

July 30, 2026 | 16 Av, 5786 | Volume 61, Issue 19

For the want of a kidney

Portland's connection to kidney donation - past, present and (hopefully) future

By **ROCKNE ROLL**

The Jewish Review

Richard Freimark has something in common with approximately 96,000 other Americans.

He needs a kidney.

Kidney disease is an unfortunately common story. What's perhaps less common is that, despite the incidence of kidney disease being no more frequent in Jewish populations than the rest of the country, the Jewish community has responded to the issue in an organized and meaningful way.



Freimark's journey with kidney problems began when he was a teen; while delivering holiday baskets for his father's bakery, he handed one to its recipient, a doctor, and noticed a pain in his wrist. The doctor examined him, took a sample of fluid from the noticeably swollen wrist, and found uric acid crystals in the fluid. Further testing revealed that the concentration was in the hundreds on a scale where, Freimark explained, "anything over 10 is problematic."

Freimark was put on a high dose of a medication which reduces the concentration of uric acid in the blood and told, he recalled, "by the time you get to 50 or 60, you'll have kidney failure."

While Freimark wasn't one of those 96,000 -yet- he joined another club that day. Approximately 35 million Americans have some form of kidney disease. It's a club that's gotten larger since Freimark joined it.

"The incidence is higher because, you can see the rate of obesity is higher," Dr. Karen Douek, a retired nephrologist



Richard Freimark leads a baking workshop at The Shuk Sunday, June 21 at the Eastside Jewish Commons. After dealing with kidney-related illness since his teens, Freimark went on dialysis last year and now needs a kidney transplant. (Rockne Roll/Jewish Review file)

living in Portland, explained "Type2 diabetes, which is related to obesity, high blood pressure. Look at the way Americans live in general."

While many instances of kidney disease are related to lifestyle factors, many cases are due to genetics. Freimark falls into the latter camp; his father and grandfather both suffered from less severe kidney-related diseases, and while the Holocaust wiped out any medical records going farther back than that, one of his sisters and his son also have kidney issues. As soon as he was

diagnosed, Freimark became diligent about keeping those lifestyle factors from aggravating the situation.

"I stopped eating red meat. I never drank any alcohol. I did a very careful life structure," Freimark said, to hold off the disease's progression. He's also very physically active.

It was that activity that let Freimark know that last summer, at age 71, he'd finally ended up where his doctor from his teens said he would. It was while he and his partner were driving to visit

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ADL, Brandeis Center settle with Reed College

Agreement resolves Title VI complaints filed on behalf of Jewish students

The Jewish Review staff

Portland's Reed College has reached a settlement with the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law and the Anti-Defamation League regarding a pair of complaints regarding Reed's handling of antisemitic incidents on campus in 2023 and 2024.

The complaints, filed with the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1963, involved incidents including the smashing of a student's mezuzah and, later, the throwing of rocks through the same student's window, which struck the student in the head.

"Following a confidential and voluntary mediation process supported by OCR, and after months of dialogue and reflection," a letter co-signed by Reed Board of Trustees Chair Deborah Kamali and President Audrey Bilger, "Reed College has reached a voluntary agreement with the complainants."

In the settlement, the college has agreed to appoint a coordinator for Title VI compliance, to institute annual Title VI training for the entire campus community, considering the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism in its assessment of antisemitism complaints and training the college's Bias Education and Response Team in that definition, among other steps. The annual training will pay "specific attention to antisemitism and Islamophobia-based discrimination," the college's FAQ page about the settlement explained; it continued to say that "the agreement recognizes that for many Jewish people, Jewish self-determination (often called 'Zionism') is integral to their religious, ancestral, or ethnic Jewish identity."

"Antisemitism is a persistent and evolving form of hatred, and addressing it—alongside other forms of discrimination—requires sustained effort and collective responsibility," Kamali and Bilger's letter continued. "It requires attention, institutional accountability, and a willingness to listen, learn, and change. Ultimately, it will be up to our community to implement these commitments thoughtfully."

"This is one of the most significant

OCR campus anti-Semitism settlements under the current Administration, building on our prior settlements with Harvard University and the University of California at Berkeley. It will create an excellent precedent for protecting Jewish students," Kenneth L. Marcus, chairman and CEO of the Brandeis Center, said in a joint press release from the center and the ADL. "Reed College allowed anti-Semitism to fester, leading to a student being struck in the head with a rock. No institution should be the scene of that kind of violence. This settlement is what accountability looks like, and it shouldn't be the exception, it should be the standard every school holds itself to before, not after, a student gets hurt."

"After Jewish students were subjected to violent and persistent antisemitism on campus, we are pleased that Reed College has committed to meaningful, immediate, and long-term action to ensure that the civil rights of Jewish students on campus are protected and affirmed that antisemitism has no place on campus," Jonathan Greenblatt, the ADL's CEO and National Director, said in the release. "This outcome demonstrates how the Title VI process can work to effectively protect Jewish students."

