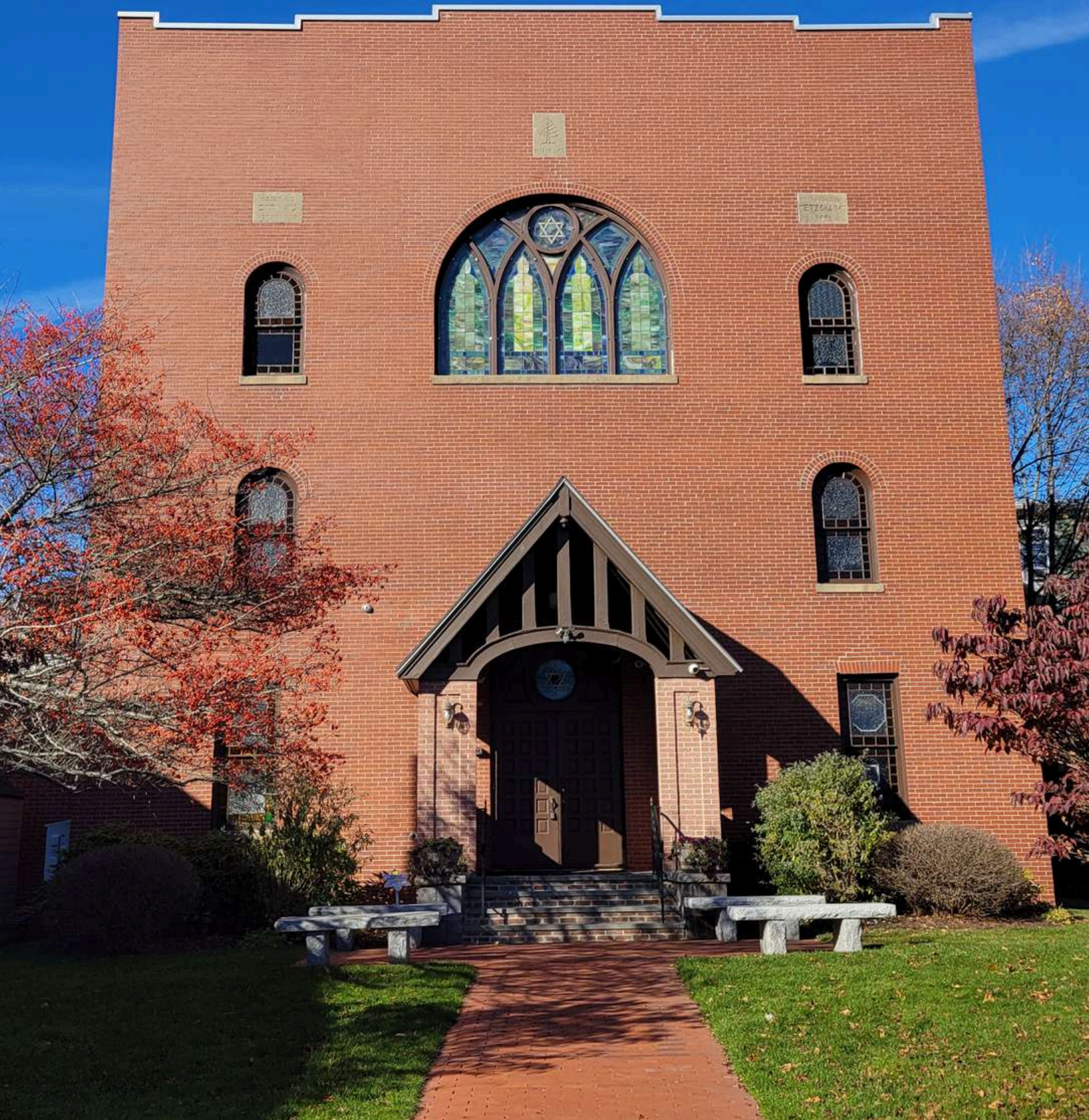


Maine Jewish Museum

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear MJM Friends,

As 2025 draws to a close, we find ourselves reflecting on a year rich with stories — of art and memory, resilience and renewal, old friends and new connections.

