

THE JEWISH REVIEW

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST'S JEWISH NEWSWEEKLY | EST. 1959

May 28, 2026 | 12 Sivan, 5786 | Volume 61, Issue 12

'Unexpected growth, profound learning'

Federation leaders share year's successes, vision at annual meeting

By **ROCKNE ROLL**

The Jewish Review

Jewish Federation of Greater Portland Board Chair Leslie Beard marked a year in her role at the organization's annual meeting Wednesday afternoon at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. What a year it's been.

"It has been a year of unexpected growth, profound learning and many lessons in leadership," she said.

As the organization gathered to elect new board members, present awards, bid farewell to departing staff and celebrate the 12 months prior, a big part of that growth was expressed behind a dollar sign.

The Federation has raised \$4,511,871 this fiscal year, Beard said. "We saw an astonishing 8 percent increase in our annual campaign and over 300 new donors to the campaign."

Most of the numbers that describe the Federation's successes in the last year, however, don't represent currency.

"As we like to say, it is not about the money," Beard continued, "it is about what the money does."

She explained that the Federation's money supports 250 immersions at Rachel's Well Community Mikvah per year, more than 200 Gather Grants since the program began, more than 20 professional development trainings for local leaders and educators on antisemitism in the last three years, 2,380 of Dignity Grows' signature hygiene supply totes and more than 170 articles across these now-weekly pages this year.

Some of that money goes overseas as well. Beard explained that, among other programs supported as Overseas



Jewish Federation of Greater Portland Board Chair Leslie Beard addresses the audience at the Federation's Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 27, at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Beard's remarks detailed JFGP's \$4.5 million in fundraising in the last year and its impact. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review) Margaliot.

More from JFGP's 106th Annual Meeting

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Special Projects, JFGP provided financial assistance to more than 300 financially challenged Holocaust survivors living in Israel and helped replant 220 plum trees destroyed by war in Moshav

The Federation also distributed \$200,000 of the \$3.5 million bequest by Prineville's Marvin Harris, z"l, to support 43 children in Israel orphaned by the Oct. 7 attacks.

"Over the past months, the Jewish Federation and Oregon Jewish Community Foundation have been working collaboratively on exploring ways to increase endowment giving for our Jewish community," Beard continued. "We are in discussions with the OJCF and look forward to sharing more in the weeks and months ahead. Please know endowment giving is a key component for our Jewish community going forward."

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MEETING (continued from page 1)

The plans for the “going forward” were, in part, laid out by Federation president and CEO Marc Blattner.

Blattner explained that, looking ahead, the Federation will focus on five core areas: Philanthropy, Community Engagement, Networking, Antisemitism and Government Relations and Israel and Global Responsibility.

Those focal areas will be addressed by a slightly different team. Wendy Kahn, the Federation’s Chief Development Officer, retired in March after 10 years with the Federation, during which she launched Dignity Grows and the Women’s Giving Circle.

“The campaign total that Leslie shared earlier -- \$4.5 million - is just one of the many accomplishments Wendy had in her tenure,” Blattner said. “Wendy, we thank you and miss you and I hope you are enjoying your retirement”

Additionally, Chief Planning and Engagement Officer Caron Blau Rothstein will depart next week after 15 years at the Federation, for a role at Denver’s Rose Community Foundation, where she and husband Ari will be living closer to their eldest son and daughter-in-law.

“Caron and I have not only worked together here, but also at the Baltimore Jewish Federation some 30 years ago,” Blattner said. “Caron, thank you for your work with our community partners, partnering with our allocations committee in the difficult task of allocating funds, being the lynchpin behind the creation of Rachel’s Well Community Mikvah, and truly helping us better understand what engagement means.”



From top: Jewish Federation of Greater Portland President and CEO Marc Blattner presents gifts to outgoing Chief Planning and Engagement Officer Caron Blau Rothstein at the organization’s Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 27, at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Attendees nosh and schmooze at the event, attended by more than 100 community members. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Blau Rothstein was presented with a handmade challah board and cover, along with a mezuzah intended for her office in Denver, made by

Ben O’Glasser.

