A yearlong journey of kindness

BY DEBORAH MOON

In his first Rosh Hashanah sermon at Congregation Shaarie Torah, Rabbi Gary Ezra Oren challenged congregants to perform 18,000 mitzvot or “regular acts of kindness” in 5782.

“In our world, a little kindness can really make someone’s day, and a lot of kindness can restore hope, joy and possibility,” says Rabbi Oren, who took the reins of the 116-year-old Conservative congregation July 1.

“When I said 18,000 in 5782, there was a ‘wow’ gasp in the sanctuary,” says the rabbi. “It’s a lot, but it’s not that much for our whole community.”

The pandemic has limited in-person attendance at services. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, about 70 people spread out in the sanctuary that holds more than 700. About 315 streamed the services on the website with 150 clicking on the Facebook stream. So to ensure all congregants know about the challenge, the congregation is promoting it on its website at shaarietorah.org/regular-acts-of-kindness and has emailed all congregants.

The webpage notes: We’ve all heard of Random Acts of Kindness, but we want these to become part of the fabric of our everyday experience and to acknowledge the power of this work in the world, so we’re choosing to call them Regular instead of Random.”

Everyone is encouraged to log each regular act of kindness on the page. By Sept. 10, several people had posted kindness acts. One teen picked up books and supplies a schoolmate dropped and said they could tell that the person was having a really bad day, and it seemed to help. Another congregant smiled and complimented everyone they saw in the grocery store. One person paid for the coffee of the person in line behind them at the drive-through.

Rabbi Oren says he was inspired to issue the challenge because, “The world seems so uncertain and scary right now, and a lot of kindness can really make someone’s day, and a lot of kindness can restore hope, joy and possibility.”

Hillel and Repair the World team up

BY DEBORAH MOON

For the second year, Oregon Hillel will participate in the Repair Campus Corps Program from Repair the World and Hillel International.

A press release notes that in year one, 100 Campus Corps Members from 96 local Hillels recruited 4,843 peers in service, catalyzing 5,312 acts of service and learning and contributing 26,299 hours of service to partner organizations. Last year, Oregon Hillel and PDX Hillel both participated. This year, the program will support 150 college student corps members around the world to engage their peers in service, civic engagement, Jewish learning and social justice work during the 2021-2022 school year.

Student Corps Members will participate in a full-year cohort experience run by Hillel International with support from Repair the World. Students will get their choice of six issue area-based education cohorts — Environmental Justice, Disability Inclusion/Justice, Racial Justice, Food Justice, Housing Justice and Education Justice. Starting in October, each cohort will participate in a four-part virtual educational series related to their issue area. The education series will introduce the topic and its connection to Jewish values and

See CAMPUS CORPS, page 5
High Holiday Resources

The High Holiday season continues at sundown tonight, Sept. 15, when Kol Nidre ushers in Yom Kippur. The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland has curated a webpage jam-packed with resources to help you observe this year’s High Holidays. [jewishportland.org/highholidayhappenings](Jewish portland.org/highholidayhappenings) features links to several resources including the High Holiday Community Calendar, which includes High Holiday services, classes and programs presented by congregations and Jewish organizations in the greater Portland region. For in-person events, be sure to check with the congregations (see list below) as plans continue to evolve almost daily with the recent surge of COVID cases.

The page also features links for holiday recipes and activities for families with young children, DIY Yom Kippur and Sukkot resources and projects, online offerings, service projects, and general information about Yom Kippur and Sukkot.

One link provides A Guide to Improve Mental Health in the New Year from the Blue Dove Foundation. That site features resources for individuals to reflect on and improve their own mental health as well as to contribute to the mental wellness of the Jewish community as we look forward to a sweet new year.

Congregations in Greater Portland area

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<tr>
<th>Congregation Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ahavath Achim</td>
<td>6686 Capitol Hwy.</td>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>97219</td>
<td>503-227-0010 ahavathachim.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Albert Shul</td>
<td>503-703-5205</td>
<td>albertashul.org</td>
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<td>Beit Haverim</td>
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<td>Portland</td>
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<td>Congregation Beit Yosef</td>
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<td>503-382-1069</td>
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<td>Chabad of Hillsboro</td>
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<td>Hillsboro</td>
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<td>Tigard</td>
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<td>Chabad Center for Jewish Life SW Portland</td>
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<td>8700 NE 199th St.</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
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<td>Kol Shalom (Humanistic)</td>
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<td>Neveh Shalom (Conservative)</td>
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<td>503-473-8227</td>
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<td>Community Chaplain</td>
<td>971-361-6124</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chaplain@jewishportland.org">chaplain@jewishportland.org</a></td>
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2 Jewish Review Sept. 15, 2021
Growing kindness: PJA volunteers at Kindness Farm

Want to help the Earth, feed the hungry, learn gardening tips, enjoy the outdoors, schmooze and teach Jewish values all at once? As many Portland Jewish Academy families have discovered, Kindness Farm is the place to do it.

Kindness Farm is a non-profit located on a 1-acre plot off Southeast 127th Avenue in Portland. Founded and run by Lou Levit this past January, the farm uses volunteer labor and sustainable agricultural practices to grow produce that is then donated to those in need. “Kindness Farm aims to care for people and Earth by regeneratively and sustainably growing nutrient-full vegetables and fruits; cultivating community education of balanced farming practices; and providing freshly harvested nutrients to houseless and low-income neighbors in need,” according to its website.

PJA has organized several volunteering events for families at Kindness Farm, including last spring and during the summer. “Because of COVID, many of our traditional service opportunities weren’t available, so we were looking for outdoor service opportunities,” says PJA Service Learning Coordinator Elana Cohn-Rozenksy. “We connected with Lou through the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland and have kept it going since.”

PJA organized two volunteer events in late spring, and then two more during summer. “Kindness Farm is doing so much that we want to teach our children,” says PJA parent and Middle School Jewish Studies Teacher Ben Foote. “Treating the Earth with respect, helping those in need, the joy of working outside in the dirt – these are all things I want my own children and my students to appreciate.”

