannot end homelessness without affordable housing.”

In addition to the inability to afford housing, he said mental health or addiction issues, and racism, are significant factors in homelessness. People of color are dramatically overrepresented, making up about 45 percent of Portland-area homeless.

He pointed out that the Joint office has three roles: to help people get into emergency shelters, help them get into permanent housing and help keep them in permanent housing.

“Just paying rent is not enough,” said Jolin. “They need a wraparound support services.”

The homeless crisis is not limited to Portland and other large cities.

Johnson said he sees a similar dynamic in Grants Pass, which is representative of other small communities in Oregon. From 2000 to 2020, the population almost doubled as retirees moved in and almost no housing was developed.

“People came in at the top and everyone else got pushed down,” said Johnson. “If you were at the bottom, you got pushed out. … Most folks are homeless in the place they were housed before – they were your neighbors.”

“The only solution is affordable housing – period,” said Johnson.

From July-December 2021, the joint office moved 1,700 people from shelters or the streets into permanent housing, supported 10,000 people already in long-term housing and got 3,000 people into shelters. Johnson shared a quick overview of some legal cases around the homeless, noting he would need two days to give a full picture. One key decision is a Ninth District Court ruling that if the number of homeless people is higher than the number of shelter beds available in a community, then “you can’t punish someone for sleeping outside if they have nowhere else to go.”

For more information or to participate in Solomon’s Legacy, contact Wendy Kahn at wendy@jewishportland.org or call 503-892-3015.
102nd Jewish Federation Annual Meeting

Monday, June 13
4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Mittleman Jewish Community Center
6651 SW Capitol Highway

Also available via Zoom
Link provided upon registration

Light refreshments will be served
Proof of vaccination is required for in-person attendees

REGISTER: jewishportland.org/102

Meeting will include:

• Highlights of the past year
• Recognize Lauren Goldstein for her outstanding leadership as Chair of the Board
• Elect and welcome JFGP’s newest board members
  Craig Berne • Christie Moore • Jeffrey Weitz (as of May 6)
• Thank outgoing board members:
  Jack Birnbach • Karen Blauer • Ted Nelson • Ed Tonkin
• Celebrate our campaign successes
• Recognize our Laurie Rogoway Award and scholarship recipients
• and so much more.
People in the News

**MJCC hires assistant executive director**

The Mittleman Jewish Community Center has hired Jennifer Robinett as the center’s new assistant executive director.

“I am particularly excited that Jenny will be joining the MJCC’s leadership team because of her strong background in youth and family programs, including camps,” says MJCC Executive Director Steve Albert. “The growth of youth and family programming at the MJCC is one of our highest strategic priorities, and Jenny brings the experience and expertise necessary to oversee innovation and expansion in these program areas.”

Jenny holds a B.A. in Recreation Administration and has worked in various roles at the Multnomah Athletic Club for the last nine years. Jenny’s most recent role has been the Membership Business Operations Manager at the MAC. In that capacity, she worked closely with MAC membership, partnered with the Finance and Accounting Departments and served on the Diversity Admissions Committee. From 2017-2021, Jenny served as the Youth Programs Manager at the MAC. She had oversight of all youth programs department activities and instructional offerings and supervised a staff of 40. From 2013-2017, Jenny was the Early Childhood Supervisor at the MAC and assisted in the design and administration of all youth programs camps and classes, as well as special events for families and children. Before joining the MAC, Jenny worked in early childhood education as the Director of the Child Development Center at the YMCA of Columbia-Willamette and as a preschool teacher.

“I am looking forward to joining the team at the J,” says Jenny. “I am excited to bring my past experiences and learn more about the community at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. When I met the staff at the J, they all spoke about it being a family, and I am thrilled to be a part of a community like that.”

Jenny will start at the MJCC on May 16.

**Neveh Shalom hires finance director**

Congregation Neveh Shalom welcomed Rikki Kass as the Congregation’s new Finance Director on April 4.

Rikki will work with the Neveh Shalom finances and budget and help congregants with their accounts.

Originally from Long Island, N.Y., Rikki and her husband, Evan, moved to the West Coast in 2011. She started her career in the Jewish community as a Sunday School teacher in Sacramento, Calif., and then ran senior programs and PJ Library for the Jewish Federation of the Sacramento Region. After a few years as a Jewish community programming professional, Rikki switched to synagogue finance. She took a position in a Sacramento-area synagogue, Temple Or Rishon, as their office manager and bookkeeper. During the pandemic, Rikki also became the bookkeeper of the the North Tahoe Hebrew Congregation.

The pandemic also prompted Rikki’s husband to look for a career change, which brought their family to the Portland area in the summer of 2021. Rikki became the accounting and HR administrator at Congregation Beth Israel. She loves the CBI community and staff, but says when she learned about the finance director position at Congregation Neveh Shalom, “I knew it was the best opportunity to use my particular set of skills to serve the Portland Jewish community.”

