

THE JEWISH REVIEW

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Portland Jewish Festival this Sunday at Zidell Yards

The Jewish Review staff

Tickets are still available for the Portland Jewish Festival, to be held this Sunday, Aug. 30, at Zidell Yards in South Portland.

"During this time that has been turbulent and difficult for the Jewish community,"

Jewish Federation of Greater Portland President and CEO Marc Blattner told KGW-TV's "Hello! Rose City on Monday," "we felt it was time to be loud and proud and be a part of this city."

The festival starts at 11 am and runs all day until 7 pm,

with local vendors, activities and kosher food and beverages a plenty.

The main concert stage will feature performances by local Klezmer luminaries The Carpathian Pacific Express, Songleader Boot Camp founder and PJ Li-

brary musical spokesperson, Rick Recht, Portland musician and Girls In Trouble creator Alicia Jo Rabins, DJ fCD, Brooklyn-based Jewish rapper Kosha Dillz and Israeli-American musician

See **FESTIVAL**, page 2

More than a meal

Morah Rochel's Shabbat Hugs build community - one bag at a time

By **ROCKNE ROLL**

The Jewish Review

When is food more than just a meal?

One answer to that question rests on Devora Wilhelm's dining room table every Friday morning. Rows of small bags, each filled with a Shabbat dinner made just a few feet away; challah, soup, salad, gefilte fish, quiche or other entrees and dessert. Each also contains kosher grape juice and candles along with a printed article from Chabad's website. A sticker on the outside of each bag provides the time to light those candles just below the name of the program: Morah Rochel's Shabbat Hugs.

What makes these bags more than just meals is what happens next. One by one, volunteers come through Wilhelm's door. They greet one another and Wilhelm, then take a bag or two to

deliver to someone else – bringing a metaphorical hug to a fellow Jew as the Sabbath approaches.

The meal is just a gateway to a connection – a connection that often goes far beyond a Shabbat dinner.

As volunteer Darcy Rubin put it, "what starts as a mitzvah becomes a relationship."

☆

Wilhelm began making Shabbat dinner bags for those in need during the COVID pandemic.

"I was making challah and chicken soup and giving it out sometimes," Wilhelm, the wife of Chabad Rabbi Moshe Wilhelm, explained. "But then three and a half years ago, I guess I felt that there was a need in the community."

She started assembling Shabbat bags for a pair of

See **HUGS**, page 4



Bags containing Shabbat meals, part of the Morah Rochel's Shabbat Hugs program, await delivery Friday, Aug. 21. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

INSIDE

Events – page 8

Beth Israel hosts cancer genetics panel

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Cancer is scary. Delving into the realities of genetic predispositions for cancer can also be scary, especially if, like many Ashkenazi Jews, you have a higher-than-average likelihood of carrying certain cancer-linked genes.

Talking about these things shouldn't be – at least it wasn't supposed to be at Congregation Beth Israel's panel discussion, What Every Jewish Person Should Know, held Wednesday, Aug. 19.

"This evening is not about creating fear," moderator Dr. Barbra Fisher explained. "It's meant to provide knowledge when we understand our personal and family health history and recognize what questions to ask and know where to turn for support so we're better equipped to make informed decisions and advocate for others and the people we love."

Ashkenazi Jews are more likely than the general population to carry the BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations, which are linked with increased risk of breast and ovarian cancer. They also are more likely to develop colon can-



From top left, Dr. Barbra Fisher, Dr. Dafna Lohr, Dr. Denise Bilbao and Michelle Caplan participate in Congregation Beth Israel's cancer genetics discussion panel Wednesday, Aug. 19. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

cer, particularly early-onset cases associated with the A636P gene mutation, according to medical journal database EBSCO. However, cancer genetics is

still a new field, and just like having a genetic mutation doesn't mean you'll get a certain cancer, the absence of ge-

See **CANCER**, page 5



Be'ima shelcha | באימא שלך

Literal translation: "On your mother"

Meaning: An expression used to emphasize disbelief or ask for confirmation; similar to "Seriously?" or "Are you for real?"

FESTIVAL (continued from page 1)

Nissim Black.

"We just finished recording our fourth album, so I'm really excited to share these new songs with everyone," Rabins said in a Federation video promoting the festival.

"I'm bringing vibes, I'm bringing great Jewish raps and awesomeness," Dillz said in another promotional video. "We're going to give you the greatest show Portland has seen in a really long time."