Volunteers weeded existing garden beds and laid compost for new ones.

“The summer event was great, because it was mostly families new to PJA,” says Ben. “The kids were either digging up weeds or watching caterpillars and worms, while the adults were able to converse and connect.”

Ben was so struck by Kindness Farm he has returned to volunteer beyond PJA events.

“The PJA crews have done a lot of meaningful work at the farm, but we’ve never harvested the food (which mostly happens on Fridays),” he says. “I wanted to see how all this work translated into the actual produce the farm donates.”

Founder Lou Levit reflects on the impact Kindness Farm has already had on the Portland community: “In such a short time, this year alone, we’ve been able to feed over 5,000 of our houseless and low-income neighbors fresh, vibrant produce.”

Lou also expresses gratitude for those who have pitched in to help: “This couldn’t happen without the amazing contributions of our donors and volunteers. PJA families have been so amazing in spending their time on our beautiful farm, helping us create growing beds and gardens. I am truly grateful to the families that come out and support the farm and hope to see more community members as we grow and evolve.”

www.thekindnessmodel.org

Harvesting Chessed: Sukkot Shabbat at Kindness Farm

Celebrate Shabbat and harvest season with OneTable and the Kindness Farm (read about the farm above). OneTable promotes Shabbat and holiday dinners for and by young adults.

At 5:30 pm, Sept. 24, young adults (20s-30s) are invited to spend a fun evening volunteering and learning more about the farm, partaking in a delicious plant-based dinner from Aviv and connecting in community through reflective conversations. In the spirit of Sukkot, we invite you to bring your intentions and goals for how you want to engage in more radical hospitality throughout this Jewish New Year, 5782.

Suggested cost for catered dinner is $10/person. Limited capacity to the first 15 RSVPs (address provided with RSVP). For details and to RSVP, go to bit.ly/38TlEPr or onetable.org/portland.

Enjoy Sukkot at the MJCC

Mittleman Jewish Community Center is hosting two events to bring the community together outdoors for Sukkot.

Help build the Community Sukkah at 10 am, Sunday, Sept. 19, at the MJCC.

Then at 4 pm, Sunday, Sept. 26, come and enjoy Pizza in the Sukkah at the MJCC. Masks will be required when not actively drinking or eating. Enjoy an evening of great food, schmoozing, singing and storytelling. Cost is $5/person with children 3 and under free. Register at oregonjcc.org/pizza.
BY DEBORAH MOON

PJ Library has hired two part-time parent ambassadors – Sonia Marie Leikam and Ilana Jaffe-Lewis – to help create experiences and connections among the 1,020 young families across the Greater Portland area who receive free PJ Library books each month. PJ Library sends more than 230,000 books a month to families across North America. Portland was one of the first communities to adopt PJ Library when the Harold Grinspoon Foundation offered the program nationally. The program has been run in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland since 2011. “Each ambassador will build authentic relationships, create new, barrier-free Jewish experiences, expand communities and impart relevant Jewish content to Jewish families with children receiving PJ Library books,” says Rachel Nelson. Rachel oversees the local program in her role as JFGP Director of Educational Initiatives & Associate Director of Community Relations.

Sonia Marie will focus on families on Portland’s eastside. A longtime Jewish professional and community organizer, she is currently focused on growing her family business, Leikam Brewing, a Kosher craft brewery. She and her husband Theo have three boys ages 7, 10 and 12 who have received PJ Library books all the years they have been eligible. The older two are now enrolled in PJ Our Way since they aged out of the PJ Library. “I love connecting people together and hope I am able to help bring families together,” says Sonia Marie. She adds her own family has benefited so much from the program, she felt this role would be a good way to give back. “Because we are an interfaith home, PJ Library books have allowed my partner the opportunity to learn about holidays and traditions alongside my kids and be an active participant in creating a Jewish home,” she says.

As the new west side ambassador, Ilana looks forward to forging new connections. “I’m most excited to connect with and learn from other parents, to raise my child within a close, local community of families and to watch the children of these families grow over this next year,” she says. She adds connection will be her primary goal: “Parenthood can be lonely at times. And parenthood during a pandemic has been very isolating for many. My hope is to offer opportunities for authentic and compassionate connection.” Ilana worked in Jewish education for 10 years and early childhood education for the past four years. Raised in southern California, she has lived in Portland since 2017. Ilana and her husband, Steven, have a 5-month-old son who has been receiving PJ Library books since he was born.

As a PJ Library parent, she says, “I most enjoy the element of surprise that PJ brings into our life. It’s fun to receive a mystery book every month. And it’s a gift that we can share together. I also deeply appreciate that the books he receives will grow in number, and our home library will have Jewish characters that reflect my son and his life.” Rachel notes that the recent surge in COVID with the Delta variant has made the in-person gatherings the three women discussed initially impractical until children can be vaccinated.

However, Ilana says she has many ideas that she feels can work well in a virtual setting – a monthly Shabbat picnic, story hours, mask-making for Purim, a Hanukkah dreidel tournament and, her favorite, a Rosh Chodesh group for moms. Literally, head of the month, the holiday of the new moon has long been celebrated by women.

“Jewish feminists have been using this holiday to gather, connect and learn together,” says Ilana. “This is something that I think mothers desperately deserve right now.”

Sonia Marie plans to use the fall to get to know families and reach out to families new to the program. “Due to the variant, we will be restricting our large events, but may be meeting with families at the park if weather permits,” she says.

PJ Library also is creating Shabbat bags for the ambassadors to deliver to local families new to PJ Library.

For more information on PJ Library, contact Rachel at rachel@jewishportland.org or visit pjlibrary.org.

PJ Library engages diversity, equity, inclusion and access consultant

Portland Jewish Academy has engaged a consultant, Heather Clark, Ph.D., to work with the school on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access. Heather holds a Ph.D. in anthropology and serves as a Lecturer at the University of Washington and an Instructor in the Rainier Scholars program. She has broad experience working with schools and other organizations on DEIA. Her approach is to help organizations understand their cultural values and norms, and to explore the changes that take place when new people are introduced into the culture.