Rikki says the community is warm and welcoming, and she loves working as a Portland Jewish community professional.

**Laura Fendel eases end-of-life journeys**

Laura Fendel has launched a website for her services as a Melavah, Hebrew for “One Who Accompanies,” to serve Portland’s Jewish community as an end-of-life doula. Laura partners with the dying and their family to help ease the experience with grace and love through a Jewish connection.

“I am honored to help others embrace our traditions and rituals at the end of life,” says Laura. “I am a supplement to hospice, providing nonmedical services in helping to give peace of mind to overwhelmed families caring for their dying loved ones, who also need support. I cultivate a sacred space so you and your family can experience the death process peacefully.”

Laura is a trained end-of-life doula affiliated with INELDA (International End of Life Doula Association) and has served for several years at Legacy Hospice. She has studied Mussar, Jewish ethical behavior, for more than 20 years. She has guided ongoing groups at Rose Schnitzer Manor and Congregation Neveh Shalom for many years.

“As a Melavah, I give emotional and spiritual support, and if the ailing person is able, there are many options for a variety of experiences in finding meaning through life review, writing a legacy letter or an ethical will,” says Laura. “I can offer prayers, rituals, ceremonies, music, meditation and breath awareness to help guide the way.”

Laura has lived in Portland for over 50 years and was an educator in Beaverton Schools. She received the Golden Apple Award for excellence. She is the author of two books published by Harper Collins on self-esteem activities for children. For more information and to make an appointment to meet Laura, visit jewishendolifedoulapdx.com.

**New business helps you think Inside the Box**

When Covid halted in-person activities two years ago, NCSY Oregon Director Meira Spivak decided to spend the extra time on professional development.

After reading Inside the Box: A Proven System of Creativity for Breakthrough several times, she reached out to co-author Jacob Goldenberg and trained in his SIT (Systemic Inventive Thinking) approach over Zoom. Now she has launched a business to share the concepts with nonprofits, businesses and individuals.

She is still the NCSY Oregon Director, Director of Camp Kesher and the Northern District Manager of the West Coast NCSY. But she also runs Results Driven Innovation, which offers workshops and facilitates effective brainstorming sessions.

“I’m extremely passionate about SIT because it’s helped me to overcome challenges quickly and efficiently,” says Meira. “I offer workshops training companies in the skill of innovation as well as help them to narrow down their mission and set targeted goals using the OKR (Objectives and Key Results) management system.”

OKR focuses on efforts, not results. With OKR, a company sets a goal and then identifies key steps needed to achieve that goal. Each week, employees are judged on the effort they put forth. “If you follow the steps, you should be successful,” says Meira.

For more information on the process, workshops or brainstorming sessions, visit meiraspivak@gmail.com or contact Meira at 503-757-3037 or meiraspivak@gmail.com.
Corvallis teen gets Bronfman Fellowship

Sofia Isaias-Day of Corvallis is one of 26 North American 11th-graders selected for the 36th cohort of the Bronfman Fellowship.

The Bronfman Fellowship, the flagship program for outstanding young Jews, taps 26 North American teenagers at a formative point in their lives, the year before college, when an intense, immersive experience will have the most impact. The 2022 Fellows are from 11 states and Canada, and represent a wide range of Jewish backgrounds, including Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Just Jewish and secularly/culturally Jewish.

The year begins with a five-week summer study program in Israel and includes an encounter with a parallel cadre of outstanding Israeli teenagers. Programming continues throughout the Fellows’ senior year of high school with a series of lively in-person and virtual seminars, gatherings and projects. Upon graduating high school, the Fellows join an alumni community that has become a model for lifelong engagement.

Sofia is a rising senior at Corvallis High School. One of her biggest passions is writing articles and short stories primarily focused on Jewish feminism and personal experiences. Last year, she was a fellow for the Rising Voices Fellowship through the Jewish Women’s Archive, where she published articles on their website along with other projects that are involved and related to the Jewish community.

The family members of Beit Am, the Mid-Willamette Valley Jewish Community, Sofia’s living at bat mitzvah at Beit Am when she was 13. After her bat mitzvah, she has continued to occasionally lead services on High Holidays. Sofia is a board of directors of Honors Society, Associated Student Body, Tennis Team and Green Club at CHS.

www.bronfman.org

Book, paintings bring Yiddish to life

BY KERRY POLITZER

Artist Jessica Rehfield spent part of the pandemic researching Jewish-American identity and has inspired by her findings. "Luckily, I was able to take a lot of time to look more deeply into organizations that talk about this subject in America, like the YIVO Institute, which is pretty well-known in the Yiddish-American community," says the artist.

As a Jewish person with only minimal exposure to the Yiddish language, she found herself increasingly drawn to it. While working on her graduate thesis at the now-defunct Oregon College of Art and Craft, she combed YIVO’s archives of photos, letters and academic articles. Jessica’s studies have led her to write and illustrate Mayn Kneydl, a new book about matzah ball soup that doubles as a Yiddish-English primer. The artist aims to spread awareness of the Yiddish language among younger generations while helping older generations reconnect with the language they heard or knew as a child.