To everyone who has supported the Maine Jewish Museum along the way, *thank you*. You are the thread that keeps the tapestry of Jewish life in Maine vibrant and strong. As we turn the page to a new year, we invite you to continue that story by contributing to our **Annual Appeal**. You can make a gift online using [this link](#) or by mailing a check to:

Maine Jewish Museum
267 Congress Street
Portland ME 04101

In a year marked by widening divisions and rising antisemitism, both nationally and here in Maine, MJM has remained a place of gathering, listening, and belonging. Our mission calls on us to celebrate and honor the contributions of Maine's Jewish community members, past and present, and to highlight the richness of the Maine Jewish experience in ways that foster connection, understanding, and hope among people of all backgrounds.

At the core of our work is a simple belief: when we share our stories and truly see one another, empathy and light grow in the spaces between us. That belief also inspired MJM's fresh new look — a logo that reflects our evolving story, rooted in history, illuminated by art, and always open to what comes next.

As we carry this vision forward, we are bolstered by an extraordinary commitment from Board President **Bob Hirshon and the Wein-Hirshon Foundation: a \$25,000 Matching Grant** for all first-time donors and for anyone who increases their support this year, making your contribution doubly impactful. (*To confirm what you gave last year, contact us at admin@mainejewishmuseum.org or [207-773-2339](tel:207-773-2339).*)

Now more than ever, the Maine Jewish Museum needs your help to meet the moment. **Your support transforms inspiration into action, preserves Jewish stories, bridges cultures and communities, and ensures that MJM is a beacon of creativity and compassion that shines brightly into the future.**

With appreciation,
Dawn LaRochelle
Executive Director

MAZEL TOV!

Annual Appeal Honoree TERI BERENSON

For nearly two decades, **Teri Berenson** has been one of the Maine Jewish Museum's most reliable constants.

Since our earliest days, she has served as our volunteer bookkeeper, giving of her time freely and never accepting a penny in return.



Teri's unwavering commitment through times of growth and transition helped MJM evolve from a grassroots enterprise into a professional institution with a statewide mandate and a growing international reputation for excellence.

Her diligence and dependability have provided a foundation on which new ideas, partnerships, and programs could flourish.

We proudly dedicate our **2025 Annual Appeal** to Teri Berenson, whose years of devoted service remind us that behind every thriving organization are those who keep faith with its mission day after day, year after year.

KOL HAKAVOD!

Volunteer of the Year TOBY ADELMAN

Toby Adelman is a true Maine cornerstone: a third-generation potato farmer, northern Maine native, and passionate steward of the state's Jewish history.

Her long-standing work with **Documenting Maine Jewry** helped lay the groundwork for MJM's recent integration of that digital archive, making her a steadfast and visionary architect of our growing statewide reach.



When the time came to launch our ambitious **Ampersand Project** — a collaborative effort to photograph and interview hundreds of Jewish Mainers — Toby didn't just participate, she stepped up. She modeled for the project and then volunteered to criss-cross Maine, recording the voices behind the faces and helping seed MJM's emerging video library.

Her dedication ensures that these stories will be seen *and* heard for generations to come.

For championing voices from “The County” to the Coast and standing as a bridge between heritage and innovation, Toby is MJM's 2025 **Volunteer of the Year**. We are deeply grateful and hopeful that Toby's leadership and insight will continue to help shape MJM's future.