PJJA engaged planning its work with Heather in the fall of 2019, but the pandemic delayed the launch. In the fall of 2020, Heather worked with teachers, administrators and board members to reflect on the impact of the pandemic as well as the racial reckoning of the spring of 2020. In May, Heather met with the same group. Her workshops provided an opportunity to discuss key racial literacy terms, establishing a shared foundation and language on which to base future work. In August 2021, Heather joined the faculty during the in-service week on campus to continue important discussions about DEIA. PJJA staff identified their comfort level with confronting specific situations and analyzed real-life scenarios. Heather’s work with the PJJA faculty, staff and board will continue throughout this school year.

Undertaken as a follow-up to PJJA’s most recent reaccreditation, the work is a natural extension of previous efforts. In 2015, the school began to examine its curriculum through an anti-bias lens. In 2016-17, PJJA identified a need to expand its anti-bias education work, review hiring practices and improve accessibility. In March 2018, a visiting team from the Northwest Association of Independent Schools spent several days on campus and issued a reaccreditation report that recommended PJJA “clearly define what constitutes a diverse school community within the context of a Jewish day school.”
BB Camp to raise funds with BBQ and concert

B’nai B’rith Camp will host the first fundraiser concert at its new amphitheater on Sept. 26. Renowned pianist and BB Camp supporter Michael Allen Harrison and his All-Star Band will perform.

The event begins at 3 pm with a picnic-style barbecue and tours of BB Camp’s campus, including the newly built northside cabins and amphitheater/aquatic center. The concert will begin at 4 pm.

Tickets are $20 a person or $40 a family, including lunch and concert. Tickets can be purchased at bbcamp.org/bbq.

“Serving our community during this extraordinarily challenging time has been a true blessing,” says BB Camp CEO Michelle Koplan. “Thanks to our committed community and many donors, we have been able to continue to do this important work.”

Composer and pianist Michael Allen Harrison is a longtime supporter of BB Camp and a B’nai B’rith Men’s Camper.

BB Camp will continue to follow current OHA COVID-19 guidance for this event. Concertgoers ages 12 and up will be required to show proof of vaccination. Everyone must wear masks during the event when not eating or drinking.

The fundraiser will contribute to BB Camp’s continued support of the Lincoln County community, home of BB Camp’s Jewish overnight camp and conference center.

The BB Camp BBQ and Concert will support BB Camp’s work in the community near the camp, particularly the popular BB Day Camp Lincoln City and the Lincoln City Food program.

Since 2006, BB Day Camp Lincoln City has provided children with the opportunity to have an amazing week at camp, which includes hydro-tubing on Devil’s Lake, canoeing, swim lessons, a ropes course, music, arts & crafts, sports, drama and team-building games that foster independence and cooperation. Children are fed delicious and nutritious breakfasts, hot lunches and snacks as part of their day camp experience and given books to take home weekly as part of the BB Reads program.

More than two-thirds of the children attending the BB Day Camp Lincoln City receive financial assistance.

Since 2013, BB Camp has provided free meals to nearby Lincoln County children eligible for free and reduced lunch through the USDA Summer Food Services Program. With COVID-19 impacting school food programs and increasing food insecurity in the state, BB Camp expanded the effort to serve meals daily at three locations in Lincoln County. BB Camp has served over 165,000 meals to food-insecure children since June 2020.

In September 2020 when wildfires hit Oregon, firefighters stopped the Echo Mountain Complex Wildfire just blocks away from camp. Since then, BB Camp has provided free, delivered meals to evacuees from that wildfire.

CAMPUS CORPS (continued from page 1)

help students create tangible next steps to participate in service around this issue.

“Last year, we had two interns – one at University of Oregon and one at Oregon State University,” says Talia Leider, Oregon Hillel’s second year Springboard Social Justice Fellow at UO. “This year, we’re going to follow a different format, and we’re going to be piloting it just at the University of Oregon. We are hoping for three interns and will try to get them spread out across different grade levels … (so) we can have different points of view, different perspectives, different time commitments.”

Each of the three interns will lead a cohort to learn about and perform social justice with local nonprofit partners.

“A lot of internships don’t compensate students, which creates marginalization between students who can afford to engage in different activities that they’re not being compensated for and students who really want to participate in this programming, but they have to be working to support their academic career,” says Talia. She notes that interns do receive support from Repair the World, but she hopes to extend that. “We’re hoping to provide stipends for our cohort participants.”

Talia and the interns will work to connect cohorts with local nonprofits doing service projects that fit each cohort’s area of interest.

For instance, last year a favorite project was making sandwiches for the unhoused community. About 12 students gathered with one intern outside and made 300 sandwiches. Some were donated to nonprofit partners who regularly help feed Eugene’s growing houseless population. But many students also walked around the community and engaged with people who are unhoused and offered them sandwiches. Talia says some of the unhoused “just wanted to sit and have a conversation and share their experiences with us. It humanizes people in a beautiful way to actually sit down and have a conversation and not just have it be a statistic or something you see as you’re walking to class.”

This year, Talia says they want to “learn from the fact that our sandwich-making was really fantastic and, at the same time, there are so many more opportunities for different community feeds that have already been established by nonprofits like Food for Lane County. So how do we join them in support and bring our students to them as opposed to separating our students and just having it be them alone doing a service activity?”

Oregon Hillel is now accepting applications for the internships from interested UO undergrads. Applications close Sept. 27. For more information about the internship application, contact Talia at talia@oregonhillel.org.

Akiva on Campus to become Olami Oregon

Akiva on Campus has served more than 1,000 University of Oregon students and young professionals with innovative programming, inspiring international trips and community building over the past eight years. This has been made possible by Olami – an organization that funds and nurtures more than 300 similar chapters in 28 countries. Olami Oregon will operate from the same premises with the same team. Programming and opportunities will increase to include more trips overseas with Olami Explore; access to international career networks in business, technology and health through campus clubs including Olami JBiz, Olami JHealth and Olami JTech; and well-being and mindfulness programming through Olami Connect.