“The primer is for everyone who wants to have an introduction to Yiddish as a vernacular, spoken language and to learn vocabulary that is outside of the popular phrases often referred to when one encounters or thinks of Yiddish,” she says.

“I started looking at Yiddish as one of those lost things that I may have had access to in the past if I had grown up in a different era. I didn’t grow up with it in my household,” says Jessica. “One of the things that led me to study Yiddish was that all of these organizations I was looking at kept pointing to the influences of Jewish immigrants in America, and how much Yiddish-speaking immigrants have influenced American popular culture. The influence is so profound.”

The artist, who also has a background in the French language, continues: “Languages have to do with senses of identity and community and belonging, as well as “othering” or being “othered.” Part of my heartache is that we should be celebrating people’s abilities to speak multiple languages (in the United States); it’s a crazy type of oppression to say that we should only speak English.”

Jessica was chosen for the 2021-22 Artist Accelerator Program at the Art Center. During her residency, she developed all the text and most of the illustrations for her book.

“I used my resident studio there as a generative space for composition and illustration,” she says. “I used the walls as a place to brainstorm and plot out all of the text and storyboards for illustrations. The basement of the Arts Center has these metallic walls, which I used to put my manuscript pages and paintings up with magnets and rearrange and try changes in the order of pages to refine the story text.”

The artist has also connected with senior citizens who have firsthand knowledge of Yiddish; they responded well to her project.

“I did have a really good interaction with the woman visiting from a senior living center in Corvallis, who recognized Yiddish when she saw my work at the Arts Center,” says Jessica. “She saw the picture with the word geshmak (delicious) and said, ‘I know what that means.’ We had a nice conversation about how she had grown up on the East Coast with her mother speaking Yiddish … It was very meaningful for me.”

See more about Jessica and her work at The Arts Center, theartscenter.net.
Roughly half the group was from the Jewish community; others were affiliated with Vancouver Avenue or were Portlanders of color interested in social justice issues.

Daryl Stewman, 52, is the only Black teacher at Southridge High School. Previously a salesman for a hydraulics company, he returned to school and earned his master’s in education from Portland State University, desiring to connect with and teach history to high schoolers.

“I couldn’t think of a more valuable trip that I could take to give back to my students in the classroom and to myself and my family,” said Daryl, the father of two adult children and the stepfather of four younger kids.

Sarah Blattner, 51, a Southridge High School language arts teacher and colleague of Daryl’s, knows her way around the South. Having lived in Baltimore, Md., and Atlanta itself, she went on the trip to see a once-familiar region through Pacific Northwest eyes and return to Portland with greater insights to share with fellow educators in a group she leads at the high school, Building Anti-racist White Educators.

Sarah expressed what some on the trip considered an uncomfortable truth: Jews, at the dawn of the United States, owned and profited from slaves and the slave trade.

Other discoveries were poignantly displayed at the Montgomery-based National Memorial for Peace and Justice and The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration. Both exist to this joint Jewish-Black civil rights trip because witnessing history through the eyes of victims deepens the meaning of sites and experiences. Years ago, he visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem with Jews who held only a tenuous grasp of the Holocaust. His presence and perspective as a second-generation survivor made that trip more meaningful for everyone.

Similarly, the civil rights trip was more meaningful for him, because he shared it with those who have a direct, palpable experience of discrimination and oppression.

“We White Jews have the option to hide that Blacks don’t have, and the need to hide indicates an illness in our society. Hiding is only a strategy to avoid confronting hate,” Hank said.

Tour participants were acutely aware of rising rates of antisemitism internationally, in the South and in our region in the West.

Miles Rowe Pendleton, 23, is president of the NAACP Eugene Springfield. A 2021 University of Miami graduate (with four majors, including Africana Studies and Criminology), Miles had joined his campus Hillel on a trip to Israel, where he’d learned more than he previously knew about the Jewish people, Judaism and the contentious Israeli-Palestinian conflict, always with an eye toward learning how to mediate and work through the thorniest of issues.

Miles walked away from that trip with a greater understanding of Black-Jewish civil rights work, and he more recently endeavored to connect with the JCRC, which was his entrée to this trip. Miles is inspired by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s nonviolent approach to what he calls the ongoing, redemptive work everyone should engage in to “to redeem the soul of the nation” through “a coalition of people working together.”

“We stand against bigotry in all forms,” said Miles, who identifies himself as biracial with a German mother and South Carolinian father. “This trip won’t give us all or any answers. But it does ground us in where we’ve been and where we can go to effect real change.”

Blacks and Jews, he said, “are more the same than distinct” and can find agreement on some issues while disagreeing on others. Reflecting on viewing the Atlanta-based elevated tombs of King and his wife, Coretta Scott King, in the National Historical Park, Miles echoed a line of Billy’s, the tour founder and guide: “People are not other, but an-other.”