Connecting People to the Maine Jewish Experience & Jewish Mainers to their Roots

From the digital sphere to the streets of Portland to the far reaches of Aroostook County, the Maine Jewish Museum continues to remind Mainers and visitors alike that *there is always an & —* between

PAST
ART
ONE STORY

&

PRESENT
HISTORY
ANOTHER

In 2025, that sense of connection came vividly to life. We officially welcomed [Documenting Maine Jewry](#) into the MJM family, securing the future of Maine's most comprehensive online Jewish archive. A new, community-driven website redesign will soon make thousands of photographs, records, and stories more engaging and accessible, preserving the legacy of Founder **Harris Gleckman** and inspiring new generations to help build on it.

We also expanded our reach through a new partnership with **Colby College**, collaborating on projects that explore Jewish life in Maine, past and present. We could not be more excited about this invaluable bridge between scholarship and community.

Together, these initiatives reflect MJM's growing commitment to sharing Jewish Maine *beyond our walls* — in classrooms, on campuses, and out in the neighborhoods and landscapes where Maine Jewish stories first unfolded.

We are also connecting the Museum to the broader community with our new hybrid “digital-and-on-the-ground” **Portland Jewish History Trail**, which invites walkers, bikers, and drivers to discover 28 historic sites where Jewish life took root.

Created by historian and MJM Board Member **Riva Krut**, who [led our first guided tours this fall](#), the Trail serves as a pilot for future routes across the state, weaving Maine’s Jewish stories into a living map of presence, perseverance, and pride.



Riva leading one of the inaugural tours – September 2025



[Check it out
for yourself
\(click here\)!](#)

And at the heart of it all beats the **Ampersand Project**, a collaboration with acclaimed Israeli artist **Hedva Rokach** and publisher **Itay Bahur**, who traversed 7,000 miles throughout the state in six weeks to photograph nearly 300 Jewish Mainers — more than one percent of the state's Jewish population.

These portraits will anchor our Spring 2026 exhibition and accompanying art book, as well as fuel MJM's expanding digital storytelling initiatives.



Hedva and Itay in Maine – June 2025



Executive Director Dawn LaRochelle and Co-Curator Melissa Yaverbaum think planning the Ampersand Project is delicious!



Sneak peek of the artbook to be revealed at the exhibition opening in Spring 2026!

Celebrating Jewish & Maine Artists

Where bridges are built, art invites us to cross. In 2025, the Maine Jewish Museum championed artists whose work sparked conversation, deepened understanding, and celebrated the creative voices that make Jewish Maine — and Maine itself — so vividly alive.

Japanese Sushi Girls, by **Hedva Rokach**, marked MJM's first international collaboration with the **Haifa Museums/Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art**.

Hedva's evocative portraits explored identity and place through the visual poetry of sushi, igniting statewide dialogue. Her partner, **Itay Bahur**, joined her for community conversations that showcased how art can connect people and perspectives even in times of division.



Other highlights included **Dr. Eric Finzi's** *Return to the Garden*, whose expressive resin-on-wood compositions invited visitors to reflect on beauty, exile, and renewal.

The exhibition was accompanied by a sold-out film-and-pasta night pairing *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* with a guided walk-through of the show, transforming art appreciation into a shared communal experience.



Jack Montgomery's *To Rome and Beyond* followed his acclaimed *Soul Survivors* exhibition and extended his long-standing exploration of spiritual resilience. Through luminous, contemplative photographs, Montgomery traced journeys of faith and identity across Italy and the rise of fascism.



Emily Hass's *No One Leaves Home Unless* confronted themes of displacement and survival with striking empathy. Through mixed-media works drawing from architectural blueprints and her own family's story, Haas invited viewers to consider the emotional landscapes of those forced to seek safety far from home.



Rachael Cerrotti's *We Share the Same Sky* combined photography and oral history to tell a deeply personal intergenerational story of memory, migration, and the endurance of love. The exhibition wove together past and present in a way that left many visitors visibly moved.



And *Up/Rooted*, guest-curated by **Dr. Aaron Rosen**, brought together a diverse group of artists grappling with migration, faith, and the search for home. The exhibition offered a powerful reminder that Jewish stories — like Maine stories — are often stories of movement, reinvention, and return.