The release emphasized that the settlement requires Reed to "strengthen campus protest, masking, and campus access policies – including a ban on masking intended to evade identification; limits on demonstrations inside dormitories, and a prohibition on faculty cancelling class or otherwise incentivizing students to attend campus protests; and publish annual statements reaffirming the College's commitment to combating anti-Semitism."

The college's progress will be monitored by an independent consultant, selected in consultation with the Brandeis Center and the ADL for a three-year appointment. The consultant will produce annual, publicly available reports about the college's adherence to the settlement terms.

"This agreement represents an important step toward ensuring that Jewish and Israeli students at Reed College re-

ceive the same protections afforded to every other student under federal civil rights law. We are encouraged by Reed College's commitment to meaningful institutional change and look forward to continuing our partnership as these reforms are implemented," Greater Portland Hillel Executive Director Lisa Hendricks said in a press release from the organization.

The release continued to say, "The settlement also creates new opportunities for collaboration as Reed College works alongside Greater Portland Hillel and other community partners to implement the agreement. Greater Portland Hillel, which supports Jewish students at Reed College, looks forward to continuing to work closely with college leadership throughout implementation of the agreement, providing resources, educational programming, and support that help Jewish students thrive."

"The Jewish Federation's Jewish Community Relations Council had met multiple times with [Bilger], encouraging her to take steps to combat antisemitism on campus. Additionally, we supported the Brandeis Center's Title VI case, helping to arrange meetings with the impacted students," Jewish Federation of Greater Portland President and CEO Marc Blattner said in his weekly "Marc's Remarks" email two days after the settlement was announced. "We look forward to seeing Reed College implement these reforms and hope for positive days ahead for all Jewish students and every student."

"Two thousand twenty-four on the Reed Campus was a very difficult one for many Jewish students, who described the climate there as 'hostile.' We were proud to have worked to support the Brandeis Center's Title VI case against Reed because we felt at the time that the college was being unresponsive to antisemitism," Federation Chief Community Relations and Public Affairs Officer Bob Horenstein told *The Jewish Review*. "It is our hope that the Reed administration will now take antisemitism seriously and effectively address issues that arise. As with other schools, we are prepared to be a resource to them."

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**CONGREGATION
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Rose City Mitzvah Meals service program launches

By **ROCKNE ROLL**

The Jewish Review

Everybody needs food. Some people, of course, have a harder time finding it than others. That's where the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's latest volunteer program comes in.

Rose City Mitzvah Meals, launched earlier this summer by Federation Volunteer Coordinator Merit Pinker, partners with organizations around the city to provide frequent opportunities for Jewish community members to cook and serve food to those in the area who need it most.

"The locations range from homeless shelter shelters to youth mentorship programs to housing facilities for families with children that are undergoing medical treatment," Pinker said. "It really runs the gamut of populations that we're serving across Portland, but the chief interest of all of these programs is addressing hunger and the need for food and a reliable meal that these communities have."

The program is a byproduct of Pinker's participation in the Jewish Federations of North America's Catalyst program, promoting volunteer service and service-learning programs in Jewish communities across the country. Pinker, as part of the most recent cohort, worked with professionals in all kinds of locations and federation roles. Catalyst also provides grant funding for participants to launch a program in their communities.

"It's been really interesting to see what people are doing with the grants. Some people have launched programs specifically for teens. Some people have done one big day of service using the grant money," Pinker said. "Everybody is really responding to their community needs in really interesting and different ways. So great to take inspiration also from what these other groups are doing."

When looking for a good program for Portland, Pinker said one key issue kept coming up.

"When I talked to community members, food and hunger insecurity is one of the biggest things that I kept hearing from our Jewish community as what they see as the biggest issue in Portland right now," she said.

At each Rose City Mitzvah Meals program, a small group of volunteers work



Rose City Mitzvah Meals volunteers work on dinner at Ronald McDonald House in South Portland Tuesday, July 28. (Merit Pinker/The Jewish Review)

together to cook, then serve, meals to the populations served by partner agencies. And while Maimonides' Eight Levels of Charity places great emphasis on anonymity, there's something powerful about stripping that veil away.

"When we're talking about serving somebody a meal, adding that human element, putting a face to the meal that's being prepared and getting to share that really human connection with somebody, that's just as important as the food that you're providing. You're giving people dignity and we are interacting with the people that we're serving in a way that really shows that we are part of one community," Pinker explained. "Food is such a part of Jewish culture, it's such a way that we as Jews show each other how much we love and care about each other. This just takes that a step further into our broader Portland community. It's a plate of food that says, 'I care about you, I have hope for you, I want the best for you.'"

Each program also comes with Jewish learning – engaging with text and conversation with fellow volunteers.

"These texts from a long, long time ago really are applicable to our modern life and the service that we continue to do today and seeing how integral service and community action has been since

Judaism's beginnings," Pinker said.