Continued on next page
CR (from previous page)

Leslie Warren, 50, who is Black and also of Japanese and Native American descent, needed little reminder of the phrase. She is on the board of Western States Center, a Portland-based, racial-justice nonprofit whose executive director is Black activist, thinker and writer Eric Ward. In addition to her day job as an independent financial advisor, Leslie is part of a WSC team working “intentionally,” she said, to strengthen the Black and Jewish relationship.

The two communities have “a deep-rooted relationship that most people aren’t aware of. A lot of change can happen with those two communities coming together again in a meaningful way, as we have seen throughout history,” she said pointedly.

Group members talked frequently to each other throughout the trip – on the bus, at meals, at powerful historically significant sites – about active next steps in the name of furthering the aims of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Ideas spanned creating scholarships, getting more involved in voters’ rights work to stem the tide of ongoing voter-suppression legislation, sharing trip experiences with friends, families, boards, elected officials and much more.

Said Marni of the trip: “This challenges me a little more, and I’m looking forward to conversations.”

Tour leader Billy urged the group to continue to reflect on the work and legacy of civil rights-era giants who are familiar – John Lewis, Malcolm X, the Kings, Rosa Parks, Emmett Till and his mother – and those who are largely unknown.

They include activist Joanne Bland, 70, who was jailed as young as age 8 in poverty-stricken Selma, Ala., when she stepped up to fight for her elders’ right to vote; Bishop Calvin Wallace Woods Sr., 88, a contemporary of King and fellow activist who drove King to the Birmingham, Ala., airport before his fateful trip to Memphis, where the legend was assassinated; and the 4,400 Black people – many whose names will never be known – lynched in 800 counties around the country only because of the color of their skin.

Billy left the group with a number of thought-provoking statements for continued reflection, including this question for the 39 of us: “What is it you’re willing to live for so when it’s your turn not to be here anymore, groups can hear your story?”

Trip reveals historic truths

BY BOB HORENSTEIN

I had been on a civil rights trip to Atlanta, Montgomery, Selma and Birmingham three years ago, so why go on, let alone organize, the same journey last month? For starters, since nearly half of my fellow travelers were from the local African-American community, I wanted to experience the history of the civil rights struggle through the eyes of those who have experienced discrimination and whose ancestors had been the victims of systemic racism and oppression in this country.

Yet, there was another compelling reason to repeat this sort of educational experience along with the desire to bond with the amazing participants. When I look back on my so-called high school education, specifically my one and only U.S. history course, I feel cheated. Cheated because what I was taught at that time glossed over important – and uncomfortable – parts of American history, downplaying the ugly legacy of slavery and Jim Crow laws. Cheated because I wasn’t taught that the country I love was built on white supremacy.

I attended Woodrow Wilson High School in Southwest Portland. The same Woodrow Wilson who screened the reprehensibly racist film, “The Birth of a Nation,” in the White House in March 1915. Of course, we never learned that our school was named after a president who openly admired the Ku Klux Klan. (Wilson was renamed after the Black civil rights advocate and journalist Ida B. Wells in 2021.)

In the late ‘70s at Wilson, were we taught that two million kidnapped Africans – two million – died, their corpses thrown overboard into the Atlantic Ocean, as the slave ships made their way to our shores? Or that by 1730, half the population of New York City owned slaves, a higher percentage than any other colonial city except Charleston, S.C.? That it was slaves who cut and cleared the road that would become Manhattan’s Broadway and built the wall for which Wall Street was named?

Were we taught that Andrew Jackson, a slave owner and our seventh president whose face adorns our 20-dollar bills, once placed an ad in the Tennessee Gazette offering a reward for the capture of an escaped slave and “ten dollars extra, for every hundred lashes any person will give him, to the amount of three hundred?”

This is exactly why trips such as the one organized by the Jewish Community Relations Council and Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church in April are so important, especially given the current climate in this country. Lawmakers in several statehouses – Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, Iowa, South Dakota and Missouri among them – have proposed and in some cases even adopted legislation to prohibit lesson plans in our public schools that focus on the centrality of slavery to American history.

How are these efforts to erase the dark stains on American history any different from attempts to minimize the Holocaust?

Our civil rights trip, in particular the visit to Brian Stevenson’s powerful Equal Justice Initiative Lynching Memorial and Legacy Museum in Montgomery, was for me a poignant reminder of the straight line from slavery to Jim Crow to race-based gentrification and mass incarceration.

We learned who we were and, frankly, who we are even now. We still have a long road to travel in this country, but now we have newly inspired and well-informed partners with whom to face present and future challenges.

Bob Horenstein is the Director of Community Relations and Public Affairs for the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

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ARREST (cont. from page 1)

“Although the crimes committed were against property, we know that left unchecked, hate speech can lead to violence,” wrote Rabbi Cahana. “We are grateful that we are all safe.”