“We are very proud and honored to have been selected as one of the first chapters to carry the Olami brand in Oregon,” says Rabbi Moshe Drukman. For more information, contact Rabbi Drukman at 404-532-8763 or mdrukman@olami.org.
COVID Corner

In the midst of chaos, there’s hope

BY JOANNA WENDEL

We’re nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, and the news seems pretty chaotic. But despite the scary headlines, the future is not without hope.

According to the Oregon Health Authority, Oregon is now seeing more cases per day than the last large surge before vaccinations were released. For instance, the highest number of cases in Oregon, pre-vaccines, was on Nov. 30, 2020. On that day, OHA counted 1,712 cases. On Aug. 16, 2021, OHA recorded 2,600 cases. Hospitalizations and deaths have also been rising, while the average age for cases and deaths is decreasing.

VACCINATED VS. UNVACCINATED RISK

However, it’s important to remember that the populations of people being infected and hospitalized have also changed in a dramatic way. The vast majority of all cases, hospitalizations and deaths are among unvaccinated individuals.

We’ve entered a new age of COVID-19, with unvaccinated and vaccinated groups facing entirely different risk levels. According to a CDC report released in late August, unvaccinated people are five times more likely to be infected by COVID-19 and 29 times more likely to require hospitalization compared to vaccinated people. If you’re vaccinated, you’re much less likely to become infected, and if you do become infected, you’re much, much less likely to require hospitalization.

Breakthrough cases are possible. Every week, OHA releases a breakthrough case report detailing how many people that week tested positive for COVID-19 despite being fully vaccinated. Since they began releasing that weekly report, breakthrough cases have hovered between 12 and 16 percent of the week’s total COVID-19 cases. But the vast majority of these people do not end up in the hospital and do not die. This means the vaccines are working.

Vaccination rates, which stagnated over the summer, are again rising as more people realize that they’re not safe from the Delta variant. Average vaccination rates are up to 8,000+ per day, compared with 1,000-2,000 per day rates over the summer. And now that the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine has received full FDA approval, there’s hope that more vaccine-hesitant folks will get the jab.

WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?

Unfortunately, the story isn’t over for those who can’t be vaccinated, especially kids younger than 12. The head of the National Institutes of Health, Francis Collins, has said that emergency use authorization for COVID-19 vaccines for young kids may not happen until late in 2021, several months after school starts. Many parents are afraid for their kids’ lives as Oregon maintains that school districts must return to in-person learning.

I’m not a parent, so I can’t possibly know the fear in parents’ minds, but I do want to offer some facts that will hopefully assuage some of those fears: the risk of death in children with COVID-19 is still low, even with the Delta variant. According to OPB, the hospitalization rate among kids 10-19 is just 0.8%, the lowest of any age group.

Portland pediatrician Malaika Little said in an interview with OPB that “We have millions of kids at this point that have been tested for COVID. We have lots of experience with test-positive kids, and overall, it’s milder in children.” She is a single mother herself, with a 7-year-old starting second grade this year. She said the most important thing is that schools take a multi-tiered approach to reducing transmission; children are more likely to contract the disease from adults.

Portland Public Schools released its “Back To School” guide for 2021, which includes a summary of its approach to student safety. They’ll use a combination of vaccine mandates for all staff, physical distancing, newly installed air filters, contact tracing and more to keep transmission low.

Reopening schools with a low COVID-19 transmission is possible. For some hopeful reading, check out data scientist Elizabeth Ladyzhets’s “Opening Profiles” on her COVID-19 Data Dispatch blog about schools that reopened and kept transmission low.

The pandemic isn’t over, and it won’t be over anytime soon, but there is hope for the future. As more people get vaccinated, we creep closer toward the end.

Find testing events at govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing and vaccine sites and events at getvaccinated.oregon.gov.

JoAnna Wendel is the lead communications consultant for the Congregation Neveh Shalom COVID-19 Outreach and Services team funded by the Oregon Health Authority.

JFCS requires all employees and volunteers receive COVID vaccine

Jewish Family & Child Service prioritizes its clients, volunteers and staff members’ health and care. Due to the highly transmissible Delta variant of the ongoing COVID-19 virus, JFCS has made receiving the vaccine a condition of employment and of volunteering.

JFCS provides counseling, disability support services, emergency aid and Holocaust survivor services to over 1,000 clients in greater Portland in accordance with Jewish values.

JFCS is following the strong recommendations, and in some cases requirements, of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Governor Kate Brown. JFCS’ Board of Directors supports the agency’s updated policy.

“Take care of everyone in the JFCS family, we must demonstrate best practices to support the greater community,” says Executive Director Ruth Scott. “In this time of the pandemic, this means getting vaccinated.”

PDX Biz explores Telehealth & Pandemic

Entering its fifth year of presenting PDX Business events, the Mittleman Jewish Community Center plans to use a hybrid format. Some events, including its first program of the year, will be only via Zoom, while others will be both in-person and on Zoom.

Up first at noon, Thursday, Sept. 30, is “Telehealth and the Pandemic: What is the future of medicine?” Discussions will range from telehealth to medical records, cybersecurity and more.

Panelists will be Dr. Andy Barnett, Dr. Ariel Z. Salzman and Dr. Mark Zeitzer. Dr. Barnett currently serves as a strategic consultant to Oregon Health & Science University for its Immediate Care Services. He is the Senior Research Editor for the Journal of Urgent Care Medicine and is a frequent contributor to HIPPO Education’s podcasts on Urgent Care. Dr. Salzman, DPT, OCS, CMPT, is the owner of Move Strong Physical Therapy, located inside of the MJCC. She enjoys treating members of the community as well as competitive and professional athletes. She also works at Pacific University, teaching orthopedic techniques to physical therapy students. Dr. Zeitzer is the Medical Director for Acute Care Services at ZoomCare, a pioneering health-care company based in the Pacific Northwest. In his role at ZoomCare, Dr. Zeitzer engineers integrated behavioral health, urgent, primary, telemedicine and specialty care services to coincide with advanced, chronic care models.