The first Rose City Mitzvah Meals program was held July 1 at Transition Projects in Southeast Portland, serving up 90 dinners for men looking for jobs and permanent housing in Southeast Portland. Yesterday's Mitzvah Meals program served families with children receiving medical treatment through Ronald McDonald House in Portland's South Waterfront neighborhood. Opportunities are coming up next week with Portland youth mentoring program p:ear at their facility in Northwest Portland and at Transition Project's Jean's Place in Northeast Portland.

"We have strategically picked locations in each of the four quadrants of Portland because we have heard, and we've learned from our community and from the community study that was done a couple of years ago, that geography is a big barrier to people engaging in Jewish life and engaging with their Jewish community," Pinker said.

Numerous opportunities are available at each of these sites through the rest of the year and into 2027, but capacity of each event is limited and fills up fast. Learn more and register for a program (or more than one) online at jewish-portland.org/jewishportlandregfox-com/rose-city-mitzvah-meals.

Altman's 'Israel on Trial' comes to CNS Sunday

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Judge Roy Altman is used to presiding over trials. This Sunday, he'll come to Portland to discuss a different kind of trial.

Altman will present on his recently released book, "Israel on Trial: Examining the History, the Evidence, and the Law" Sunday, Aug. 2 at Congregation Neveh Shalom in Portland at 4 pm in an event sponsored by Israel360, StandWithUs Northwest and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

A former assistant United States Attorney, Altman was appointed as a United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida in 2019. Beginning after Oct. 7, he began speaking about Jewish history around the country. Later, he began a program to take fellow federal judges to Israel. From the conversations that often followed these trips, the idea for the book sprouted forth.

"These judges were not Jewish, never been to Israel before," Altman said. "I've had thousands of conversations with people around the country about Israel, many of them see the world differently than I do, and that's okay, and I came to recognize that the entire debate about Israel is driven by six claims that people believe."

Those six claims each take up a chapter of the book: That Israel is a settler-colonial enterprise, that Israel was illegitimately founded, that Israel has been the primary obstacle to the creation of a Palestinian State, that Israel occupied the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7, that



Altman (Courtesy photo)

Israel is an apartheid state and that Israel committed genocide in Gaza.

"Why not just apply the same legal methodology that judges, lawyers, and jurors apply every single day in courtrooms and law offices across this country?" Altman asked himself. "It's a time-tested methodology that we've developed and honed over hundreds of years and it's a methodology that we know we trust because we use it where truth-telling matters the most, in the courtroom where someone's life is at stake."

The verdict? Not guilty on all counts.

"The good news is that when you look at the law on each of these claims, you see that the claims are preposterous on

their face and that they're actually not created because they're true," Altman said. "They're created because they invert reality."

Altman posits that accusations of genocide against Israel have little to do with whether there's an actual genocide (a particular term with a particular definition) occurring.

The accusation of genocide, he said, "has everything to do with minimizing Jewish suffering and saying, look, we don't really need to care about Holocaust education anymore. We don't need to care about protecting Jews. We don't need to care about the guilt we feel about the creation of the state of Israel and how necessary it is because of what we did to the Jews, because the Jews are doing the same thing to everybody else."

Unlike most courtroom trials, Altman's book has found a wide audience. It's been a *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller and is currently the number-one book on Amazon in its International Law category.

"The truth is you write a book and you think maybe your mother will read it," Altman joked. "To have a book become this tremendously successful was a huge surprise."

Registration for Altman's appearance at Neveh Shalom is free. Copies of "Israel on Trial" are available to order at registration for \$25 each and Altman will be signing books after the event. Learn more and register at members.nevehshalom.org/form/israel360-SwU-Altman-registration-2026.html.

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KIDNEY (continued from page 1)

Canada. They'd stopped to see a friend in Bellingham, and Freimark felt noticeably fatigued, though he chalked it up to the 95-degree weather. The lethargy didn't go away.

"The whole vacation, I was just really tired," he said.

The first thing he did when he got home was go to the hospital. The levels of creatine and other toxins in his blood suggested he'd had a heart attack. He was admitted on the spot.

"That was on a Wednesday night," Freimark said. "And then Thursday morning they put the port in, and Friday I had my first dialysis."



Dialysis is the reason that there are far more people living with kidney failure than with most other types of organ failure; there's no stopgap measure for liver failure, for example. But dialysis is just that – a stopgap measure, and there are some drawbacks.

"Most people can't work, they're exhausted. It's a terrible experience tethered to a machine," Rabbi Josh Sturm, the Director of Outreach at Renewal, explained. "Besides all of that, the long-term survivor rate on dialysis is not very good."

Because dialysis only manages 10 to 15 percent of what a healthy kidney can do, Rabbi Sturm explained, the average survival time on dialysis hovers around five years – unfortunately, this is also the typical waiting time for someone entering the back of that 96,000-person line for a kidney.