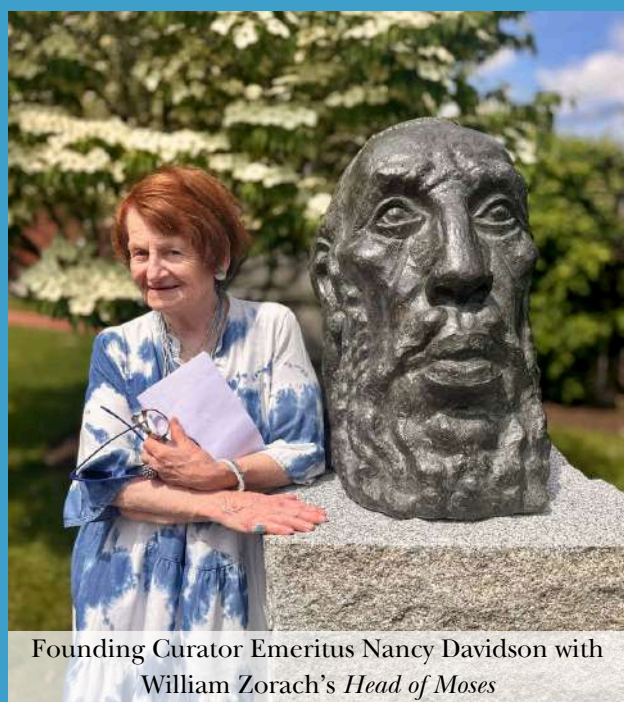


Our Sculpture Garden, too, became a stage for renewal.

It welcomed **William Zorach's** *Head of Moses* — dedicated to Founding Curator Emeritus **Nancy Davidson**...



Pictured left to right with sculpture: Art installer Kevin Callahan; MJM Founding Curator Emeritus Nancy Davidson; Rachel Walls, Principal, Rachel Walls Fine Art; and MJM Art Curator Alison Gibbs



Founding Curator Emeritus Nancy Davidson with William Zorach's *Head of Moses*



William Zorach's family participated in our garden dedication ceremony! – June 2025

...and a new, hand-carved menorah-and-goat sculpture by **Aaron Margolis**, *Zlateh and the Lamp*, destined to glow with community light every Chanukah.



Installation day!