The cost of the program is free, but a donation of $18 is suggested. RSVP: oregonjcc.org/pdxbiz. For questions, contact Saul Korin at 503-452-3427 or skorin@oregonjcc.org.
Donate restart kits for Afghans

Refugee families from Afghanistan are settling in Portland. The Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland are partnering with the Refugee Care Collective to collect restart kits for these new arrivals.

The Refugee Care Collective (refugeecarecollective.org) is a nonprofit that mobilizes the city of Portland to come alongside refugee families as they work to rebuild their lives. The collective expects 300-400 Afghan arrivals over the next couple months.

A variety of kits are needed such as kitchen, bedding, personal care and cleaning kits. Select a kit, go shopping for the listed items (they need to be new), then place the items in a clear plastic tub that can close and label the top of the container with the restart kit type.

“We are glad to be partnering with the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland on this worthy endeavor to provide essential items to Afghan refugees, who have been forced to flee their homelands because of who they are,” says OJMCHE Director Judy Margles. “At OJMCHE, our mission drives us to teach our audiences that we all have a responsibility to one another, (and) that indifference, passivity and inaction can result in public disaster. Holocaust history, while speaking to a specifically Jewish experience, also addresses broader, universal issues of injustice and the dangers of denying people the freedom to pursue a living and a livelihood free from oppression.”

When Jews from the former Soviet Union arrived in Portland in the 1990s, Roz Babener launched an effort to collect household items for the new arrivals. “It is our heritage,” says Roz of the restart kits. “It is in our DNA. We are supporting people who are fleeing in the same way many of our grandparents fled and helping them be welcomed into a new community.”

You can drop off your kit at the Refugee Care Collective warehouse in Tigard (10160 SW Nimbus Ave., Suite F-3): noon-3 pm, Wednesday-Saturday until Nov. 19. Sept. 18, Oct. 23 and Nov. 20. Or drop kits at OJMCHE (724 NW Davis St.) 11 am-4 pm, Wednesday-Saturday until Nov. 19.

“Our tradition teaches us to always ‘welcome the stranger,’” says JFGP CEO and President Marc Blattner. “When Jews came to the United States as immigrants and refugees, it was not always easy. We should work to help these refugees as they begin their new lives and make this difficult transition as easy as possible. I am proud of our community’s role.”

Survivors’ daughter to speak on family film

The Next Generations Group will host Yvonne Cohen, daughter of Dutch Holocaust survivors, for a talk about the film, “Cohen Legacy Family Film,” at 3-4 pm, Sunday, Sept. 19, via Zoom.

Those who register for the talk will receive a link to view the film before the event if they choose.

Yvonne was born in Rotterdam, Holland, and was inspired to write a book about her parents, Izaak and Bertie Cohen, but because of the vast collection of primary resources, she was encouraged to create the powerful legacy film instead. As a speaker, Yvonne has addressed countless students and groups about discrimination in its many forms, drawing on her parents’ experience.

Family documents, letters, photos and other artifacts (her father being an impeccable collector of items and data, including creating handmade puppets), and conversations with her parents and Gien Dane, the woman who saved her parents, have allowed Yvonne to reconstruct the story of their parents’ life in Rotterdam before, during and after the Holocaust.

Their parents hid to survive, creating an amazing hidden life that included building a hideaway room and putting on puppet shows for children, an extremely risky endeavor at the time. Their survival was made possible by the brave and righteous Dutch family they lived with in secrecy for more than 2 1/2 years.

On Sunday, Sept.19, Yvonne will speak about her family’s survival, how it impacted her and answer questions about the film.

To attend, email Sue Wendel at suemwendel@gmail.com.

Café at the J reopens

The Café at the J has reopened with indoor and outdoor dining, online and phone ordering, and curbside pickup all available.

“We are doing whatever we can so people will come in or pick up from the comfort of their car,” says Allen Levin of Café at the J and Century Catering.

During the pandemic, the café has been closed, but Allen kept kosher food options available with his Garbonzo’s Food Cart in the parking lot of the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. The food cart’s final day was Sept. 5, with the Café at the J reopening the day after Rosh Hashanah, Sept. 9.

The café opens at 8 am weekdays offering coffee, tea, bagels and snacks. From 10 am to 6:30 pm weekdays, the café offers Garbonzo’s menu, which features falafel pita and platters and a host of vegan options including eggplant, vegetarian kafta, portobel-lo mushrooms and hummus. Allen says he won’t be going back to the full café menu anytime soon, but he does plan to add tuna melts, grilled cheese and pizzas, which were all popular items pre-COVID. All are under the supervision of Oregon Kosher.

The café is open to everyone, though you do need to show ID if you enter the MJCC.

Order online at garbonzos.square.site. You can also phone your order to 503-475-4875. Specify if you want curbside pickup.

Zoom anti-Semitism symposium set for teens

High school students are invited to participate in the Anti-semitism Symposium for Teens, sponsored by Lappin Foundation’s Teen Antisemitism Task Force and the Jewish Teen Initiative. The free symposium will be facilitated by Dr. Noam Weissman at 4:30 pm PT, Tuesdays, Oct. 12, 19 and 26, on Zoom.

The interactive sessions are designed to deepen teens’ knowledge of anti-Semitism; develop skills and build confidence to respond to it; and identify resources to support students if they experience anti-Semitism.

Register at LappinFoundation.org. For details, contact Sharon Wyner at 978-565-4450 or email swyner@lappinfoundation.org.
BY JENN DIRECTOR KNUDSEN

Grief affects every part of our lives and can be a lonely road to travel. Due to the ongoing pandemic, coping with grief has been more isolating than at any time in recent memory.

To address individuals’ grief and shore up their ability to cope, Jewish Family & Child Service created a grief-processing group for adults over the course of six sessions (see box for dates, registration).

Walking Beside You is co-facilitated by Missy Fry, LCSW, a JFCS behavioral health social worker and certified advanced grief counseling specialist, and Rabbi Barry Cohen, Jewish community chaplain of the greater Portland area.