"There's a potential solution that's called kidney donation," Rabbi Sturm said.

Renewal is here to help make that happen. Founded in Brooklyn by Mendy Reiner in 2006, Renewal exists for the same reason that JCCs, Jewish family service agencies and other similar organizations exist – when the Jewish community needs something, it tends to be the case that the Jewish community builds it. So, when Jewish people need kidneys, Jewish people respond. The Talmud, in Tractate Shevuot, puts it more succinctly: "*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazei*." (All of Israel are responsible for one another)

"I think what motivates the Jewish community in a strong way is that there's a very, very strong sense of community. We identify with each other. And even if we're not exactly alike, but we identify as one people, as one nation, and therefore, I don't know you, but you're still my brother," Rabbi Sturm said. "There's a very, very strong sense of that communal bond."



Some of those communal bonds are stronger than others.

Marshal Spector came to Portland in 1990 and joined Congregation Shaarie Torah, where he quickly connected with the synagogue's cantor, David Rosenberg, z"l. It turned out that Rosenberg's adoptive father, a world-renowned cantor, had studied with Spector's great-grandfather in Europe in the 1930s. The two men's children became friends, and they shared an affinity for Judaism and hockey.

"David became sick in the late 1990s and the early 2000s; he had various health issues over time," Spector recalled. "At some point, his kidneys began to fail."

Due to his adoption, Rosenberg was not in touch with any of his biological family, Spector said, and turned to his

community in search of a potential donor kidney. Several individuals volunteered to be tested for a match; Spector's tests came back positive, and he agreed to donate a kidney. It was not a decision, or a process he took on lightly. Spector embarked on a holistic process to prepare himself for the procedure.

"I picked up my exercise quite a bit. I saw a therapist to help with mental health," he recalled. "I looked at alternative medicine and I saw an acupuncturist and a naturopath because I wanted to not only bring the wisdom and experience and proficiency of Western medicine, which was going to be the actual donation part, but I believed in also bringing in anything I could in terms of my mental health, my physical health, and everything else."

That included diving further into his Jewish learning to understand the *halacha* (Jewish law) and teachings of Jewish sages around the subject.

"We are not supposed to desecrate our bodies, but we are also obligated to help people, to help preserve life," Spector recounted. "There has been a whole body of Jewish law, especially as these types of things became medically possible, about whether it is forbidden for someone to be a donor, whether it is required for someone to be a donor, or whether it's just permitted. My understanding of Jewish law is that it is neither required nor is it forbidden, but it is permitted to do this."

Spector, a father of three who's children were aged 16, 14 and 12 at the time of his donation, also included his family in the process, having his doctors speak with them and soliciting their input.

"My younger son, who has a great sense of humor, asked the surgeon if they could remove the Blackberry (mobile phone) from me along with the kidney," Spector recalled. "My older son, who was 16 and was very thoughtful about it, he well understood the risks that I was taking, said, 'Dad, if you ever need a kidney, I've got your back.'"



Family can provide more than support in these situations – they're usually the first place people turn in search of a kidney. While Rosenberg did not have that option, Carol Danish did when she was diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease in 1999. Just after the turn of the millennium, she received a kidney from her daughter, Debbie Plawner; it was the third kidney transplant surgery performed at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital in Portland.

"I knew where it came from and I knew she took good care of it," Danish said of Plawner's kidney.

Plawner, one of whose sisters is Rosenberg's wife, Kim, has gone on to help friends like former Jewish Federation of Greater Portland professional Jen Feldman find kidneys and co-organize local events for Renewal along with Spector and Devorah Wilhelm, whose husband, Rabbi Moshe Wilhelm, received a kidney donation.

"Everyone that I know that's donated a kidney, the reward has been the person and the moments. My mother holding my babies, my mother going to their high school graduations, my mother celebrating their college graduations. That's the reward," Plawner said. "Someone who does it for a stranger takes that reward in a different way than I do, but

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they take that reward and that's still the same reward. It's the awareness that person lives. It's a big one."

Plawner's kidney spent 16 years in Danish – an average run for a live donor kidney, Rabbi Sturm of Renewal said – before it stopped working. Danish then received a second kidney transplant, this one from a deceased donor.

"I was in dialysis and the person who was in charge of the dialysis unit was on a portable phone and I saw him walking toward me and motioning with his finger, 'this is for you.' I got so frightened because I thought somebody was in an accident or something like that," she recalled. Instead, the woman on the other end of the call asked "What are you doing at 5:30 tomorrow morning? We've got a kidney waiting for you and we want you to come in so you can have a transplant."

Danish was Number One on the transplant list – "you were sicker than you thought you were," she recalled a doctor telling her – and a deceased 7-year-old's parents had agreed to donate their child's organs.

"I'm keeping it for the seven-year old," Danish said of her kidney. "He's now 17."