Congregation Beth Israel’s historic sanctuary was marked with a hateful antisemitic slogan and suffered minor fire damage last week. Staff arrived at the historic congregation on Monday, May 2, to discover a spray-painted antisemitic slogan and the remnants of a small fire near the sanctuary entrance.

“Having this Nazi-referenced statement spray-painted in yellow on our building, just a few days after we commemorated Yom HaShoah, pains my heart,” said Rabbi Cahana.

Rabbi Cahana and Anderson both urged community organizations and individuals to remain vigilant and to report any recent vandalism.

“Even incidents which seem random and unrelated or too minor to bother with should be properly reported” says Rabbi Cahana. “We are all responsible for one another.”

Anderson serves as a conduit between local Jewish organizations and law enforcement agencies and asks people to report incidents to her at janderson@securecommunitynetwork.org or 503-892-7406. You can report incidents on the Federation’s website at jewishportland.org/security.

“Incidents such as these serve as a reminder to pay attention and be vigilant,” says Anderson. “I also ask you to think back on the past few weeks for any instances of vandalism that might have initially been brushed off and not reported. Investigators are wondering if there was additional vandalism conducted by him that they don’t yet know about. Please let me know if this is the case.”

“I want to make sure you know how hard investigators worked on this case this week,” Anderson wrote. “Portland Police, FBI, Beaverton Police, the local District Attorney’s office, the U.S. Attorney’s office and others I don’t even know about have all worked phenomenally well together to make this happen. Thank you for your partnership as we work to keep the Jewish community and others safe.”

Funding for the regional security advisor is via a four-way partnership of SCN, the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Oregon Jewish Community Foundation Endowment Fund and contributions from 17 Jewish organizations across the region.

Cedar Sinai Park hosts virtual benefit May 12

Join Cedar Sinai Park virtually for its annual benefit Thursday, May 12. Tune in at 5 pm for the pre-show. The event begins at 5:30 pm. Go to: avstream.me/MarcysBar.

The event is set within a TV show, Marcy’s Bar: Where Everybody Knows Your Name, based on the 1982-1993 sitcom, Cheers. Cheers.

You may recognize some of your Cedar Sinai Park friends and family, and meet a few new faces, too, as residents and staff make their primetime debut. Celebrate and support Cedar Sinai Park’s 102-year commitment to our community’s older adults and amazing staff. For details, contact Director of Development & Communications Martha Norrie at martha.norrie@cedarsinaipark.org or 503-535-4315.

Drop off hard-to-recycle items at MJCC May 15

A James Recycling Drop Off Event will be at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center 10 am-12:30 pm, May 15, hosted by the Climate Action Committee of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland. For information on cost, sorting and other details, visit jshrecycling.com/recycling-drop-off-event.

Oregon Rises Above Hate

Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education will participate in Oregon Rises Above Hate on May 14. Celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and the AANHPI (Asian, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander) community, its resilience, and commitment to combating the continued rise of anti-Asian hate.

As part of Oregon Rises Above Hate, OJMCHE admission is free on May 14, 11 am-4 pm. Other cultural heritage institutions that will offer free admission include the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, Lan Su Chinese Garden, Oregon Historical Society and Portland Chinatown Museum.

Afternoon events are set on Flanders and Davis Streets with a vigil and memorial at Lan Su Chinese Garden from 6-9 pm. For more information and a schedule of events, visit oregonrisesabovehate.com.

May 12: Candidate talk

Learn where Christine Drazen, a Republican frontrunner in the race for governor, stands on the issues of importance to both the Jewish and general communities at noon, May 12, on Zoom. jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/jewish-community-relations-council

May 20-21: Kesser Israel Scholars-in-Residence

Congregation Kesser Israel hosts Rabbi Benzion and Chani Twerski for a full weekend of inspiring learning May 20-21. "Repair and Rebuild on Our Journey to the Future: Relationships & Our Community" is the theme of the Torah Learning weekend. kesserisrael.org/event/scholar-in-residence

Find more local events at jewishportland.org/community-calendar
Explore Iran nuclear threat

On May 23, learn about the Israeli and American response to the Iranian nuclear threat. “From Covert Operations to Overt Negotiations: The Israeli and American Responses to the Iranian Nuclear Threat” will be at noon on Zoom. Lahav Harkov, senior contributing editor and diplomatic correspondent of The Jerusalem Post, will be the featured speaker. She reports on and analyzes Israel’s international relations, the Prime Minister’s office, the National Security Council and the Foreign Ministry. She is well connected to Israel’s top lawmakers and diplomats. This local Zoom program is presented by the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Stand WithUs Northwest, Israel360 and Congregation Neveh Shalom.

Register at tinyurl.com/2p99x634.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and its theme is “Together for Mental Health.” In the spirit of togetherness, the agency works to ensure anyone with mental health challenges can get the appropriate support and quality of care to live healthy, fulfilling lives. Until society opens up a little more, JFCS is offering group-session and workshop options in a safe online space.