The sessions will take place online; group members will have the opportunity to share their own experiences with grief, connect with others, learn about the grieving process and explore strategies for moving through loss.

In summer 2020, both Rabbi Cohen and Missy recognized the need for Walking Beside You, a debut program that could be offered again as the need continues to grow.

Shortly after the start of the pandemic, Rabbi Cohen began noticing people feeling increasingly emotionally untethered. “Something is going on here that we need to address,” says Rabbi Cohen, reflecting on spring 2020 visits with the dying and their loved ones, both within and outside the Jewish community, in retirement facilities, in hospitals, in their homes.

“The toll of isolation, concern about the unknown, pain over lost expectations and plans left unfulfilled” have contributed to a number of challenges, including coping skills when death enters the picture, he says.

Missy adds: “COVID-19 has impacted so much in our lives, including grief, which is a natural response to any kind of loss such as being with loved ones or participating in traditional rituals.”

Walking Beside You provides a path through grief. For example, while the grieving process is individualized, a group helps foster community and allows one to build connections – both antidotes to isolation, Missy explains.

She says the group’s name – Walking Beside You – is very purposeful.

“We’re not going to cure grief, but we’re going to accompany you so you are not alone during this experience,” she says.

Rabbi Cohen acknowledges that while an in-person group would be ideal, Zoom is a necessary tool and has its advantages. “It still amazes me how strong a connection one can make over Zoom, and that connection can be so powerful, even if only in 2-D,” he says. Plus the co-facilitators are aware that many people feel safer in an online rather than a shared physical space, and meeting via a Zoom link mitigates barriers to traffic, transportation and parking.

Ultimately, Missy says, she and the rabbi agreed the time for their grief-processing group is now. “We said, ‘Let’s not wait a moment longer.’”

Statistics shore up their observations, both real and anecdotal.

Rabbi Cohen cites an article from the “The Conversation,” a nonprofit news organization that publishes studies and articles by academic experts in numerous fields, to underline the need for the grief-processing group, now.

“Social distancing is different from social isolation, which leads to a sense of disconnection from the community. … Socially isolated people have higher rates of not only dementia, but heart disease, high blood pressure, depression, cognitive decline and death,” writes a University of Virginia associate professor of medicine.

Missy believes Walking Beside You is one of the only nonprofits offering a generalized grief-processing group, and it is not exclusive to members of the Jewish community.

The co-facilitators consider their role a privilege. “We get to be part of these really delicate moments,” Missy says.

For more about Walking Beside You and JFCS’ other programs and services, follow JFCS on Instagram and on Facebook.

**History scholars, practitioners invited to apply for prize by Nov. 1**

Early- and mid-career scholars and practitioners who study the human past are invited to apply for a $300,000 Dan David Prize. Beginning in May 2022, the Prize will award up to nine $300,000 prizes each year to early- and mid-career scholars and practitioners around the world to recognize outstanding achievements in the study of the human past and to support the winners’ future endeavors.

First established in 2001 by the late entrepreneur and philanthropist Dan David to recognize achievements in the sciences and the humanities, the Prize will now champion a spectrum of emerging and more established scholars of the past, active within and beyond the academy. Winners can include researchers from a wide range of fields, including history, archaeology, anthropology and art history, and also practitioners such as archivists, curators, public historians and documentary filmmakers.

“We live in a world in which investment in the humanities, particularly in the historical disciplines, is declining, even though we know how important studying the past is for understanding the present and building the future,” says Ariel David, board member of the Dan David Foundation and son of the Prize founder. “For these reasons, we have decided to focus our resources on this field and help catalyze the next generation of scholars.”

The Prize aims to advance history’s place in contemporary discourse at a time when political transformations underscore the importance of studying and remembering the past. The decision to shift the full Prize purse of $3 million to scholars of the past comes at a challenging moment for the humanities. In addition to the nine prizes of $300,000 for individuals, the remaining $300,000 will go to establish a new international program for postdoctoral fellows who study the historical disciplines at Tel Aviv University, where the foundation is headquartered.

Nominations for the new Prize are due Nov. 1, 2021. Winners will be announced in early 2022. For the nomination process visit dandavidprize.org.
Refugee families from Afghanistan will soon be settling in Portland. Refugee Care Collective is coordinating Restart Kits for these new arrivals and Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland invite our community to participate.

Would you like to create a Restart Kit to help these refugee families?

There are three upcoming dates to drop your kit off in Tigard. Take your Restart Kits to Tigard Warehouse, 10160 SW Nimbus Ave, Suite F-3, 97223 on one of the following dates: 9/18 from 12-3 PM . 10/23 from 12-3 PM . 11/20 from 12-3 PM.

If you cannot make one of those dates, please drop kits off at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education during museum hours: Wednesday-Saturday, 11am-4pm.
Security Corner

Now is the time to prepare

BY GENE MOSS
Since its inception in 2004 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Preparedness Month has been observed each September with the intent of raising awareness about the importance of preparing for emergencies.

In September and throughout the rest of the year, the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland recognizes the importance of emergency preparedness in limiting impacts and creating improved outcomes of incidents that affect the community.

As the JFGP’s Regional Security Director, I support and implement this effort. Federation also recognizes that emergency preparedness is a multi-faceted effort. Highlighted below are some of the activities that I work on with Federation, local Jewish community organizations and public safety partners to develop and implement a wholistic emergency preparedness program.

PLANNING
The foundation of any emergency preparedness program is planning. While organizations cannot choose when or where an incident will occur, they can be proactive by pre-identifying courses of action that can be implemented when responding to an incident. I work with Federation leadership to develop emergency plans that address not only incidents that directly impact Federation facilities, but also those that impact community organizations. I also provide support to community organizations wishing to develop emergency plans such as Emergency Operations Plans and Crisis Communication Plans.