Of the approximately 21,000 kidney transplants done in the United States last year, about 15,000 involved organs from deceased donors.

"The problem is that it didn't move our waiting list at all," Rabbi Sturm noted "We're adding more and more people to the waiting list, and we're not lowering those numbers despite how many transplants that we're doing a year. That is the difficult reality that we face, and that's why this idea of kidney donation has become something that's been talked about more and more."

Each one, however, is special. Just ask Danish.

"The grass is greener to me, and the sky is bluer. I've been totally optimistic since this surgery because I realize that I've been given a gift of life, and it still surprises me the length of time not only that I've had, but also the *simchas*, the joys in my family that I have seen," she said. "I'm a grandmother, I'm a great-grandmother, and my family is very close and very supportive of me. It's a blessing."



Giving someone that kind of joy starts out very simply. Renewal's Rabbi Sturm explains how simple the initial testing process is for someone who is interested in donating.

"We mail them a kit, which is literally just two Q-tips. They swab the right cheek, they swab the left cheek, completely painless, and they put it back in the envelope and mail it back to us," he said. "I tell people if you could brush your teeth, you could swab."

If a potential match is identified, there's more testing to confirm it – the better the match, the lower the risk of the recipient's body rejecting the donated organ.

"We worked with the hospitals and hospitals have become a lot better, many of them at least, of treating this donor like the hero that they are," Rabbi Sturm said. "We've had a hospital that kept their lab open after hours so that the potential donor could come in after work and they don't have to take off a day from work to go for a lab."

All procedures related to donations are typically covered by the donor's insurance or the facility performing the trans-

plant. The surgery is more invasive for the donor than the recipient, but advances in laparoscopic surgical techniques have made the process smoother than before.

"The physical recovery was actually better than I was told it might be and better than I anticipated," Spector recalled of his donation. "I was walking and eating and sleeping comfortably within a few days."

He was back to work in a couple weeks. Three months later, he was ready to play in BB Camp's annual Men's Camp basketball tournament – he joked that, though it was not a concern, he told opponents they couldn't elbow him.

"I think that one of the best rewards of even entering into the process of being considered to be a kidney donor is that you are put through all of the tests to evaluate both if your kidney is healthy and if you are strong," Plawner said. "The result is that if someone says yes to you, that's because you're really healthy."

Make no mistake: it's a significant procedure, but it's not debilitating.

"I've heard people on the street tell me that, 'oh yeah, kidney donors, they're going to be out of work for like 6 months, right?' Or 'kidney donors, they have to take medication for the rest of their life.'" Rabbi Sturm related. "Both of those are completely false."

Plawner explained that, with a single kidney, she's very careful about staying hydrated. Spector said he no longer uses Advil (its active ingredient, ibuprofen, puts stress on kidneys) and has quit white-water kayaking following his donation.

They'd both do it all over again.

"You do anything for them," Plawner said of her family. "If I could give another kidney, I would have given another kidney."

"In some ways, this was one of the easiest decisions of my life, knowing that while there was some risk to me because I would be undergoing surgery while I was totally healthy and giving up a kidney," Spector said, "it was one of the easiest decisions because I was able to do something to save a friend's life."



A friend. A family member. Or a complete stranger. The last of those is the life Dr. Douek, the retired nephrologist, saved with her kidney donation.

"I always knew I was going to do it," she said. "As a nephrologist, I know I only need one."

She had a friend who needed a kidney, but they weren't the same blood type. A paired exchange was arranged, where a donor and a recipient who know each other are linked with another donor/recipient combo, but before the surgery happened, Douek was in a bicycle accident and sustained a severe concussion.

"Around the same time, I read this article about a firefighter," she said.

The firefighter, who had been assigned to a station near Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway that sent other personnel to Douek's crash, shared Douek's blood type, she found, and she knew the reporter who had written the piece from a swimming group a decade prior. Douek got connected, the arrangements were made, and Douek donated her kidney in 2025.

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Though she'd known she wanted to donate at some point, Douek explained that the aftermath of Oct. 7 ended up spurring her on.

"I think October 7th, honestly, made it really important to me. I've been hurting so much. I'm a secular Jew, but my parents are from the Middle East, exiled Jews," she explained. "I only heal by giving. That's the type of person I am. [Donating has] actually made a huge difference for me. Just that act of giving, like it's a gift, but that gift was really to me. It's a gift I gave myself."

☆

It was a gift that kept on giving for Spector.

"People offered to help drive my kids or take my kids places. People gave *tzedakah* (literally "justice" in Hebrew but usually translated to "charity") to all types of places in honor of this," Spector said. "It created a feeling of goodwill in the community that people learned about what was going on."

A lot of people learned, thanks to a piece in *The Oregonian* ("[Timeless faith, renewed life](#)," Sept. 16, 2007, re-published Dec. 20, 2014), including someone in Lake Oswego who knew a woman at their church who needed a kidney. Inspired by the *Oregonian* piece, an appeal was made to the congregation for a kidney donation. From that church, a donor was found who saved their fellow parishioner's life just the way Spector saved Rosenberg's.