Fighting loneliness and creating community are two foundational reasons JFCS created its first Cancer Support Group, thanks in large part to funding from the Holzman Foundation. It is co-facilitated by JFCS’ Caitlin DeBoer, LCSW; Community Chaplain Rabbi Barry Cohen; and Rabbi Mel Young. It is free, but registration is required. It meets the second Wednesday of every month, from 11 am to noon.

To register, visit jfcs-portland.org/cancer-support/. For more information, contact Caitlin at 971-400-3533 or cdeboer@jfcs-portland.org.

RSM reports first resident Covid-19 cases

Last month, Rose Schnitzer Manor at Cedar Sinai Park recorded its first positive cases of Covid-19 since the pandemic began March 11, 2020.

Chief Executive Officer Kimberly Fuson said the Covid-19 positives were a tough reminder that the Omicron virus and sub-strains are extremely transmissible, and that Covid is still very much present in our lives. “We must continue to place the highest emphasis on the importance of continuing to wear PPE appropriately,” says Fuson.

Of the 90 Covid-19 positives at Rose Schnitzer Manor, 57 were residents and 33 were staff.

“We are especially thankful for vaccines and boosters, as symptoms were all mild in nature, such as a cough, runny nose or fatigue,” says Fuson. “It is extremely gratifying to see that the mild symptoms reported by residents and staff resolved within a few days amongst almost all of the residents and a good portion of the staff.”

One-third of the staff and residents testing positive for Covid-19 reported no symptoms.

Despite the general community being given a green light to stop indoor masking, “assisted living communities, nursing homes and all other health-related communities and facilities remain highly vulnerable,” says Fuson. “The mask and PPE mandates remain in place for our residents, our staff and for all those who come to visit. We thank the Jewish community deeply for their concern and empathy and adherence to protocols.”

“It is my hope we can all work together to expel Covid-19 from our community for good by following the protocols, vaccinating and boosting, and using best judgment regarding masking (and other PPE as appropriate).”

“We will continue to keep the community updated as we move through the pandemic and appreciate all the good energy and wishes for a full and speedy recovery of our residents and staff.”

Trauma-informed expertise grows at JFCS

BY JENN DIRECTOR KNUDSEN

Caitlin DeBoer is Jewish Family & Child Service’s newly minted licensed clinical social worker. But her career with JFCS and expertise in person-centered, trauma-informed counseling work began years ago.

“The social services that JFCS offers would not be as clinically and trauma-informed without Caitlin’s contribution in all aspects of our work,” says JFCS Clinical Director Douglass Ruth, LCSW, CCTP. “Her ability to assess clients’ psychological needs as well as provide advocacy and assistance around basic needs allows JFCS to offer a full spectrum of support services.”

Caitlin, 31, received her master’s degree from Portland State University School of Social Work in 2017, the same year JFCS brought her on as a social work intern.

Caitlin provides a unique perspective. Now a mental health social worker on the nonprofit’s counseling team, she also managed its Emergency Aid program. At the pandemic’s height, Caitlin helped field more than 100 calls and messages left on JFCS’ intake line in a single three-week period. More people than ever from greater Portland sought help from or received referrals to JFCS as their jobs evaporated, parenting demands and costs increased as children were home from school, rent payments languished and, for some, taking care of a single medical emergency suddenly meant no food on the table.

She previously worked for CASA-Voices for Children in Corvallis and the Native American Youth and Family Center in Portland. At CASA, she interacted with many children who carried a legacy of “unimaginable generational trauma,” often defined by addiction issues, domestic violence and other sources of great hardship.

At JFCS, she has worked with older adults, many of whom had experienced trauma.

“It was eye-opening to see we could be a support while never knowing what they’ve experienced,” says Caitlin, referencing world events like the Depression, World War II, the Holocaust and the beginning of the civil rights movement. In addition, her clients suffered traumas outside the confines of history, such as the loss of loved ones, illnesses and divorce.

For Caitlin, her dual work providing mental health services and emergency funding when it’s most needed has translated into wraparound care for many clients.

She recently helped create JFCS’ first-ever Cancer Support Group that ramps up in May, which is Mental Health Awareness Month. Caitlin co-facilitates the free group that meets every other Wednesday alongside Community Chaplain Rabbi Barry Cohen and Rabbi Mel Young, a cancer patient himself (see box for details).

“It’s my responsibility to show up and meet folks where they’re at,” says Caitlin.
Chaplain's Corner

Mayday, Mayday, Mayday for Health

Rabbi Barry Cohen is the Jewish community chaplain of the Greater Portland area. chaplain@jewishportland.org

During the start of my senior year of high school, I was miserable. I felt overwhelmed by academics and extracurriculars. I was stressed out by the pressures of social life – weekend plans, cliques, dances and dating. The stressors of college applications and SAT tests set me over the top.

Turning to my friends did not help. Though I had a great relationship with my sister, her plate was full because she had started graduate school. My mom clearly recognized I was struggling. She made a simple suggestion that forever changed how I would respond to worries, stresses, strains and pressure. She admitted that she did not have the answers I needed, but that she knew someone I could talk to: a clinical therapist.