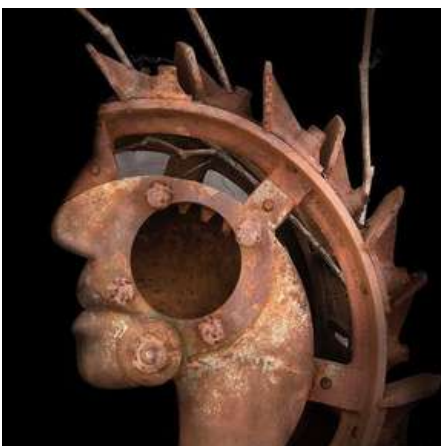


Zlateh



Artist Aaron Margolis with the newly-installed *Zlateh and the Lamp*

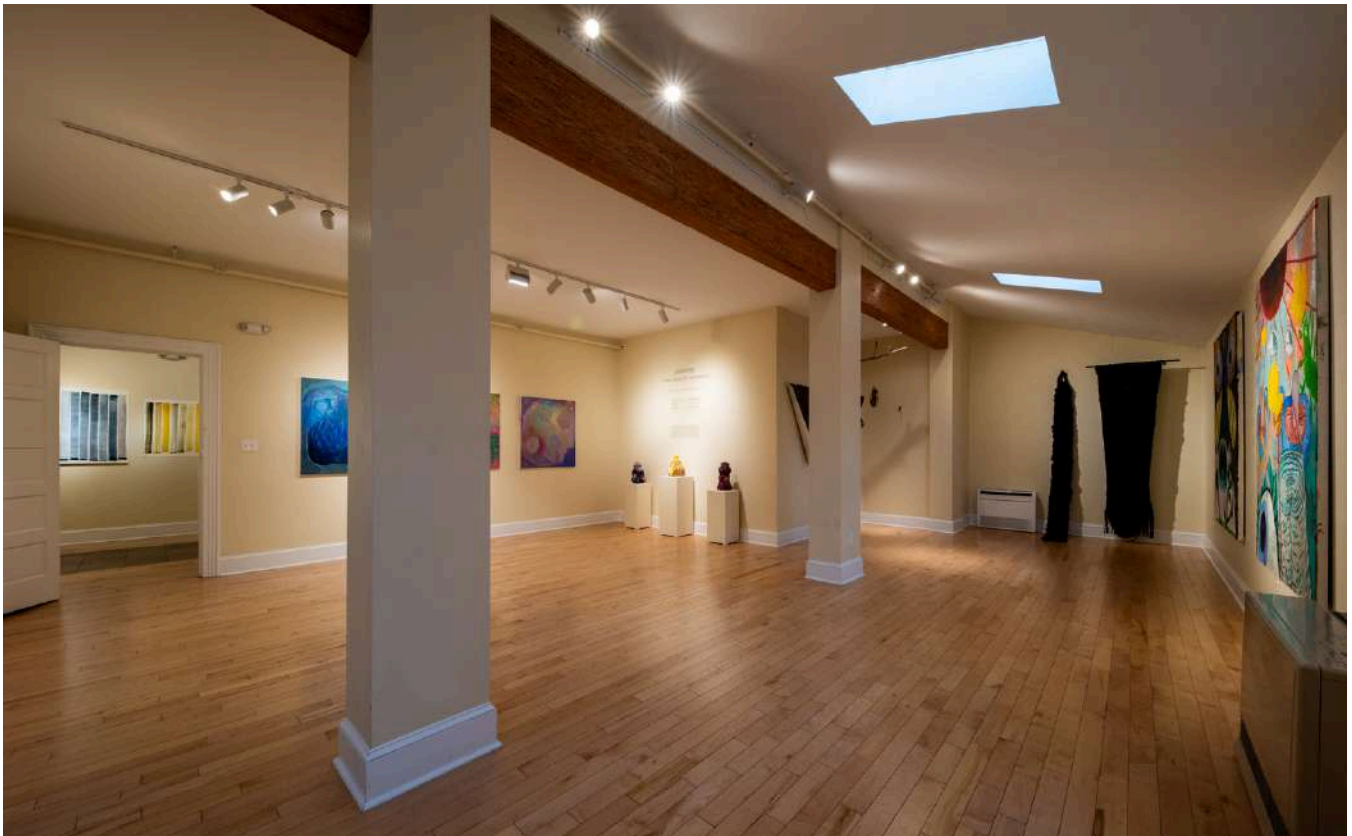
These exhibitions — and so many more — were made possible through the vision of Curator **Alison Gibbs** and Curator of Photography **Nanci Kahn**, whose discerning eyes and deep care ensure that MJM remains a home for art that connects, challenges, and inspires.