With the departure of two senior professional leaders, changes are afoot at the Federation. One has already

been made as Rachel Nelson’s appointment as Chief Planning Officer was announced at the meeting.

Blattner also spoke of the upcoming Portland Jewish Festival, scheduled for Sunday, Aug. 30, at Zidell Yards in Portland’s South Waterfront. Tickets are available online now at jewishportland.org/jewishfestival.

“It is our way to say to the City of Portland, ‘The Jewish community is here, and we are a vibrant part of this city,’” Blattner said.

It’ll be a celebratory cap on Beard’s first year-plus as chair – one that’s not only been profound for the organization and the Jewish community as a whole, but for Beard personally.

“As many of you know, I grew up in a Federation household. My father, Jerry Stein, of blessed memory, served as Board Chair of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation,” Beard said earlier in the evening. “What I’ve come to appreciate even more recently is just how influential my mother, Louise Stein, was as a leader in the Jewish community. She has always talked about leadership development and mentoring others.”

Beard recalled that last fall, during the Jewish Federations of North America’s General Assembly, she sat next to a woman who had participated in a leadership training program sponsored by Stein, and that Stein had been a major part of her own leadership path.

“That woman is now the new board chair of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation,” Beard said. “It was one of those moments that reminded me how leadership ripples outward in ways we never fully see.”



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Sammy Monk wins 2026 Rogoway Award

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Sammy Monk's career thus far has not been what she initially planned.

An advertising major from Syracuse University, Monk was working as a copywriter for a firm contracted with Toyota's North American operations in Los Angeles when it hit her that none of it was for her. Selling cars, advertising, Los Angeles, all of it.

"I have done so many things in my life to care about the environment and yet here I am selling giant trucks to people," Monk told *The Jewish Review*. "I just didn't feel good about that, so I quit my job, got in my car drove north until it felt like it reminded me enough of New York."

That place was Portland, where she embarked on a path that was recognized with the 2026 Laurie Rogoway Outstanding Jewish Professional Award, presented at the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's annual meeting yesterday at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center.

"Her mission is to strengthen the entire communal ecosystem. She believes in a snowball effect of goodness: when she cultivates a positive experience for a volunteer, they are more likely to keep giving back to the Jewish community at large," Rogoway Committee Chair Sarah Howard said at the meeting. "Her work builds a culture of volunteerism that benefits us all."

While she left a lot in California, Monk brought her connection to Judaism with her to the Pacific Northwest; in fact, she leaned into it in her early days as a Portlander.

"Right when I got here, I just started networking with



Sammy Monk, the 2026 Laurie Rogoway Outstanding Jewish Professional Award winner, smiles from the stage as the award's namesake is recognized at the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 27, at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

people in the Jewish community," Monk said. "The Jewish community has always been really important to me."

Thus, she joined the PDX Pathways program, a young professional mentorship cohort put on by the Federation, and connected with current Congregation Neveh Shalom Assistant Executive Director Michelle Caplan. The timing was impeccable.

"We were talking about engagement work and were exploring volunteer professionalism and [Jewish Family & Child Service] had put out an ask in conjunction with the Federation for a Volunteer Coordinator," Monk said. She became that coordinator in 2020, producing an immediate impact.

"[Monk] leads the annual Thanksgiving Food Box program, which mobilizes 100 volunteers to touch the lives of more than 1,000 people each year, coordinating logistics and deliveries with a calm and clarity that inspires everyone around her," Howard told the audience at the annual meeting. "She manages the Senior

Social Hours and Friendly Visitor programs, taking the time to truly know each volunteer and each client, their stories, their needs, their personalities, and building connections that often grow into lasting relationships. She introduced a digital volunteer management system that made it easier than ever for community members to give their time, revived JFCS's volunteer appreciation event, and contributed her wisdom to the Jewish Federation's Volunteer Task Force, helping lay the groundwork for the Federation's own volunteer coordinator role."