Without actually saying the words, she expressed that there was nothing wrong with me, that I did not need to judge myself for failing and that it was OK to share my feelings with a trained professional.

I met with the therapist only three times, but those sessions made all the difference. I obtained the insight and the strategies to navigate senior year and prepare for the next big step: college.

Throughout my life, I have turned to a trained therapist to help me navigate stressful, anxious and even tragic experiences. Knowing that I can always turn to a professional for help has provided a sense of security. In addition, as a single parent, I have expressed to my children that parents do not always have the answers. My kids do not view the need to talk to a therapist as a sign of weakness or failure. They view it as a valuable option, when friends and family are not enough.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This is our reminder to be as vigilant with our mental/spiritual/psychological health as we are with our physical health. If we lost our balance, awkwardly fell and broke our wrist, we would not self-diagnose, self-judge, try to ignore the pain and hide this reality from others. We would seek medical help immediately.

Only recently have we become equally as comfortable seeking help from others when we experience mental, psychological or spiritual pain. This month is a reminder to do three things: take care of ourselves, take care of our loved ones and talk about mental health. This effort is an “all hands on deck” approach. After all, our mental health is arguably more important than our physical health (even though both are intimately intertwined).

Professionally, I have seen that women tend to be more willing than men to talk about mental health and work with a professional. For generations, our society has taught that if a man struggles with mental health, he is weak or a failure. As a result, men have learned to self-medicate, deny their feelings or express their emotions in counterproductive ways.

This trend has continued to my generation, Generation X. Have you seen the movie “Fight Club?” For the protagonist, who was experiencing a psychological breakdown, the solution was not talking to a therapist or joining a support group. The solution was taking part in an underground fight club, where men beat each other up, the bloodier the better.

Professionally and personally, I am seeing that more and more people are comfortable seeking help to remain mentally, spiritually and psychologically healthy. I have seen this not just with younger generations, but with older generations, men and women included.

At one of the widows/widowers group I facilitate, a participant shared some wise words. She reminded us that too few parents have taught their children how to access and articulate their emotions. Too few parents have taught their children how to grieve. As a result, they lack positive models for how to navigate emotionally challenging times.

We continue to be inundated by grief. Especially during the past two years, grief has rolled over us, wave after wave. Unresolved grief has affected us mentally and physically. Each and every one of us, to varying degrees, is grieving, and this grief has adversely affected our mental health.

Though our youth are resilient, they cannot adequately grieve on their own. Let us remember that they are watching us. As adults, let us model to them constructive ways of grieving and maintaining our mental health. When we express through our actions the importance of mental health, we teach our children and grandchildren how to handle stresses, strains, loss, grief and crisis. As a result, we, our families, our communities and even our nation will become healthier.
BY STEVE ALBERT

Since its founding in 1914, the Mittleman Jewish Community Center has met the cultural, educational, recreational and social needs of the Portland Jewish community. What this has looked like, in a practical sense, has developed over 108 years as the community continues to evolve. The leadership at the MJCC is always allocating resources to those programs and services that engage the most community members, that are not duplicated elsewhere, and that best align with the priorities of the Jewish community.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it is an opportune time to review the J’s offerings and establish new strategic priorities. Thanks to a generous grant from JFGP, the MJCC was able to engage a consultant to review our business model over the course of the last six months. We worked with Brian Hayden, a consultant who has worked with numerous JCC’s around North America. Brian visited Portland several times and worked closely with the MJCC’s Leadership Team and a sub-committee of the Board of Directors to understand our organization and our community.

Brian met with numerous constituencies – the J’s board, leadership team, management team, as well as representatives from among the J’s donors and members, and individuals representing different Portland Jewish organizations. Every group called out the need for the J to invest more resources in programs for youth and young families. This wasn’t a surprise to me, as I was one of many individuals who shared this perspective with Brian, and it was a need that we identified as a priority in our 2019 Strategic Plan. So much has changed in the intervening years, however, that the 2019 plan no longer serves as an effective road map, and we need a new strategic plan.

What does an increased focus on youth and young families look like? The MJCC’s Board of Directors is wrestling with that question and, within a few months, will define a set of strategic priorities and clearly communicate our vision for the future of the J. There are some things that we already know, however.

First, we know that day camp is an important part of this initiative. The results of recent surveys show that MJCC camp families are extremely pleased with our day camp, in terms of overall program, staff, facilities and value. Our camp enrollment for 2022 is more than double what it was at this time last year. While that’s partly due to the lifting of pandemic restrictions, it’s also intentional program growth to better meet the growing demands of our community, and we know we can serve even more children and families.

Second, we know that many young people choose the MJCC for fitness and recreation. Whether its swim team, soccer leagues, sports camps or youth fitness classes, we provide outstanding facilities and programs for young people and know that there are opportunities to offer more. Afterschool classes are another area of potential growth. Currently, our classes include rock climbing, chess, art, tai chi and numerous sports, and we’re excited to expand those offerings.