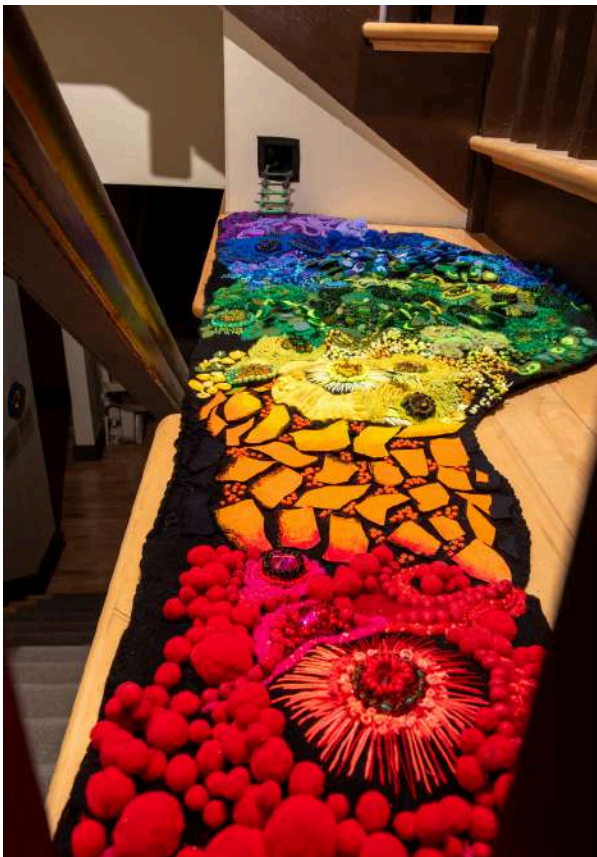
From left to right

Row 1: **Joanne Tarlin, Rick Graff, Jeane Cohen**

Row 2: **Craig Becker, Ron Faris, Anita Rabinoff-Goldman**



The Fineberg Room



Juliet Karsen

[Read about
our current
exhibitions
\(click here\)!](#)

Cultivating Learning, Engagement, & Jewish Joy Across Maine

The Delet Program: Opening Doors, Building Understanding

From the Hebrew word for “door,” **Delet** is MJM’s signature education initiative, designed to open doors between Maine’s Jewish community and the students who take this learning into their lives and communities. In 2025, Delet grew from a regional pilot into a statewide movement for empathy and understanding.

With the addition of **Rabbi Bill Siemers** in Bangor and **Rabbi Andy Bachman** in Portland, Delet expanded its reach north and south, bringing Jewish history, culture, and values into classrooms across Maine. Supported by the **Sam L. Cohen Foundation** and the **Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine**, the program engaged **more than 650 middle and high school students** from schools including Oak Hill Middle (Sabattus), Deering High (Portland), Bruce M. Whittier Middle (Poland), Hebron Academy (Hebron), the Friends School (Cumberland), Freeport Middle (Freeport), and Thornton Academy (Saco).



Cultivating Learning, Engagement, & Jewish Joy Across Maine

In collaboration with the **Holocaust & Human Rights Center of Maine**, MJM helped facilitate teacher training and a forum on contemporary antisemitism, enabling Maine educators to bring these critical conversations into their own classrooms. And looking ahead, 2026 promises a major leap forward: Executive Director **Dawn LaRochelle** will serve as a mentor for the *Celebrating Rural Maine Project* at Bruce M. Whittier Middle School, guiding students through a full-semester exploration of Maine Jewish history, antisemitism, and Jewish joy.



Delet also created powerful arts-based learning experiences through partnerships with Maine's leading cultural organizations. With **Portland Ovation's**, students experienced **Russell Kaback's 25044: A Jewish Grandson's Musical History of the Holocaust**, a stirring performance blending song and story. With the **Portland Symphony Orchestra**, *Mozart Meets Klezmer* brought world-renowned clarinetist and composer **David Krakauer** to the MJM stage, proving that Jewish creativity can both honor tradition and improvise boldly toward the future.

[Click here to view the video "The Delet Program: Russell Kaback 25044 — A Jewish Grandson's Musical History of the Holocaust"](#)

Cultivating Learning, Engagement, & Jewish Joy Across Maine

Building Bridges Through Celebration

Throughout the year, MJM gatherings reminded us that community is both a value and a verb. *Shalom & Shamrocks*, our joyful cross-cultural celebration with the **Maine Irish Heritage Center**, [earned glowing coverage in the *Portland Press Herald*](#) for its spirited blend of story, song, and shared immigrant roots. **Challah Back Girls** events filled the Museum with the scent of fresh bread and laughter, while our *Chocolate Tu B'Shevat Pop-up Dinner* combined culinary creativity with community connection.



