

Jeser joins Federation

By ROCKNE ROLL

When Laura Jeser returned to Portland in 2022, one of the things that brought her back was the sense of inclusion and care she felt within Portland's Jewish community. Now she plans to help more people experience that feeling as Associate Campaign and Engagement Director for the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

"We are delighted to welcome Laura to our professional team," Federation President and CEO Marc Blattner said, "and we look forward to her work on the campaign and in engaging more people in Jewish life."

Jeser's engagement work will focus on connecting young adult and young family groups within Portland's Jewish community with each other and with the resources of the Federation.

"It's finding out what will bring them in, what would be appealing, what can we do to speak to our greater community," Jeser said. "I think that's really important."

She will also assist Chief De-

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Jewish Federation of Greater Portland Associate Campaign and Engagement Director Laura Jeser, pictured at the Federation's offices Thursday, Aug. 3. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Managing Child Anxiety series returns

By ROCKNE ROLL

Jewish Family and Child Service and Congregation Neveh Shalom are bringing back their successful presentation series "Helping Your Child Manage Anxiety" beginning August 15.

The four-part series, sponsored by JFCS, Neveh Shalom and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, kicks off with three Zoom presentations on consecutive Tuesdays, Aug. 15, 22 and 29, each from 7-8 pm. The fourth session, a panel discussion with the presenters from the series, will be held in-person Tuesday, Sept. 5, at the Eastside Jewish Commons at 7pm.

Mel Berwin, Neveh Shalom's Director of Congregational earning, helped put the initial series together in May and said the turnout and response was impressive.

"We got really good feedback and we wanted to offer

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Dernbach finds family at Cedar Sinai Park

By SYDNEY CLEVINGER

Harold Schnitzer Center for Living Resident Janet Dernbach minces no words about her living situation: "This place saved my life," she said. "I wouldn't have a home without it."

A stroke brought Dernbach to Cedar Sinai Park a few years ago. She has no living family. The former grain worker doesn't remember many details of what brought her here, but she is adamant that she is in a great place.

"After my stroke, I stayed in other places and they weren't nice like this one," Dernbach said. "The people are just wonderful here."

"The facility is unique. It's very comfortable as far as the

modern conveniences go, and kind of homey.

"It reminds me of the house I grew up in [in southeast Portland], and it's very relaxing to be here."

Dernbach attended Marshall High School (now a Portland Public "hotel school" used to house students whose schools are undergoing extensive renovations). After graduation, Dernbach moved to St. Louis to work briefly as a grain inspector, and then returned to Portland where she had a long career at Tektronix.

Dernbach is a regular at exercise class and enjoys going outside to "sit amongst the beautiful trees on a nice day." She says there is always "something to do" on any given day, wheth-

er it's cooking or playing Bingo or planting flowers or listening to music. Dernbach says she doesn't like country music, but when a country song comes on the radio, she knows all of the words.

"My mom liked country music, and I learned it with her," Dernbach said. "Once it gets in your brain, it kind of sticks there."

Dernbach said the diversity of residents at Cedar Sinai Park surprised her, in terms of religion and age and hometown. "It's more interesting than having everybody that's exactly the same no matter where you are," she said. "It helps you learn about yourself and other people."

She also enjoys having her



Janet Dernbach, pictured at the Harold Schnitzer Center for Living. (Courtesy Cedar Sinai Park)

own suite in which to live with a view of trees.

"I love it here. I very much want to stay here."



Summer Festival draws hundreds

Over 400 attendees converged on The Fields in Northwest Portland for the Jewish Summer Festival, put on by Chabad Northwest/Chabad Young Professionals Thursday, July 13. A drum circle and fresh-fried falafel preceded sunset Jewish Trivia and a screening of "Woman in Gold." The festival was cosponsored by the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland. (Courtesy Chabad Young Professionals)

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it kind of as a second round leading up to the new school year," she said.

"Repeating this program is so important given the mental health challenges that so many families are experiencing right now," added JFGP Director of Educational Initiatives and

Associate Director of Community Relations Rachel Nelson. "The ability to know where to go for resources and to find an ongoing network to support one another is vital."

Berwin will lead the first presentation in the series, titled "Supporting Youth with Anxiety Through a Jewish Lens." It's a subject that's personal to Berwin, as her own children each struggled with mental health issues. She started addressing the subject in trainings with her education staff at Neveh Shalom, adapting that work to speak to parents as their children face mental health challenges.

"Part of what I do in this workshop is actually to incorporate some of those unhelpful thinking patterns so that we can identify those when we have them or when our kids have them," Berwin said, "and then to present some texts right that can kind of push back against those unhelpful thinking patterns."

She mentions an example from the Talmud where the Almighty intervenes in a disagreement between Hillel and Shammai, declaring both their interpretations of a subject are correct with the phrase "Elu V'Elu," meaning "these, and these." This idea, Berwin explains, is a powerful tool to counteract that absolutist thought patterns that are a hallmark of anxiety and depression.

"This ancient text that says two things that feel very opposite and completely intractable can both be true, two different things can coexist at the same time, it interrupts

that always/never, all-or-nothing."

The second presentation, from JFCS child and family therapist Laura Cohen, is titled "A Taste of SPACE," referring to "Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions." Too often, Cohen explains, the natural tendency of parents whose children are facing emotional challenges is to attempt to alleviate those feelings instead of giving their child space to learn how to work through them. It can be tough for parents to hear, but as a parent who dealt with these same issues in her own home, Cohen can identify with those sorts of responses.

"I often say to parents I wish I knew then what I know now, which is that by engaging in these what we call accommodating behaviors," Cohen said, "the message that I was giving to my child, [was] 'I don't really think you can handle this, so I'm going to take care of it for you.'"

Cohen emphasized that she's not interested in blaming anyone, but in working with parents to explore a more effective model.

"Parents want the best for their kids," she said. "It is challenging for parents to take a step back, and to sometimes say, 'Wait a second. I might be a part of this situation. I might not be helping.'"

The third week's presentation, "Finding the Appropriate Mental Health Professional for Your Child," comes from Dan Rothenberg, a Neveh Shalom member and local therapist and teen resiliency coach. Rothenberg explained that as mental health treatment becomes more advanced, it has become more specialized.

"If I have a sore throat, I go to the nose and throat[doctor], or my primary physician refers me there," he said. "More and more, we're learning mental health is like that, too."

Finding a good fit between therapist and patient is important, but finding someone who is an expert on the patient's particular problems is also crucial, and Rothenberg wants to help parents avoid the kinds of pitfalls he regularly sees in his practice.

"What kind of therapist might you look for based on a lot of different factors of what's going on with your child," he said. "What could happen often is a young person finds a therapist and they like them and there's a good rapport, and then they might have to leave that therapist."

The series will again conclude with a panel discussion and chance for attendees to connect in person. This will continue moving forward with a monthly support group, meeting on the first Monday of each month at rotating locations throughout the Portland area, including EJC, Neveh Shalom, and farther west in Washington County. These sessions will start with a 45 minute group discussion, then move on to a 45 minute presentation from an expert in a particular area of children's mental health.

"We want to create this space for parents to feel comfortable talking about things and then also having a psychoeducational component to be able to learn about some things from experts in the field," Cohen said.

"We want to address eating disorders and self-harm and trans and gender issues and other topics that are more focused on some of the different pieces that we know our families are and their kids are struggling with," Berwin added.

The presentation series is free; pre-registration is required and available online at tinyurl.com/register-manage-anxiety-2023. For more information, email Berwin at mberwin@nevehshalom.org.