

Telling the JFCS story

BY DEBORAH MOON

Jewish Family & Child Service Marketing Manager Robyn Taylor has spent the past year using her stage-managing and storytelling skills to spotlight the social service agency's incredible work.

She honed her storytelling skills as co-founder of Folklore Media, a marketing and design agency helping nonprofits, small businesses and local political campaigns tell their stories. Now she enjoys focusing on the work of JFCS.

When Taylor joined JFCS in July 2021, she focused on creating a tagline for the agency. "We're really trying to define who we are and what we do in the community moving forward," she says. She collaborated with staff in all the programs and developed the tagline "We provide stability and hope."

"We provide stability and hope to the Jewish community and beyond ... through all of our four programs," says Taylor. "Especially in these times of instability in the world, we are trying to bring a little stability, and we always want to try to bring hope to people who are in need – a little bit of hope and positive look into the future."



Robyn Taylor

Over the years, JFCS programs have shifted to respond to the needs of the community. "As needs change, we change," says Taylor.

For example, JFCS recently expanded its counseling department to support the community's mental health needs, enhanced its focus on child and family services, and beefed up its emergency aid program "where the needs, especially during the pandemic, have been so great."

"This year, we are getting ready to celebrate our 75th year of existence, so we're going to be planning activities and ways to bring the community together all year long to talk about what we've done in the past, what we're doing now and where we're headed in the future," says Taylor.

To reflect that, the tagline during the 75th year will be tweaked to "We provide stability and hope then, now, always."

Taylor also draws on her early career as a stage manager for the acclaimed Steppenwolf Theatre Company, stage-managing shows in Chicago, New York, and London. A member of Congregation Beth Israel, she has served as stage manager of the annual Purimspiels for several years.

She used those skills to help organize JFCS's Sips & Sweets event last month.

"I think it was the first time a lot of the folks in our community had been in person together," she says. "Just seeing the community together was really beautiful and heartwarming."

PSU 's Weingrad named outstanding teacher

Portland State University Judaic Studies Professor Michael Weingrad won the John Eliot Allen Outstanding Teaching Award in May.

Each year, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences recognizes exceptional teaching and leadership with the JEA Outstanding Teaching Awards named in honor of John Eliot Allen, an outstanding professor who founded PSU's Geology Department and taught for more than 35 years.

Faculty nominees are submitted by students within each academic department of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Winners are recognized at the annual awards ceremony each spring.

Professor Weingrad loves exploring



Michael Weingrad

a wide range of Jewish literature and culture in the modern period – from the latest Israeli science fiction novels to the politics of Jews in the United States or memoirs of Jewish Baghdad.

Oregon's seniors can experience Professor Weingrad's teaching acumen this fall when he teaches an online course about David Mamet. Mamet, considered by many to be the greatest living playwright, turns 75 this year. Oregon residents age 65+ may apply to audit the course for free through PSU's Senior Adult Learning Center. Learn more at: pdx.edu/senior-adult-learning-center.

The fall term course is FILM 384U | Topics in American Cinema and Culture: Mamet. For a course description visit pdx.edu/judaic-studies/fall-term-2022-courses#FILM384U.

For an introduction to Mamet, read Weingrad's May 18, 2022, article on the playwright in Mosaic Magazine. Create a free account with Mosaic to read Weingrad's articles: mosaicmagazine.com/author/michael-weingrad/.



The MJCC Community Celebration filled the ballroom after celebrating virtually for the past two years. Photos by Paul Rich.

MJCC Community Celebration goes live

After two years of virtual celebrations, this year the Mittleman Jewish Community Center held its annual Community Celebration in person on May 24.

Michelle Alany & The Mystics performed and wowed the crowd with their fresh interpretations of ancient melodies, hypnotic strings and wild improvisation with their energizing soulful music.

The Pillar of Excellence Award was presented to MJCC Past-President Jerry Sadis. Jerry served on the MJCC and Portland Jewish Academy boards from 2007 to 2016, and he served as president of both from 2009 to 2011.



MJCC Executive Director Steve Albert presents the Pillar of Excellence Award to Jerry Sadis.

The Center presented the Harry Glickman Scholar/Athlete Award to two outstanding Jewish teen athletes from Oregon – Everest Sibony of Seaside and Lyla Paru of Beaverton. This award was established in 2012 in honor of Harry Glickman, z"l, the "father" of professional sports in Oregon.

The J also inducted a new member into the Oregon Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, established in 2012 to honor Oregon Jewish men and women who have accomplished extraordinary achievements in sports. This year's inductee is Jake Raiton, who grew up playing many sports but focused on tennis.

Others recognized during the evening included outstanding members of the Stingrays Swim Team, members who visit most frequently and MJCC's superstar camp counselors.

The Harold & Arlene Schnitzer Family Fund of OJCF/Jordan Schnitzer was the presenting sponsor. All members of the J's "Friends of the Center Society" are sponsors of the MJCC Community Celebration. For more information on the honorees and a full list of sponsors, visit oregonjcc.org/celebration.