Dining al fresco at *Dine and Unwind: A Vegetarian Shabbat Dinner ... in the Garden!*
with the Challah Back Girls – July 2025

Cultivating Learning, Engagement, & Jewish Joy Across Maine

Family-friendly programs like *The Passover Guest* and *Zlateh's Hanukkah Party* carried that same spirit of warmth and inclusion, reaffirming that **museums are for kids** — and for everyone who remembers what wonder feels like.

[Click here to
view a video
from 2025's
*Shalom &
Shamrocks!*](#)



The Stillson School of Irish Dance at *Shalom & Shamrocks* – March 2025

[Click here to
view a video
from *The
Passover Guest!*](#)



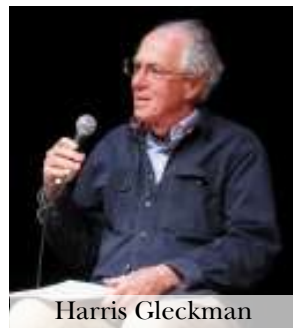
Dawn & the Challah Back Girls – July 2025

[Click here to
view a video
from our time
with the
*Challah Back
Girls!*](#)

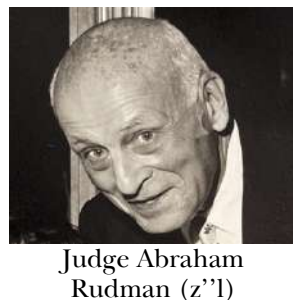
Cultivating Learning, Engagement, & Jewish Joy Across Maine

History, Happy Hours, & Hall of Fame Heroes

MJM's *Happy Hour with a Historian* series has quickly become a community favorite, bringing scholarship and storytelling together over conversation and camaraderie. And *Summer in the Garden* programs returned to rave reviews, offering music, movement, and Maine sunshine in equal measure.



June's sold-out [Hall of Fame](#) *Induction Ceremony & Fundraiser* honored **Leah Binder, Harris Gleckman, Bernard "Billy" Miller Charlie (z"l) & Ellie Miller, Edith Pagelson (z"l), Judge Abraham Rudman (z"l), and Judge Louis Scolnik (z"l)** — and introduced MJM's new **Affinity Award**, recognizing friends beyond the Jewish community whose actions embody shared values of justice, creativity, and compassion. The inaugural recipients, **Kevin & Pam Rhein**, set a shining example of what partnership looks like at its best.