Third, we know that the J has an important role in bringing the community together for holiday and family programs. Events like our recent Yom Ha’atzmaut concert featuring TLV, as well as our annual Sukkot, Hanukkah and Purim programs, along with secular programs such as New Year’s at Noon and Big Truck Day, bring thousands of community members to our campus, and we’re excited to build on that success.

We also know that strategic plans involve trade-offs, and we can’t add in some areas without cutting back in others. That, of course, is the biggest challenge of strategic planning – ensuring that we are best meeting the priorities of the community while stewarding our limited resources responsibly. We are excited about this work and look forward to sharing our plans next fall.

Steve Albert has served as the Executive Director of Portland Jewish Academy and the Mittleman Jewish Community Center since 2014. He has over 35 years of experience in education and nonprofit administration. He started his career as a teacher and coach, and he has provided oversight to a range of athletic and summer programs as an administrator at several independent schools.

The Mittleman Jewish Community Center annual Community Celebration will be at 5:30 pm, May 24. The celebration will be in person at the J with a virtual opportunity for those who cannot attend in person.

Michelle Alany & The Mystics will perform live. Bandleader, violinist and vocalist Michelle Alany is an ambassador of world folk traditions, specializing in Sephardic, Mediterranean and Eastern music.

MJCC Past President Jerry Sadis will receive the Pillar of Excellence Award. Jerry served on the MJCC and Portland Jewish Academy boards from 2007 to 2016. Jerry also has served on the boards of Robison Home (Cedar Sinai Park), Congregation Beth Israel, Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Oregon Jewish Community Foundation. He was president of CBI and OJCF. Born in Seattle, he graduated from the University of Washington with a Bachelor of Arts in accounting.

Two outstanding Jewish teen athletes from Oregon will receive the Harry Glickman Scholar Athlete Award. Winners are Everett Sibony from Seaside and Lyla Paru from Beaverton. This award was established in 2012 in honor of Harry Glickman (z”l), the “father” of professional sports in Oregon. He was the founder of the Portland Trail Blazers and the Portland Buckarooos.

Jake Raiton will be inducted into the Oregon Jewish Sports Hall of Fame. The OJSHF was established in 2012 to honor Jewish men and women who have accomplished extraordinary achievements in sports and have a deep connection to the state of Oregon. Raiton grew up playing many sports but focused on tennis. He was ranked #1 in Oregon throughout his junior career and reached a national ranking of #23 during high school. A three-time PIL champion and two-time Oregon High School State Champion, Jake graduated from Wilson High School in 1995 and went on to play varsity tennis at University of Michigan, graduating in 1999. Jake is the Director of Development at Green Light Development and lives in Northeast Portland with his wife, Cory, and their two children, Elliot and Katherine.

There will be other honorees recognized during the evening including some outstanding members of our Stingrays Swim Team, members who visit most frequently and superstar camp counselors.

Presenting sponsor for the evening is The Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Family Fund of OJCF/Jordan Schnitzer. All “Friends of the Center Society” members are MJCC community celebration sponsors. The event is free, but reservations are requested. To register, visit oregonnece.org/celebration.

Marilyn Grunbaum, z"l, passed away on May 4, 2022. Marilyn is survived by her husband, Eric Grunbaum; her children, Marah Amberlyn Strauch, Daniel Layton, and Gail Layton; and her great-grandchildren, Ryleigh Starr Layton and James Heroux Layton.

Lucille K. Neusihin, z"l, passed away April 10, 2022, at age 98. She is survived by her husband, Irving Neusihin; her sons, Jordan (Dana Hori) Grossman, Aaron (Mghi Tran) Grossman, and Nathan (Morgan Brown Grossman) Grossman; and five grandchildren.

Dr. Jordan Popper, z"l, passed away in St. Louis Park, MN, on April 30, at the age of 92. Dr. Popper is survived by his wife of 65 years, Ann Tenenbaum Popper; his children, Deborah Popper of Portland, Ben Meyers of Naples, FL, Rebecca (Kevin) McGrath, and Rachel Popper of Minneapolis; and his grandchildren, Joshua, Alexis and Addison McGrath.

Marianne Buchwalter, z"l, passed away Feb. 17, 2022, two months shy of her 98th birthday.

Mikhail Benikov, z"l, passed away May 2, 2022. Mikhail is survived by his wife of 67 years, Yelena Benikov; son, Yuri Benikov; daughter-in-law, Lena Benikov Avayyan; daughter, Yana Benikov; son-in-law, Zach Mayzlin; grandchildren, Alex Benikov, Dimitriy Mayzlin, Michelle Benikov and Leana Mayzlin (Alfonso Perez); and great-grandchild, Mason Yury MacFarland.

A funeral service for Mikhail was held May 6 at Beth Israel Cemetery. Donations in Mikhail’s memory can be made to Jewish Family & Child Service.