TRAINING
Training is another critical component of emergency preparedness. Training allows organization members to develop and practice the skills necessary to prevent or limit the impacts of incidents in a low stress, no fault environment. I help community members build these skill sets by providing best practice trainings developed by the Secure Community Network. These trainings cover a wide variety of topics, from active threat response with Countering Active Threat Training to Stop the Bleed, which equips participants with the skills necessary to recognize and respond to life-threatening bleeding.

HIGH HOLIDAYS PREPAREDNESS
The High Holidays are an incredibly important time of year for the Jewish community and a time when community members should feel free to worship without fear. In an effort to ensure this, I work with local congregations to develop special event security plans and encourage community members to attend the SCN High Holidays Safety & Security Webinar Series.

NONPROFIT SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
Each year, FEMA offers the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which provides funding for target hardening and other physical security enhancements and activities to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of terrorist attack. In FY2021, I conducted assessments for 21 Jewish organizations. The effort resulted in more than $800,000 being allocated to enhance the safety and security of seven Jewish organizations.

For more information on implementing emergency preparedness efforts at your organization, contact me at gmoss@securecommunitynetwork.org.

A Partnership for Community Security
In 2019, the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland collaborated with the Secure Community Network to implement a communal security program to ensure the continued safety and security of the Greater Portland Jewish community. The partnership between JFGP and SCN ensures that Jewish organizations, communities, life and culture are safe, secure and able to flourish.

The partnership has focused on developing a manageable and effective security framework for JFGP. This framework enhances security through collaborative partnerships with local, state and national public safety stakeholders. It assesses risks, measures vulnerabilities, defines community security needs, and provides critical training, incident and crisis response. In addition, the partnership provides education programs and fosters security awareness across the community.

To design and implement this program, Gene Moss was hired in May 2019 as the Regional Security Advisor to ensure the local community could leverage SCN’s national resources and tools, as well as effectively coordinate with key partners. Gene brings more than 30 years of law enforcement and security expertise to this role.

Since the inception of the program, he has focused on establishing a proactive security program covering more than 40 organizations across the Federation’s catchment area and creating a “security culture” across our entire community.

Gene Moss has served as the Director of Community Security for our Jewish community since May 2019.
Walk with each other in new year

BY RABBI ARIEL STONE

I admit it, I’m afraid of the dark. The dark I’m afraid of is the kind that our ancestors used to associate with the primordial forests of Europe. They were deep and pathless, thick and disorienting. The darkness within which we mark the New Year of 5782 is caused by a vast, fearful and growing expanse of human cruelty, incompetence and stupidity. It is a darkness caused by human greed, arrogance and fear.

As I write this, we have endured 542 days of pandemic. White supremacist reactions to portents of social change exacerbate endemic racism; national and local governments seem hardly up to the challenge of deferred moral maintenance; the recent Supreme Court support of Texas’ criminalization of abortion after six weeks of pregnancy deliberately tears down protections for all of us who have a uterus and use it; wildfires, hurricanes, flooding and extreme heat and cold all mock the “once in a hundred years” description.

Like the wildfire smoke that appears in the distance and turns the sky into a hellscape, everywhere we look we see the encroaching darkness of fear and uncertainty. We find ourselves living in a time of Biblical plagues – and Biblical curses. The Torah describes the anxiety we suffer as much as whether we will be OK. The lesson we need to learn, the lesson that Les Aigner taught by the way he lived every day of his life, is that whether we are going or whether we will have with one another.

In the morning you shall say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening you shall say, “If only it were morning!” – because of what your heart shall dread and your eyes shall see. (Devarim 28.67-68)

“Lo ta’amin b’khayekha” – you will not have faith in your life. For 200 years, the Western world has encouraged us to believe that we should “go it alone” and be “individuals” who make our own way in the world. Yet as social psychology teaches, the self is not designed to carry its own weight. How are we to have faith in the individual, as unpredictably and unfathomably callous as some are?

Our Jewish tradition is decidedly not individualistic. The common wisdom of our people is that we are and must be in relationship with others. The only question left is how we are in that relationship? How will we treat the other? Jewish tradition urges us to see we must stand together and relieve each other’s fearful isolation.

If life is a journey, then it is in the very nature of life that we must make our way through the darkness of an untracked wilderness. But this is no joyful voyage of discovery; the fear is paralyzing, and the darkness is deep. We have no guarantees that we will emerge into some quiet garden full of light and warmth and hope.

Rosh Hashanah, curiously, is a holy day of darkness. In Psalm 81.4, we read tik’u bahodesh shofar bakeseh l’yom hageynu, “sound the shofar at the covering of our holy day.” This “covering” is of the light of the moon, invisible to us at the new month.

What, then, brings us light during this dark time?

Just a few weeks ago, I was privileged to accompany to the grave Les Aigner, z”l, the last living Auschwitz survivor residing in Oregon. Les survived a darkness that swallowed the light of millions. Les used to speak about his survival of the Holocaust in schools, and once he was asked if he hated Nazis. “I try not to hate anyone,” he answered. “To be sure, I fight them any way I can, and I fight their evil. But hate only hurts me.”

The Zohar tells us that what illuminates the darkness of this holy time is the act of turning, each of us to each other, and in so doing, to HaShem. Turning toward others, as Les showed us by his gentle, courteous, beautiful life, is the only way to dispel the darkness of human hatred and callousness.

In this turning toward what ultimately matters, we see that light is a quality of the heart. Kindness is the light we need. In the great insight of the Jewish mystics, this light is not something that will be gifted to us out of nowhere. There is within each of us a light of holiness that the world needs desperately. It’s the reason given by the rabbis of the Talmud for the wandering of Abraham:

To what may Abraham be compared? To a king’s friend who saw the king walking in a dark alleyway. The friend began to show the king a light through the window. The king looked up and saw the friend and said, “come, and light the way for me.” (Bereshit Rabbah 30.10)

No great power will gift us from on high with the relief of light we need so badly. That power comes from us ourselves, and our way forward will be lit by us, sharing the little light we have with one another.