She's also been instrumental in the success of JFCS's transportation program, matching clients who need help getting to events, medical appointments or synagogue services with volunteer drivers.

"I think the longer I was at JFCS, the bigger the need became," Monk said of the transportation program. "More of our clients are aging and phasing out of being able to drive themselves... To have volunteers kind of

bridge that gap during that time, I think it just restores a lot of dignity to clients and it builds community."

Building community has been a focus for Monk throughout her time at JFCS, which ended earlier this month when she became the volunteer program manager for homelessness non-profit Path Home; community amongst volunteers, amongst clients and all the intersections thereof. She stepped into that work at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued it through the aftermath of the Oct. 7 attacks – twin shocks that made Jewish community connection as essential as ever.

"Creating safe, social, connected community spaces post-Oct. 7 has been really fulfilling," Monk said. "I think there's a lot of services that JFCS offers that feel tangible, but I think the intangible connection that comes out of just a caring, present community is what I love most."

Monk wrote about that intangible impact in her award application, particularly her work and connection with Rabbi Mel Young, z"l.

"My relationship with Mel encourages me to treat my work as a mission to build an extended family rather than just a volunteer base," she wrote in the application, a copy of which she provided to *The Jewish Review*. "This story is a reminder that community is built through the heart, and that is the impact I strive to leave on everyone I work with."

That commitment hasn't changed, even though Monk's employment has.

She's planning to pursue board membership and oth-

See **MONK**, page 5

Birnbach receives first eponymous award

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

"There are volunteer leaders and then there are volunteer leaders; those who go above and beyond, are willing to do whatever it takes and provide incredible guidance and mentorship," Jewish Federation of Greater Portland President and CEO Marc Blattner said at the organization's annual meeting yesterday at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center.

When he described the latter set of volunteer leaders, he had someone particular in mind. Someone who's name will henceforth be associated with celebrating just that kind of leadership.

The First Annual Jack Birnbach Volunteer Service Award was presented to its namesake by Blattner at yesterday's meeting as Jack Birnbach marked the end of his service on the Federation's board.

Birnbach has continuously served in volunteer leadership with the Federation since he joined the Finance Committee in 2011. He went on to serve on and chair the nominating committee, chair the allocations committee and the annual campaign and served as the organization's treasurer at various points. In each role, he applied the same intelligence, care and enthusiasm to the task at hand.

"He helps. He does not just show up. He prepares. He builds tools, and then he shares them," Blattner said.

Birnbach, an accountant by trade, quickly made his mark – first by reading "The Ore-



gon Nonprofit Corporation Handbook" – an 800-plus-page tome as complex as any tractate of the Talmud – and breaking its recommended practices down piece by piece as a tool to evaluate JFGP's systems against.

"Week after week, we worked through that questionnaire together," Federation Chief Financial Officer Ben Winkleblack said in an email to *The Jewish Review*. "The knowledge and insight I gained from those sessions have stayed with me ever since. Jack is one of the finest mentors I have had in my professional life, generous with his time, rigorous in his thinking, and genuinely invested in the people around him."

That commitment extended beyond the financial side of the operation. Caron Blau Rothstein, the Federation's Chief Planning and Engagement Officer, worked closely with Birnbach during his service leading the nominating and allocations committees.

encing Judaism with other people is just part of my soul and that's never going to change," she said. "I think

"His humble leadership, his commitment to partnering with us professionals and his willingness to ask questions, try new roles and always strive to do what's in the best interest of our community are what make him so special," she said. "And he does it all with a smile and always with a hot cup of coffee by his side."

Indeed, Birnbach's passion for coffee is as well-known as his passion for every facet of Jewish community building.

"He is the ultimate *mensch*, with a selfless capacity to give for the greater good," Federation Associate Campaign and Engagement Officer Laura Jeser said. "I had the distinct privilege of 'coaching' Jack through his campaign presentation preparations, where I saw firsthand that he isn't just deeply committed, he is also incredibly witty, bringing a brilliant sense of humor, profound humility, and genuine compassion to every single

thing he does."

