

# Trauma-informed expertise grows at JFCS

BY JENN DIRECTOR KNUDSEN

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It was eye-opening to see we could be a support while never



## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and its theme is "Together for Mental Health."

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

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

To register, visit [jfccs-portland.org/cancer-support/](https://jfccs-portland.org/cancer-support/). For more information, contact Caitlin at 971-400-3533 or [cdeboer@jfccs-portland.org](mailto:cdeboer@jfccs-portland.org).

knowing what they've experienced," says Caitlin, referencing world events like the Depression, World War II, the Holocaust and the beginning of the civil rights movement. In addition, her clients suffered traumas outside the confines of history, such as the loss of loved ones, illnesses and divorce.

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

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

"It's my responsibility to show up and meet folks where they're at," says Caitlin.



## Explore Iran nuclear threat

On May 23, learn about the Israeli and American response to the Iranian nuclear threat. "From Covert Operations to Overt Negotiations: The Israeli and American Responses to the Iranian Nuclear Threat" will be at noon on Zoom.

Lahav Harkov, senior contributing editor and diplomatic correspondent of The Jerusalem Post, will be the featured speaker. She reports on and analyzes Israel's international relations, the Prime Minister's office, the National Security Council and the Foreign Ministry. She is well connected to Israel's top lawmakers and diplomats.

This local Zoom program is presented by the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Stand WithUs Northwest, Israel360 and Congregation Neveh Shalom.

Register at [tinyurl.com/2p99x634](https://tinyurl.com/2p99x634).

## RSM reports first resident Covid-19 cases

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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