"It is going to be amazing," Black said in his promotional spot. "It's going to be you

and me, we're going to be dancing; all of us together, singing, dancing, cheerful!"

Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$7 for children ages 6-17 and free for those ages 5 and under. Parking at Zidell Yards is available for \$10. The festival site is also accessible via TriMet's MAX Orange Line, Portland Streetcar's NS, A Loop and B Loop lines and multiple TriMet bus routes.

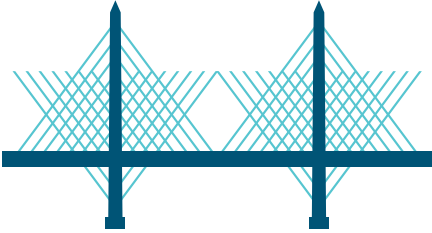
More information and tickets are available at jewishportland.org/jewishfestival.

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Jewish Festival

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Music Schedule

Kosher Food

Beer and Wine

Kids Activities

Vendors

Organization Booths

Much More!

**Please bring a can of food to support
Jewish Family & Child Service's Food Drive**

11:30-12:15	The Carpathian Pacific Express	
12:30-1:30	Rick Recht	
2:00-3:00	Alicia Jo Rabins & Girl's In Trouble	
3:00-3:45	DJ fCD	
4:00-5:00	Kosha Dillz	
5:00-6:00	Nissim Black	

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Jewish Federation
of Greater Portland

TICKETS:



HUGS (continued from page 1)

families. That number has grown to more than two dozen. While some recipients truly need the food – one recipient wrote to say she stretches the food out over each weekend, which saves her SNAP benefits from running out – the need Devora Wilhelm is addressing is not merely one of sustenance.

“A goal of mine was it should not only be for extremely needy, it should be a way we honor our elders,” she said.

The recipients are identified in a variety of ways – Wilhelm gets referrals from Jewish Family & Child Service, from Chabad Rabbis throughout the area and from other synagogues. Family members from out of state are often connected to Wilhelm when their Portland-area loved ones are unwell or isolated.

In addition to a meal, each bag contains the makings of Shabbat observance – the candles, the juice for *kid-dush* and the Chabad website article – something thought provoking or spiritually illuminating. Sometimes, those are appreciated as much as the food.

“One of the women we sent it to,” Wilhelm recalled, “I thought, ‘I bet you she doesn’t need the article.’ When I once went to deliver it, it’s the first thing she looks for. I was so surprised how much the article means.”

☆

Sometimes, the most meaningful part of the delivery is the person bringing it.

Rubin left Wilhelm’s house last Friday with a bag destined for one of her regular deliveries.

“She’s a 97-year-old Holocaust survivor. And I normally go, and I’ll sit with her until her caretaker comes.



Devora Wilhelm, left, and Darcy Rubin prepare deliveries of Morah Rochel's Shabbat Hugs at Wilhelm's home Friday, Aug. 21. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

We’ll talk about the news, anything. I’ve developed a really close relationship.”

Aki Fleshler was recruited to deliver a weekly bag to a man living in a care facility in the area.

“I didn’t want to bother him, I didn’t want to intrude, especially if he wasn’t feeling well,” Fleshler recalled. “He just welcomed me in. He said, ‘come in, sit down, take a load off.’ He was so happy to have company and a connection. We began a real friendship.”

That friendship continued through the man’s multiple hospitalizations and eventual passing.

“It’s a *mitzvah* to visit the sick. It’s a *mitzvah* to comfort people as they’re dying. It’s a *mitzvah* to accompany the dead, but it was way beyond that. It was a very deep spiritual connection,” Fleshler said.

Fleshler now delivers weekly to a man who fled the former Soviet Union after a career as a professor there – they have formed their own connection and friendship. Fleshler said there’s something unique about the

person-to-person connection the Shabbat Hugs foster in a disconnected digital age.

“[Wilhelm] knows every person who’s on the list, every potential messenger, deliverer. She does a certain amount of matchmaking, not just by geography, but who would be suitable,” he said. It’s made by hand. It’s packaged by hand. I carry it by hand. I meet the person. I connect with the person.”