"You never know, when you do a *mitzvah*, what the effect might be for others and how one *mitzvah* can lead to another," Spector said.

Spector has performed plenty more *mitzvot* following his donation, even as people joked to him that the donation would mean he'd never need to attend synagogue again.

"One of the beautiful things when you do things for others, that it encourages people to find deeper meaning in things," Spector said. "It helped me find deeper meanings to things in my life, to try to become a better person, to try to become a better parent, to try to become more active in the community."

Spector often reflects on two pieces of Jewish wisdom in regard to his donation. One is a famous idea from the Talmud, most notably paraphrased in "Schindler's List" as "whoever saves one life, saves the world entire." The second was from a piece written by Shaarie Torah's then-rabbi in the congregational bulletin just after Spector's donation.

"His message at the time was that while my donation of my kidney added days to David's life, it added life to my days," Spector recalled. "It really has."

☆

Those days are what Freimark is hoping for. Next month will be his 12th on dialysis. Three days a week, five hours at a time, with each session beginning at 4 am. He's doing his best to get ready for the kidney he's looking for.

"I'm very active, I walk a lot, I have a trainer," he said.

He'd started exercising more and cut out the small amount of alcohol in his diet four years ago when he and his kidney-disease-afflicted son-in-law both committed to a more



Richard Freimark, right, leads a baking class at The Shuk Sunday, June 21 at the Eastside Jewish Commons. Freimark has had dialysis three times a week for nearly a year. (Rockne Roll/Jewish Review file)

kidney-friendly regimen; Freimark had already cut out red meat, pork and shellfish long ago.

Unfortunately, no one in his family is a match.

"My oldest sister has cysts on both her liver and her kidney; she's four years older than me. My middle sister, who's 14 months older than me, only has one kidney and my other sister, who is two years younger than me, she has kidney disease as well," he said. "My daughter is not a match at all for me, but she's a perfect match for her husband, who has kidney disease, whose father died from kidney disease. Until you get in this arena, you don't realize how many people have kidney disease."

Thus, he has been forced to go looking for a kidney – that's where Renewal has come in.

"I wish we were, but we're not an organization where we have a refrigerator full of kidneys and you just walk in and we say, 'what make and model would you like?'" Rabbi Sturm said. "I wish it worked that way. The reality is it doesn't. So, what we do is we help to strategize with that recipient the best ways of bringing in their own donor through these different outreach methods, and what we're really good at is assisting the donor throughout the process."

Freimark, already amongst the club of 96,000 Americans who need kidneys, hopes to transition to the smaller club – more than 1,500 members, at this point – of people who Renewal has helped secure kidney transplants for.

Spector frames it differently – there's just the one club.

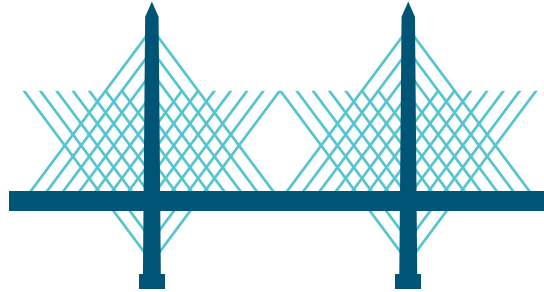
"The human body doesn't care about gender, about sexual orientation, about race, about religion. about economic status, about nationality and, certainly these days, about any political leanings," he said. "Being a match to save a life, to donate a kidney, is basically about the biological merging of one human to another; the club here is just a human club."

If you or someone you know is interested in potentially donating a kidney to Freimark, contact Oregon Health and Science University's Living Donation Program at 503-494-8500 or at livingdonation@ohsu.edu. Learn more about kidney donation at renewal.org.

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Jewish Federation
of Greater Portland

TICKETS:



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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OPINIONS printed in *The Jewish Review* do not necessarily reflect those of the *Review*, the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, its governing board or the staffs of either the newspaper or the Federation.

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NEXT ISSUE

Issue date Deadline

AUG 6 AUG 3

Security Corner

ZAKA - Heeding the call

By JESSICA ANDERSON

It was 1989, and in the wake of the Tel Aviv Jerusalem Bus 405 attack, a group of religious volunteers helped retrieve the remains of the victims for proper burial. Six years later, the organization ZAKA was formally formed. Following terrible situations of terror, accidents, and disasters, ZAKA volunteers collect the remains, blood, and any other human parts so that they can be buried with the victim or sometimes collectively, in accordance with Jewish burial laws.