"His service extended to the Board, where he brought that same rigor and genuine care for the organization's mission," Winkleblack continued. "He has championed professional development in every budget, believing that a stronger professional team makes for a stronger community."

"Every board needs to have someone on it whose first question is always 'Are we doing enough for the professional team? Should we set aside more money for professional development? Are we providing appropriate compensation and raises? Are we doing enough to keep the best people here for the long term?'" Blattner said at Wednesday's annual meeting. "Jack genuinely believes that a strong professional team makes for a strong community."

He continued to explain that the Birnbach Award will be presented annually "to honor outstanding volunteers for their selfless dedication and tireless efforts on behalf of the Greater Portland Jewish community" after handing a commemorative crystal trophy to the man himself; a monument to a monumental run of volunteer service.

"The truth is you simply cannot tell the story of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland over the past fifteen years without Jack Birnbach," Blattner said. "Portland's Jewish community is stronger, smarter, and more professionally grounded because of him, and that is a legacy worth celebrating."

MONK (continued from page 4)

er service opportunities in the coming months as she maintains her deep connection with the community, or-

ganizations and people who brought her to this moment and this award.

"Being Jewish and experi-

working outside of the Jewish community will actually give me a chance to connect in my own way."

Chapman's Robinson wins Sussman-Shenker

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

"Until fourth grade, I think I honestly just thought everyone was Jewish," Chapman University rising sophomore Isabella Robinson said.

While that sentiment was, of course, disproved, it's indicative of the level of Jewish engagement the Portland Jewish Academy and Ida B. Wells High School grad has lived – engagement that is being recognized with the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's 2026 Sussman-Shenker Scholarship, which was presented at yesterday's annual meeting at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center.

"We are delighted to support Bella's ongoing commitment to sustaining Jewish life as she pursues her undergraduate degree," Federation President and CEO Marc Blattner said.

That commitment started young.

"I went to Portland Jewish Academy from [Kindergarten] to eighth grade, and I feel like that really set me up for success; academically, socially and being really in touch with my Jewish identity," Robinson said.

It was the beginning of her Jewish engagement, but not the end. After PJA, she became President of the Jewish Student Union at Wells, was part of the Federation's Student to Student Program (see story, page XX) and spent her spring semester of 2023 in Israel. She also ran track and cross-country all four years for the Guardians, culminating in a state championships appearance in cross-country in 2024. In the summer, she could be found annually at Camp Solomon Schechter. Back home, she was and is a member of Congregation Neveh Shalom.

She could thusly be forgiven for thinking everyone was Jewish. She recalled a story she'd heard from her parents about her first experience with the Portland Vintage Trolley shortly after she learned about the existence of non-Jews.

"I was on the car and I was like, 'Oh, it's free for everyone, even if they're not Jewish,'" Robinson recalled. "My parents got mad at me for saying that."



Isabella Robinson, recipient of the 2026 Sussman-Shenker Scholarship, speaks at the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 27, at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Robinson recently completed her first year at California's Chapman University. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

It should, accordingly, be unsurprising that Robinson selected Chapman University in Orange, Calif., for its large Jewish student population; she also said the Southern California weather didn't hurt. The decision has been richly rewarded, she continued.

"In so many more ways than I ever could have imagined, Chapman has just really changed me for the better. I feel like it gave me this whole new level of confidence and just independence that I never knew I had," she said. "I feel so passionate about what I'm doing, what I'm learning. I feel like everyone who I surround myself with aligns directly with who I want to be, who I look up to."

Robinson is a Health Science major focusing on Applied Human Physiology. She's planning to follow that with medical school – a goal since high school. While the classwork is rigorous, she's still found time to join the student board of the campus Chabad. She's still running, too – she's taking on the Orange County Half Marathon next year.