☆

The Shabbat Hugs program emerged shortly after the launch of the Chesed Connection program run by Wilhelm’s son, Rabbi Chaim Wilhelm of Chabad’s NE Portland location. The two programs jointly received a grant from the Robison Foundation for Jewish Elders to support their operations, and each is working within Chabad’s Kitchen of Kindness to expand volunteer opportunities – including a volunteer opportunity coming up in advance of the High Holy Days. The Shabbat Hugs meals for Rosh Hashana will be additionally supported by a grant from the Jewish Federation of

Greater Portland’s Women’s Giving Circle.

The program’s namesake is Rochel Chaiton, z”l, the wife of former Portland Jewish Academy teacher and Chabad Rabbi Yosef Chaiton, who passed away in 2023.

“She deeply cared about individuals and would make an extra effort to reach out to those who had no family or place to celebrate Shabbat,” her death announcement on Chabad of Oregon’s Facebook page read in part. “Her Challah and Babaganoush were legendary.”

Today, Wilhelm still strives to put a homemade challah in each bag that goes out. A core cadre of volunteers help her cook and assemble meals on Thursdays for the Friday morning deliveries. Morah Rochel’s Shabbat Hugs primarily serves those on the west side of the Willamette River, with Chesed Connection working mainly on the east side. Thus, the volunteers who carry bags from Wilhelm’s doorstep each Friday carry them as far as Hillsboro or Oregon City.

Shari Anderson lives in Oregon City; her first connection with the Shabbat Hugs program was as a recipient during her late husband’s cancer journey.

“My late husband wasn’t Jewish,” she explained. “Everybody is cared for and welcomed in the Jewish community, whether they’re Jewish or not, and so it meant a whole lot.”

Now, Anderson delivers to others in her corner of Clackamas County.

She’s taking one bag a week at present, to a woman who “right now, is not doing very well, is bedridden, and really needs the food. Her husband came out a couple

continued on next page

continued from previous page

of weeks ago to tell me that they really appreciate the food because they don't have any other food."

☆

Whether it's the food itself, the company that comes with it or the sense of connection to the Jewish community, it seems like every bag has a story about how much it means to the person receiving it.

Or to the person delivering it.

Or both.

"Sometimes you don't realize the impact that you make on people's lives when you do something like this," Anderson said. "It hit me really hard how much it was appreciated and how grateful they are, and the impact that I'm having on this family by bringing them this food."

They all mean something to Wilhelm. One story in particular sticks with her, though.

A woman who was caring for her severely disabled husband was receiving a Shabbat Hug bag every week. She was not one who would regularly chat with her delivery volunteer, but later met with Wilhelm and said something that Wilhelm made sure to write down. "You restored my faith in the Jewish people," this woman told her.

Sometimes, the bag is just the beginning. Volunteers have helped advocate for their recipients in elder care or medical settings, coordinated to ensure someone was regularly visiting an elderly woman with no family in the area, arranged for a family from North Carolina to visit their aging relative in Portland before the family made *Aliyah* to Israel and even arranging a Jewish burial for someone who had died.

For Wilhelm, who's been a Chabad *rebbetzin* (rabbi's wife) for 42 years in Oregon, that's what it's all about.

"What I'm doing really fits into

[Chabad's] mission because it's about being there for others, spiritually, physically, emotionally," she said. "Any way we can be there to help somebody."

Fleshler explained it in a Kabbalistic sense, referencing Rabbi Isaac Luria's teaching of the shattering of the divine light and the diffusion of sparks of that light into the world.

"Redemption is the process of retrieving the sparks and bringing them back. It's a pretty famous idea; this is a big idea in Jewish mysticism. And I think that it applies here," he said. "Maybe all this connecting is part of that same process retrieving the sparks, connecting the sparks, building a bigger and bigger light."

Those interested in volunteering with Morah Rochel's Shabbat Hugs, including the upcoming Rosh Hashana meals, or who would like to receive the bags, can email Wilhelm at devorawilhelm@gmail.com or by calling or texting 503-358-7000.

CANCER (continued from page 2)

neric markers isn't a guarantee the other way.

Dr. Dafna Lohr, a panelist who practices obstetrics and gynecology in Portland and comes from a family with a history of cancer diagnoses, learned this when she went in for her own genetic testing after finding a benign lump in her breast.

"There was not a known gene mutation that explained the cancer in my family," she said, "and I remember very clearly that, 'There probably is a gene mutation in your family. We just don't know what to look for yet.'"

Lohr was later diagnosed with breast cancer.