In the 90s, as mass disasters continued to occur in Israel, there was a recognition that remains needed to be collected by specially trained personnel. Today, ZAKA handles more than 10,000 emergencies annually and works across 42 international teams. Nearly 4,000 volunteers respond to accidents and disasters and are nearly always prepared to immediately depart wherever duty calls them to. Following the synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh in 2018, this was the team that retrieved remains left inside the synagogue. Recently, when ZAKA heard of the vehicle ramming in Michigan, the team was already en route to the airport when they got word that the incident was over and the injuries were limited to security professionals who were already being cared for. In the US, the nearest team to Oregon is in LA, and within minutes of that team being requested or hearing of a major incident, they would be headed our way.

ZAKA representatives recently visited Portland, and



Jessica Anderson is the Portland-area Director of Community Security. She was previously an FBI agent for 24 years. This position is funded by SCN (the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America) and a local three-way partnership of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Oregon Jewish Community Foundation Endowment Fund and multiple Jewish organizations in the region.

I toured them around town to meet critical law enforcement partners. The goal of the effort was to introduce law enforcement partners to the organization and the potential needs. We started the day meeting with Portland Police Bureau – the Deputy Chief, the head of their Intel Unit (who serves as my primary PPB contact), and Chief Day's Chief of Staff. ZAKA explained Jewish burial laws, talked about their capabilities and how they work with law enforcement on scenes or following accidents. We moved on to visit with the Beaverton Police Department and closed out the day at the FBI's Portland Field Office. As one would hope and expect, every office was incredibly welcoming, eager to hear about how they would work together and completely receptive to the collaboration, if needed.

One of the experiences they talked about during their visit was their work following the Oct. 7 attack. During this effort, ZAKA recognized the need for a unit dedicated to emotional support for its volunteers. Their work there was so intense, so overwhelming. It became clear the emotional toll was

deeply affecting the workers. Some of the practices they developed were on-scene crisis response, long-term therapy, family support, and resilience training. For example, at major scenes now, ZAKA supports its members by having on-scene counseling. When volunteers are struggling, they are pulled from the scene and immediately meet with a counselor. These changes are creating an important support net for volunteers; it helps retain them as active volunteers, improve their family life, and build strength to continue the work.

Police work in the U.S. carries with it some of the highest rates of suicide, and police force leadership is recognizing that emotional support for officers is a critical effort they need to address. Every department we visited that day was interested in learning more about what ZAKA had developed and how they could learn more and apply learnings to their departments. It was a great unintended outcome of the meetings.

If you want to learn more about ZAKA or support their work, check out their website at zakaworld.org.

Elder Voices Study clarifies Robison's four pillars

By SONIA-MARIE LEIKAM and BONNIE NEWMAN

A new community research initiative commissioned by the Robison Foundation for Jewish Elders reveals that seniors' sense of security depends less on their current health or mobility status and more on whether they feel prepared for change and confident about their choices for the future. Because that confidence is built through guidance from trusted sources, the findings point to an increased need for human connection in helping older adults navigate the challenges of aging.

The Robison Foundation is committed to improving the lives of older Jewish adults across the Portland metropolitan area. Established as an independent nonprofit following the October 2024 sale of Cedar Sinai Park's Boundary Street campus to private owners, the foundation shifted its focus from operating a senior living community to serving as a strategic funder. Through targeted grantmaking and partnerships with local organizations, the foundation invests in programs and initiatives that help older adults age with dignity, connection, and security. To better understand how well these systems are meeting the needs of Jewish elders—and where critical gaps remain—the foundation commissioned the Elder Voices Study.

Conducted by Discovery Collaborative and presented in March 2026, the Elder Voices Study surveyed more than 265 Jewish older adults and caregivers in the Portland metro area and included in-depth interviews and focus groups. The research was designed to identify where support systems are falling short and help guide the foundation's future grantmaking.

According to the survey, 83 percent of respondents described their current lives as stable. However, only 43 percent said they felt confident about the next three to five years. The issue is that vulnerability often develops gradually through incremental losses in mobility, health, connection or financial flexibility. Our research found that uncertainty about the future generated more distress than dependence itself. Many respondents were open to receiving support—as long as they could preserve choice, autonomy and dignity. As one participant observed, "I probably should worry a little more because I'm not that well set up if something were to happen."

Our research also highlighted a paradox: Many elders participate in Jewish community life, but fewer feel deeply connected. While respondents reported involvement with synagogues and other Jewish institutions, only about one-third described themselves as "very" or "extremely" connected to the Jewish community. Nearly 40 percent reported feeling lonely or isolated at least sometimes. "I have outlived my husband and my immediate family," one respondent shared, "and I have nobody living close to me."

For others, barriers such as transportation, mobility limitations, language differences or living alone made participation increasingly difficult. Community engagement, we found, does not always translate into the practical or emotional sup-

port people need when life becomes more complicated.

Among the study's clearest findings was that elders and their caregivers often struggle not because services do not exist, but because systems are difficult to navigate. Respondents cited confusing systems, difficulty identifying trustworthy providers, affordability and uncertainty about where to begin. Rather than asking primarily for additional services, many said they wanted trusted guidance to help them understand options, weigh tradeoffs and make informed decisions. This suggests a real need for a proactive, connected and human-centered system that people can rely on before they reach a crisis.