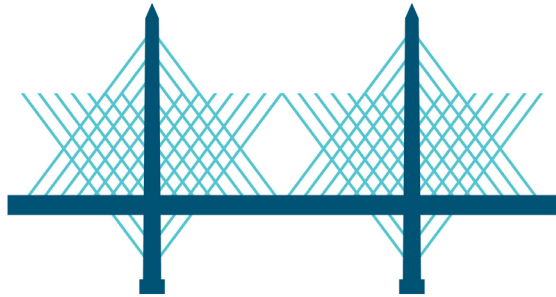
"I feel like I'm a lot more involved in the Jewish scene at Chapman than I thought I would be," she said. "When

I came to Chapman, I was like, 'Oh, I'll probably just go to Shabbat once a week or every so often whenever I can. I went the first few weeks and maybe I skipped a few, but as the semester went on, I just felt like every time I was at Chabad, it was just such a grounding moment where I could have those Jewish conversations and I could just be in that environment. It was so calming and relaxing. I felt such a strong sense of community and everyone around me cared so much for me.'

The Sussman Scholarship began in 1981 thanks to Lillian and Gilbert Sussman, z"l, and was renamed the Sussman-Shenker Scholarship in 2024 by the daughter of its founders, Lois Shenker, in honor of the 85th birthday of her husband, Arden Shenker. Judaism is still a central feature of Robinson's life – and the support of that which comes with this scholarship is not lost on her.

"I feel like the scholarship is super personal because just being Jewish, I carry with so much pride," she said. "Since coming to college, I've actually had a lot of big realizations about how I want to live my life and the path I want to go on and what that means to be Jewish and carry myself with pride."

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TICKETS:



Jewish Federation
of Greater Portland

Fliman, Newmark, Shaked and Winkler join Federation board

The Jewish Review Staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland welcomed Dr. Michelle Fliman, Miles Newmark, Alona Shaked and Jacob Winkler to its Governing Board at its annual meeting Wednesday, May 27, at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center.

The child of Israeli immigrants to the United States and the grandchild of a Holocaust survivor, Fliman grew up in Cincinnati before attending medical school at Northwestern University and becoming an anesthesiologist. She first engaged with a Jewish Federation when she attended the March for the Living at Auschwitz thanks to a sponsorship from the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati. While in medical school, she met her husband, now-cardiologist Dr. Aaron Schoenkerman, at a Yom Kippur break fast she organized for other Jewish students. The family has two daughters who both became *bat mitzvah* at Congregation Neveh Shalom, where the family are members.

A Portland native, Newmark returns to

the Federation board; he has also served on the Jewish Community Relations Council and held volunteer leadership positions with BB Camp and Congregation Beth Israel – institutions that were key to his Jewish youth in Portland. He has competed in swimming through the Mittleman Jewish Community Center since childhood, winning the center's Outstanding Sportsmanship Award, and has ski raced, wrestled, and played soccer competitively at various points. Newmark is married to Barbara Gilbert and has two stepdaughters and four grandchildren.

Shaked is Director of Advocacy and Partnerships at the Jewish Grad Organization, where she supports Jewish college students confronting antisemitism. Holding a law degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, she left litigation to pursue non-profit management. Shaked founded the Thrivacious community for English-speaking female cancer patients and survivors during her five years living in Israel and has served on numerous Jewish organizational

boards, both in the United States and in Israel. She moved to Portland two years ago with her husband, Oren Shaked, their two daughters and their Labradoodle.

Winkler grew up at Congregation Beth Israel before attending Brown University and working in Washington, D.C. and in San Francisco in management consulting. He returned to Portland to serve as Chief Marketing Officer and Chief Operations Officer of Brandlive, which was recognized as one of the Top 50 Most Innovative Companies in the World by *Fast Company* magazine. He is now the principal of Iterative Growth, a startup consulting firm. Winkler is also a member of the Jewish Federations of North America's Young Leadership Cabinet and a trustee of Catlin Gabel School, which he attended and which his children now attend. He is married to Edith Winkler and is a member of CBI.