Having information about genetic history can prompt more intensive screenings for certain cancers, guide treatment decisions if a cancer is found or even inform decisions on elective treatments like fallopian tube re-

moval – a procedure which has been found to reduce the risk of ovarian cancer, a disease for which Lore explained there is not currently an effective screening.

Michelle Caplan, a cancer survivor and women's health advocate, explained that she ended up not testing positive for either BRCA mutation, despite a lengthy family history of breast cancer. She still elected for a double mastectomy when she was diagnosed.

"It's asking, it's being an advocate, it's asking a lot of questions. It is relying on people who know the answers and not being afraid to reach out to them," she said of the process of going through genetic testing and cancer treatment. "Sometimes we're scared to ask for help. I'm one of those people who does not like to ask for help because I think I can do it all myself. But I learned

that I needed to ask for help."

Many organizations exist to help; Sharsheret, a Jewish women's health group, Breast Friends, Fighting Pretty, Pink Phoenix and a number of local genetic medicine practices were among those with tables at the event's information fair.

A great resource, of course, is your primary care provider.

"A big part of our job is to be someone's partner in their health journey and decide whether to worry with them or not," explained panelist and internist Dr. Denise Bilbao, discussing when someone should talk to a doctor about something they may notice on a breast self-exam. "I don't really have a 'If this is a symptom, come see us, but otherwise, don't bother us.' I think if you have a worry, it's a good idea to talk to somebody about it."

That this event was held

early in the Hebrew month of Elul was no mere coincidence, Beth Israel's Senior Rabbi Designate Rabbi Rachel Joseph explained. She spoke wearing, as she does every day, the *kippah* of her close friend Rabbi Aimee Gerace, z"l, who passed away in 2023 due to breast cancer.

"We often think about it as internal spiritual work... but our tradition has always also taught us that our physical is just as important," Rabbi Joseph said. "That caring for our bodies is also really important work in this preparatory time of Elul, and that our health, our physical health, is not separate from our spiritual health. It's all intertwined. It's all connected."

Learn more about breast and ovarian cancers and other women's health issues in the Jewish community at Sharsheret.org.

Free subscription: jewishportland.org/subscribe

Lyon's work on 'The Muppet Show' earns Emmy nod

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Kelly Lyon has loved The Muppets since her formative days. Now, her work on their return to television may net her a second Emmy award.

Lyon, a Portland-based film editor, has been nominated for Outstanding Picture Editing for Variety Programming for her work on “The Muppet Show,” an ABC special which aired in February of this year starring Sabrina Carpenter, Seth Rogen and Maya Rudolph alongside Jim Henson’s legendary cast of puppet characters. This marks Lyon’s fourth career nomination and her third year in a row being nominated for the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences’ flagship award.

Lyon was recruited to the job by director Alex Timbers, with whom she had previously worked on a pair of comedian John Mulaney’s stand-up specials.

“We have a great working relationship. I’m like his go-to editor,” Lyon said of Timbers. “I’ve loved the Muppet Show since I was basically a baby, I was also terrified and nervous because it’s such a beloved franchise. The classic Muppet Show was so meaningful to me, like growing up, and helped shape my understanding of what comedy is.”

That fear almost kept her off the project, along with a scheduling conflict. Timbers, however, was determined.

“I’m just gonna send you the script. Don’t tell anyone. I want you to read it and then make your decision,” Lyon recalled Timbers telling her. “When I read the script, I started crying. I was like so moved, and it was so funny. It was so good.”



Lyon (Courtesy photo)

Lyon has been editing film since her high school days at TV10 in Farmington Hills, Mich., a public access station with a rare-for-its-time advanced editing suite.

“I just fell in love with it,” she said. “My teacher was very encouraging. I was like, ‘This is fun. That’s not like a real job.’ He said, ‘No, editor is a real job, and not a lot of women do it. You should go out to Hollywood and show them what you can do.’”

Lyon studied film editing at the University of Michigan, interning at MTV, but ended up bypassing Hollywood for New York and a job at “Saturday Night Live.” She later moved across the country to the Portland area, where she lives with her husband.

Comedy comes naturally to Lyon.

“My family is funny. My dad is always telling jokes. We always connected through comedy. We watched silly

stuff growing up, like “Pee Wee’s Playhouse” and “Weird Al,” Lyon said. “I interned at MTV, and I thought I wanted to edit music videos and make things that were cool and stylish. Comedy wasn’t necessarily my original goal, but it was something that I inadvertently had been naturally training for my whole life by living in the house of funny people and constantly connecting with others through humor.”

