

'Legacy' very meaningful to Holocaust survivors

BY JENN DIRECTOR KNUDSEN

On an early December afternoon in Congregation Shaarie Torah's social hall, Jewish Family & Child Service clinicians facilitated an educational and social event for about 40 Holocaust survivors.

"Our Legacy: How Our Stories Create a New Narrative of Hope for the Future" featured a group conversation followed by a catered kosher lunch. The lunch was topped off with traditional Russian sweets like jam-filled pirozhki and a glass of white wine for all – as well as music performed by the three-member Hora Tzigane Klezmer Ensemble.

Missy Fry, LCSW, CAGCS, JFCS' behavioral health social worker, and Douglass Ruth, LCSW, CCTP, JFCS' clinical director, co-facilitated the in-person social and educational event. This was the first event of its kind since the March 2020 start of the pandemic that spelled isolation, particularly for this demographic.

"Legacy" attracted many who were eager to learn and break bread together. The event prompted both personal reflection and joy, goals Missy and Doug hoped to attain in curating the afternoon.

In an email after the event, they wrote, "We are modeling a space of intergenerational connection and relationships that allow survivors to explore their impact beyond the narrow lens of trauma."

"Legacy" discussion topics included one's own mortality, the kind of life one desires to lead, how we want to be remembered and who may have most influenced us during our lifetime. The majority of attendees are from the former Soviet Union. Alla Piatski, JFCS' bilingual case manager, provided translation throughout the group conversation.

Missy and Doug framed the guided conversation around a quote from the [Legacy Project](#) that, among other initiatives, highlights purpose in the lives of older adults.

"Legacy (is) an interconnection across time, with a need for those who have come before us and a responsibility to those who come after us," wrote Legacy Project Founder Susan V. Bosak.

At Shaarie Torah, Missy opened the conversation saying, "There are many ways we can think about legacy."

Many participants reflected on "legacy" as related to family. One said, "The most important is what parents leave for their children." Another focused on what their parents left for them. A number of survivors also made oblique references to the hardships they suffered during World War II and in the post-war period under communism.

"When something bad happens, it can help you appreciate good things," one woman offered, to which several peers nodded.

"Research shows that engaging in conversation on legacy allows for us to ascribe meaning to our experiences and, thus, meaning in our lives," Doug and Missy wrote after the event. "For survivors, we find this to be ever more important, as it is a way we can support a voice that others attempted to suppress in the most powerful way."

17th annual Weekend in Quest returns to the coast

The 17th annual Weekend in Quest returns to Astoria for a weekend of study and community on the Oregon coast Friday evening through Sunday noon, March 3-5, 2023.

Scholar in Residence Professor Mika Ahuvia will present four sessions on Angels in Ancient and Modern Jewish Culture. She is the director of the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Washington. Professor Ahuvia is the author of *On My Right Michael, On My Left Gabriel: Angels in Ancient Jewish Culture*.

The Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education presented the program virtually in 2021 and 2022 and is pleased to return to the coast in 2023.

Registration of \$195 includes all study sessions, three ko-



Holocaust survivors toast *l'chaim* at the first social gathering for the group since before Covid.

Once the audience broke for lunch, legacy remained on their minds.

Mark Shapiro – a grandfather today – learned only recently that when he was 2 years old, his father, Abram Shapiro, z'l, was forcibly taken from their Moldova home by the Russians, interrogated by the KGB and killed four months later in April 1938.

As an adult, Mark set out to research the true story behind his father's very early demise; his research led him to a treasure trove of documents that in 2014 that he turned into a book, *I am telling you: Growing up and surviving in a malicious Soviet time*.

Via his son's book, Abram, z'l, left behind a legacy that endures.

Originally from Ukraine, Sharlota Aginsky, 82, shared that her maternal aunt's kindness always will stay with her. During World War II, Sharlota and her immediate family had been displaced from their apartment; after the war, they had nowhere to go. Her aunt offered the family respite.

"She didn't charge us a dime for food or lodging," said Sharlota, now a great-grandmother.

She continued, "I remember my family; I know what they did for me, and I remember them all," including those in Israel, Germany and on both coasts of this country. "And you have to do the same for them."

Eventually, well after Sharlota and her late husband immigrated to the United States in 1979 and had established themselves and their livelihood here in Portland, she sent her niece \$3,000 toward a car purchase to get a leg up on her young-adult life in New York.

Tina Genesina and Nikolay Veytsman both hail from Odessa, Ukraine, but 30 years ago met here in Portland. Tapping his fingers on the white tablecloth to the klezmer beat, Nikolay, 95, summed up the afternoon: "Being close to your loved ones. This is legacy."

This "Legacy" event was possible thanks to generous funding provided by Jewish Federations of North America's Center for Holocaust Survivor Care and Institute on Aging and Trauma.

sher-style catered meals, Shabbat and Havdalah services on Friday evening and Saturday morning led by Eddy Shuldman, optional Saturday afternoon program, and an entertaining Saturday evening program. Lodging is not included, but discounted rooms are available at the Holiday Inn Express, where all sessions will be held. Call 503-325-6222, ext. 0, and request the special Weekend in Quest room rate.

Register by Feb. 3, 2023: ojmche.org/events/weekend-in-quest-2023-angels-in-ancient-and-modern-jewish-culture/.

If you prefer to pay by check or have questions about Weekend in Quest, please contact Gail Mandel at gmandel@ojmche.org or call 503-226-3600, ext. 104.