Stepping down off the board are former campaign chair Jess Hilbert and former allocations chair, campaign co-chair and board treasurer Jach Birnbach. (See story, page 5)

Sephardic sweets and signature sips



Congregation Ahavath Achim, in partnership with Portland Jewish Connection held its quarterly young professionals cooking workshop Sunday, May 17, at the synagogue. Led by CAA's Patrick Varon this class focused on Italian desserts and a special signature drink. Attendee Nathan Goodman said, "My wife and I had a blast learning about the Sephardic dishes and meeting other young Jewish professionals!" Afterwards, PJC hosted a happy hour at McMenamins in nearby Hillsdale. With summer travel and then high holidays save the date for the next one in October. To learn more about CAA please visit its website at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com. To learn more about PJC, a non-profit providing Jewish social events for young professionals, check out their private Instagram account and/or Facebook group or reach out by email to portlandjewishconnection@gmail.com. (Courtesy Portland Jewish Connection).

Events

See all of Portland's Jewish community events online at jewishportland.org/community-calendar

May 28: Zohar and Zhug

Monthly Kabbalah class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 8 pm. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/zohar-and-zhug.html.

May 30: Intro to Biblical Hebrew

Weekly class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 9:30 am. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/adult-learning.html.

May 30: Women's Torah Study

Weekly class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 10:30 am. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/adult-learning.html.

May 30: Sephardic Foundations

Weekly class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 12:30 pm. Learn more at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/sephardic-foundations.html.

May 21: Krav Maga In-

Song of Miriam registration ends June 1

The Jewish Review staff

Registration for the annual Song of Miriam awards brunch, presented by the Jewish Women's Round Table, will close Monday, June 1.

The brunch, scheduled for Sunday, June 14 at 10 am at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, honors volunteer leaders from Jewish organizations around Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Tickets are available online at jwrt.org/make-a-reservation.

Introductory Course

Weekly self-defense course at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center at 10 am. More information at oregon-jcc.org/culture.

May 31: Ilan Katan Open House

Preschool open house at Maayan Torah at 10:30 am. More information at maayanpdx.org.

May 31: Jew Oughta Know Part II

Jewish pop culture talk at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education at 2 pm. More information at ojmche.org/events/jew-oughta-know-part-ii-with-jessica-rehfield.

May 31: Listen, Laugh, Connect - An Intergenerational Comedy Experience

Comedy show and workshop sponsored by Jewish Family and Child Service at Portland Comedy Theater at 2 pm. More information at

jfcs-portland.org/comedy.

May 31: Bagels for Good

Informational event at Henry Higgins Boiled Bagels in Northwest Portland at 4 pm. More information at jewishportland.org/bagels-for-good.

May 31: A Strong Foundation

Spring fundraiser at Congregation Neveh Shalom at 5 pm. More information at members.nevehshalom.org/form/SpringGala26.

May 31: Steak and Stand Up

Fundraiser dinner at Tamim Academy of Portland at 5 pm. More information at pci.jotform.com/form/261205498774062.

June 3: OJCF Community Impact Happy Hour

Professional Advisors Group event at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education at

4 pm. More information at ojcf.org/advisors.

June 3: Israeli Folk Dancing for Beginners

Weekly class at the Multnomah Arts Center in Southwest Portland at 7 pm. More information at sites.google.com/site/pifdnews.

June 4: JFCS Community Connection

Virtual support group at 2 pm via Zoom. More information at jfcs-portland.org/community-connection.

June 4: Art/Lab Fellowship Cohort Exhibition - Live Performance and New Written Works

Exhibition opening and performance at the East-side Jewish Commons at 6:30 pm. More information at events.humanitix.com/art-lab-fellowship-cohort-exhibition-live-performance-new-written-works.

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THE JEWISH REVIEW

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST'S
JEWISH NEWSWEEKLY
EST. 1959

Published weekly by the
Jewish Federation of
Greater Portland
9900 SW Greenburg
Road, Suite 220
Tigard, OR 97223
503-245-6219

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To receive the Jewish
Review in your email
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