Caregivers—often adult children balancing jobs and families or spouses caring for partners—also reported significant strain. Among those surveyed, 62 percent struggled to balance caregiving with their own health and responsibilities; 45 percent reported emotional exhaustion, and only 17 percent said they were managing well. The study also found that conversations and planning about elder care frequently happen too late, leaving families scrambling during moments of crisis. The findings point to the need to shift from reacting to emergencies toward helping older adults and families prepare earlier.

As a result of this learning process, the foundation's funding priorities now center around four key pillars:

Navigation and Access: Supporting approaches that assess the needs of older adults and caregivers and connect them with trusted partners who can reduce confusion, fragmentation and barriers to care.

Social, Emotional and Spiritual Connection: Investing in programs that foster meaningful relationships, reduce isolation and strengthen trusted connections within the community.

Financial Support: Providing funds to organizations that address the ongoing and urgent financial needs of elders—in alignment with our mission, board priorities and donor intent.

Early Outreach and Education: Advancing proactive outreach and educational efforts to build awareness, confidence and support for older adults, caregivers and providers before needs become urgent.

Aging is inevitable, but isolation, confusion and crisis do not have to be. As the foundation looks to its next steps, plans involve collaborating with community partners to explore, develop and pursue opportunities outlined in the study. The Elder Voices Study reminds us that older adults are asking not only for services, but also for trusted relationships, timely guidance and a community that stays connected as needs change. By acting before crises occur, we can help more elders age with dignity, confidence and a true sense of belonging.

Sonia-Marie Leikam is the Executive Director of the Robison Foundation for Jewish Elders in Portland. Bonnie Newman is Executive Assistant for RFJE.

Opinions printed in The Jewish Review do not necessarily reflect those of the Review, The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland or their staffs.

FAINA KOTLYAR

With sadness, Chabad Southwest Portland announces the passing of Faina Kotlyar, z"l.

The funeral was held July 24 in the Chabad section of River View Cemetery in Portland.

Faina is survived by her daughter, Roza Kotlyar, and son-in-law, Vitaly Talyansky.

DAVID CAPLAN

With sadness, Chabad Southwest Portland announces the passing of David Caplan, z"l.

David passed away on Thursday, July 23, and was laid to rest Friday, July 24, in Liverpool, England.

David is survived by his wife, two daughters, and a son. His daughter Allison, son-in-law Avi, and grandson Leo Kimelman live in Portland.

GARRY KAHN

Congregations Neveh Shalom and Shaarie Torah are saddened to share the passing of Garry Lee Kahn, z"l, who died at age 90 on Sunday, July 26.

Garry was a distinguished and honored trial lawyer for nearly 60 years, including serving two years as a Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge. Over the course of his career, he volunteered on many local and state bar associations, including as President of the Oregon State Bar and Oregon Trial Lawyers. On a professional level, he was most grateful for being able to help thousands of individuals receive justice for their injuries caused by the negligence of others. He loved to golf, and continued to do so until he was 86.

Most of all, he loved and cherished his family: his wife and constant companion of 67 years, Judith; their four children: David Kahn, Steven (Wendy) Kahn, Robert (Camille) Kahn, and Sarah (Jonathan) Kahn Glass; and all of his many grandchildren and his great-grandchild. Garry and Judith were honored recipients of the Rabbi Stampfer Community Enrichment Award in 2018.

A Memorial Service was held on Wednesday, July 29, at Neveh Shalom. Donations in Garry's memory can be made to the CNS Camp Solomon Schechter Scholarship Fund or to the Kahn Campership Fund at Camp Solomon Schechter.

Events

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

Aug. 1: Women's Torah Study

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

Aug. 1: Sephardic Foundations

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

Aug. 2: PJC at North Portland Parkways

Young adult event at Mc-

Coy Park Fountain at 10:45 am. RSVP at form.jotform.com/222346266860155.

Aug. 2: Free First Sunday

Free admission to the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education from 11 am-4 pm. More information at OJMCHE.org.

Aug. 2: What Does It Mean to Be American?

Community conversation at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust

Education at 2 pm, co-sponsored by Oregon Humanities. More information at ojmche.org.

Aug. 2: Portland Jewish Writers Circle

Monthly writers' group at 2 pm. For more information, email benschubert@icloud.com.

Aug. 2: Israel on Trial

See story, page 5

Aug. 2-9 The Classical Northwest

Classical music festival at locations around the Portland area. Details and tickets

at theclassicalnorthwest.org.

Aug. 5: Israeli Folk Dancing for Beginners

Weekly class at the Multnomah Arts Center in Southwest Portland at 7:15 pm. More information at sites.google.com/site/pifdnews.

Aug. 13: JFCS Community Connection

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

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