We don’t know where we are going or whether we will be OK. The lesson we need to learn, the lesson that Les Aigner taught by the way he lived every day of his life, is this: shine the light you have; share it at every opportunity. With kindness be profligate; be superbulous; be the biggest of spenders. Whatever joy we will find in life, taught Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, is the joy we help others to find.

Wherever we are going – and whether we are going to get there – does not matter nearly as much as whether we will kindly, gently and thoughtfully walk with each other.

Rabbi Ariel Stone, the longest serving congregational rabbi in Portland, is privileged to support the emergence of 21st century Judaism with Shir Tikvah in the Commons, TischPDX and the Clergy Leadership Incubator.

“I try not to hate anyone. To be sure, I fight them (Nazis) any way I can, and I fight their evil. But hate only hurts me.”

~ Les Aigner, z”l
OBSITUARIES

GERALD COGAN

Gerald Cogan, z”l, a long-time resident of Portland, passed away on Sept. 10, 2021, about one month shy of his 92nd birthday. Gerry is survived by his children, Laurie, Deborah, Marjorie and Daniel Cogan; his siblings, Arnold Cogan, Carol Koranda and Judy Ross; and two grandchildren, Cory Hoffman and Emma Cogan.

Gerald Lee Cogan was born on Oct. 7, 1929, the third of six children of Anne and David Cogan of Bath, Maine. The family belonged to Beth Israel Congregation where Gerald became a bar mitzvah. Gerald graduated from Morse High School in 1946 and then attended Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, for two years and continued his studies at the University of Portland after the whole family moved to Portland, Ore., in 1948. He went on to pursue a career in dentistry, receiving his DMD from OHSU School of Dentistry in 1953. He married Zadell Myer Myerson in 1952. In 1953, he joined the army and served as a captain in Texas and Maryland.

After his army service, Gerald returned to Portland and started a dental practice with Dr. Duane Paulson. Dr. Eugene Skorupies later joined the practice. In 1970, the three dentists founded Willamette Dental Group. Gerald was a pioneer in creating dental plans that emphasized preventive care, which was a departure from the traditional fee-for-service model of care. The first freestanding Willamette Dental clinic was built on Jefferson Street in Portland and opened in 1976. The practice expanded to the large clinic system it is today, with more than 50 clinics in multiple states.

Gerald was part of a large extended family on both east and west coasts, and together with Zadell raised their four children in northwest Portland.

Gerald was an active and enthusiastic supporter of Democratic party politics, serving as campaign manager for several Democratic candidates. He also represented Oregon on the Democratic National Committee for eight years and attended three Democratic National Conventions. He was a member of an organization called The Campaigners, with whom he wrote and performed in satirical comedy songs and sketches put on to raise funds for Democratic causes. He was also a strong supporter of the creation of Emily’s List, which raises funds for women in the Democratic Party who are running for office.

He contributed to the community in numerous other ways. He was a leader in the successful campaign to fluoridate the water in Portland to reduce tooth decay. He practiced pro bono dentistry in low-income communities. He was active in the Portland City Club. He served as president of his synagogue, Congregation Neveh Shalom, for two years (1974-76). He was an early opponent of the Vietnam War and participated in several protests.

Gerald had a great appreciation of the English language. He enjoyed writing and tried his hand at writing plays and screenplays. He has been writing a book exploring the significance of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. In earlier years, he acted in several plays in Portland theater venues. He also competed in the State of Oregon Senior Spelling Bee and won first place in 2000.

He loved Oregon’s outdoors and often took his children on hikes in nearby Macleay Park and greater Portland area parks such as Eagle Creek, as well as cross-country skiing on Mount Hood. He spent vacations with his family at Rockaway Beach and Crescent Lake and looked forward to the many fly-fishing trips he took over the years.

As a sports fan, Gerald enjoyed taking his children to see the Portland Beavers, Buckaroos and Trailblazers. He was a lover of opera, Broadway musicals and comedy.

Gerald also loved blueberries and skilled at baking blueberry muffins, pies and more.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his honor may be made to the ACLU Foundation of Oregon, or Emily’s List.

SANDY WEINSTEIN

Sandy (Sanford) Weinstein, z”l, passed away Sept. 6, 2021. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Elaine; sons, Jerry (Bing) and Marty; daughter, Roberta; grandson, David; sister, Carol Albaum; and a large family of cousins, nieces and nephews.

A native of the Northwest, Sandy graduated from the University of Washington. He was a member of Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity.

Sandy enjoyed a 55-year career in the insurance-and-estate-planning profession, retiring to pursue his lifelong passion for physical fitness and athletic endeavors. He excelled in golf, tennis, racquetball, and running. The Cascade Runoff was a favorite. His main athletic passion, however, was racquetball, being a co-founder of the Rose Festival Racquetball Tournament.

Sandy was a modest and humble man, not seeking recognition for the many ways he helped people who needed a lift. He was greatly admired for his integrity and professionalism.

His greatest joy and concern was his beloved family. Sandy’s wishes were that there not be a funeral and that remembrances be made in his memory to the Oregon Jewish Museum & Center for Holocaust Education, Congregation Beth Israel, the Oregon Food Bank and National Alliance on Mental Illness-Oregon chapter.

EDWARD ANCHEL

Edward Anchel (Yisrael ben Yona), z”l, passed away the evening of Aug. 30 in Naples, Fla. He is loved and remembered by his sons, Congregation Neveh Shalom member David (Debra) Anchel, and Michael Anchel; daughter, Jennifer Lightner; and granddaughter, Keryn Anchel.

Congregation Neveh Shalom extends our deepest condolences to the extended Anchel family.

(LELAND) LEE HERSH

(Leland) Lee Hersh, z”l, passed away on Aug. 29 in Los Angeles, Calif., at the age of 83. Lee is loved and remembered by his younger sister, Congregation Neveh Shalom member Hilarie (Joel) Wasserman; his treasured wife of 62 years, Betty; sons Marc, Ross and Loren; six grandchildren; brother, Robert Hersh; and several nieces and nephews.

Congregation Neveh Shalom extends our deepest condolences to the extended Hersh family.

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