Thus, she knows a good script when she reads it – which is exactly what she had in her hands when Timbers sent her the script to “The Muppet Show.”

“Something like this could easily just feel stale or rehashing or like there’s nothing fresh about it, and the script felt like they had modernized the show in the perfect way, where the where the changes were almost invisible,” Lyon said.

“It just felt like a natural continuation of where these characters would be 50 years later. So, I felt, as the editor, that it was my job to not get in the way of that of that beautiful script that was that was written, and to just be able to deliver the comedy in its strongest form to the audience.”

Though none of Henson’s cast of characters are outwardly Jewish, Lyon said there’s an essence of *Yiddishkeit* in the troop.

The Muppets have sort of that vaudeville sensibility that I think is inherent in the history of Jewish comedy. My great grandparents performed on the Yiddish stage and were involved in vaudeville acts in Cincinnati,” she said. “I think Jews and being funny kind of go hand in hand over time, and the Muppets do feel like that old school vaudeville sensibility in a way.”

Lyon won an Emmy award in 2024 for Netflix’s “John Mulaney Presents: Everybody’s in L.A.,” she was also nominated that year for Amazon’s “Tig Notaro: Hello Again.” She was nominated again in 2025 for “Bill Burr: Drop Dead Years,” which aired on Hulu.

“The Muppet Show” received five other Emmy nominations for Outstanding Variety Special (Pre-Recorded), Outstanding Character Voice-Over Performance, Outstanding Writing for a Variety Special, Outstanding Production Design for a Variety Special and Outstanding Sound Mixing for a Variety Series of Special.

The Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards will be presented Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 5-6, at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles.

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NEXT ISSUE

Issue date Deadline

SEPT 3 AUG 31

Events

More events online at jewishportland.org/community-calendar

Aug. 27: Aging with Elegance

Interactive aging workshop at Congregation Neveh Shalom at 1 pm, sponsored by Jewish Family & Child Service. RSVP required at jfcs-portland.org/senior-social-hour.

Aug. 27: JFCS Community Connection

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

Aug. 29: Women's Torah Study

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

Aug. 29: Sephardic Foundations

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

Aug. 30: Portland Jewish Festival

See story, page 1

Sept. 1: JFCS/OJMCHE Community Reception with KAVOD

Organizational reception at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education at 4:30 pm. More information at jfcs-portland.org/kavod.

Sept. 1: Standing Strong Against Extremism

Political event hosted by Northwest Oregon Unity in Action at the Elsie Stuhr Center in Beaverton at 6:30 pm. More information at nwouia.org/

Sept. 3: DSA Decoded

Panel discussion webinar hosted by the Jewish Community Relations Council and the Anti-Defamation League at noon. More information at jewishportland.org/dsa.

Sept. 3: Improv for Writer's Block

Writing workshop at the Eastside Jewish Commons at 2 pm. More information at events.humanitix.com/improv-for-writer-s-block/tickets.

Sept. 3: Courageous Teshuva

Elul Learning Series class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 8 pm. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/2026-elul.html.

Sept. 4-7 Mahj & More

Adults mahjong weekend at Camp Solomon Schechter. More information at campschechter.org/mahj.

Sept. 5: Mini Mentsches Travelling Tot Shabbat

Children's Shabbat celebration at Washington Park at 9 am, hosted by Congregation Beth Israel. More information at bethisrael-pdx.org/action/mini-mentsches.

Sept. 5: Selichot

Pre-High Holy Days service at Congregation Beth

Israel at 7 pm. More information at bethisrael-pdx.org.

Sept. 6: Lox and Loaded

Firearms training session at the Clackamas Public Safety Training Center at 11 am. More information at loxand-loaded.org.

Sept. 6: Public Tour of How We Show Up

Exhibit tour at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education at 12:30 pm. More information at OJMCHE.org.

Sept. 6: Public Tour of One Nation

Exhibit tour at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education at 2 pm. More information at OJMCHE.org.

Sept. 6: Portland Jewish Writers Circle

Writing group meeting at 2 pm. For more information, email benschubert@icloud.com.

Sept. 9: Senior Social Hour Apple Orchard Outing

Pre-Rosh Hashana apple picking for seniors at 2:30 pm. More information at jfcs-portland.org/rsvp-apple-picking.

Sept. 10: Women's Henna and Learning

Elul class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 6:30 pm. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/2026-elul.html.

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