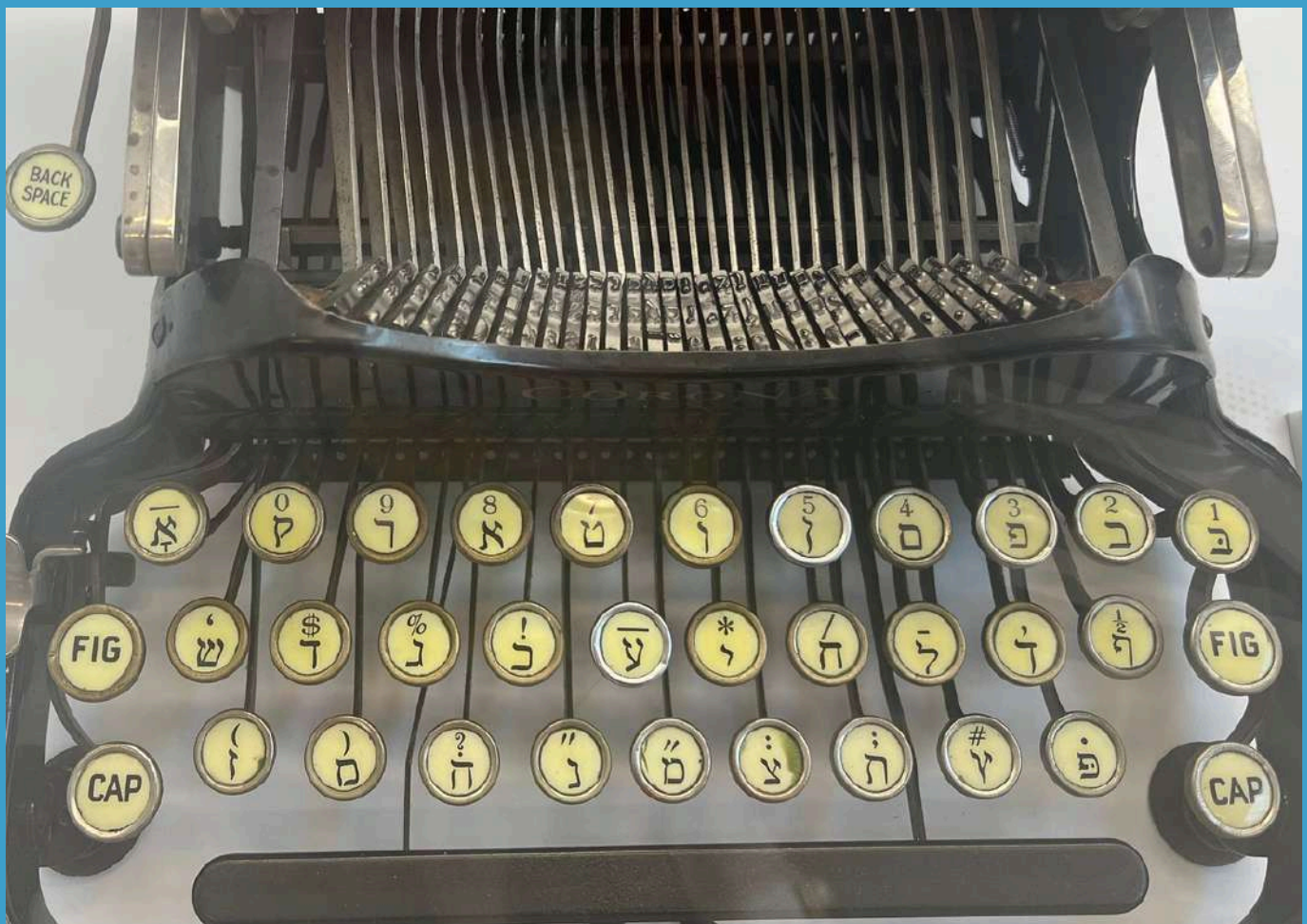


Cultivating Learning, Engagement, & Jewish Joy Across Maine

Reviving Yiddish Culture

As part of the **Yiddish Book Center's** Arts & Culture Initiative, Executive Director **Dawn LaRochelle** and Program Coordinator **Rebecca Moudachirou** participated in a three-day immersive workshop in Amherst, MA.

The resulting grant is already bearing fruit: a new MJM Yiddish series launching in 2026, beginning with a once-in-a-lifetime visit from **Aimee Ginsburg Bikel** to present the final performance of *The Magic of Theodore Bikel*, a love letter to a language, a people, and a legacy.



We look forward to incorporating more *Yiddishkeit* into our programming!

Inspiring Creativity through Partnerships

Maine's creative community thrives when we collaborate instead of compete.

This year's partners included the **Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine**, the **Holocaust & Human Rights Center of Maine**, the **Center for Small Town Jewish Life**, the **Maine Jewish Film Festival**, **Portland Hadassah**, **Rimon - the Portland Jewish Women's Group**, **Colby College**, **Portland Ovations**, the **Portland Symphony Orchestra**, **Mayo Street Arts**, **Natural Helpers of Maine**, the **Maine Irish Heritage Center**, the **Chocolate Church Arts Center**, and **Lowry's Lodge**, among others.

We also provide ongoing free space for **La Leche League of Portland** and **Taj Shabbat** gatherings — because partnership means paying it forward.



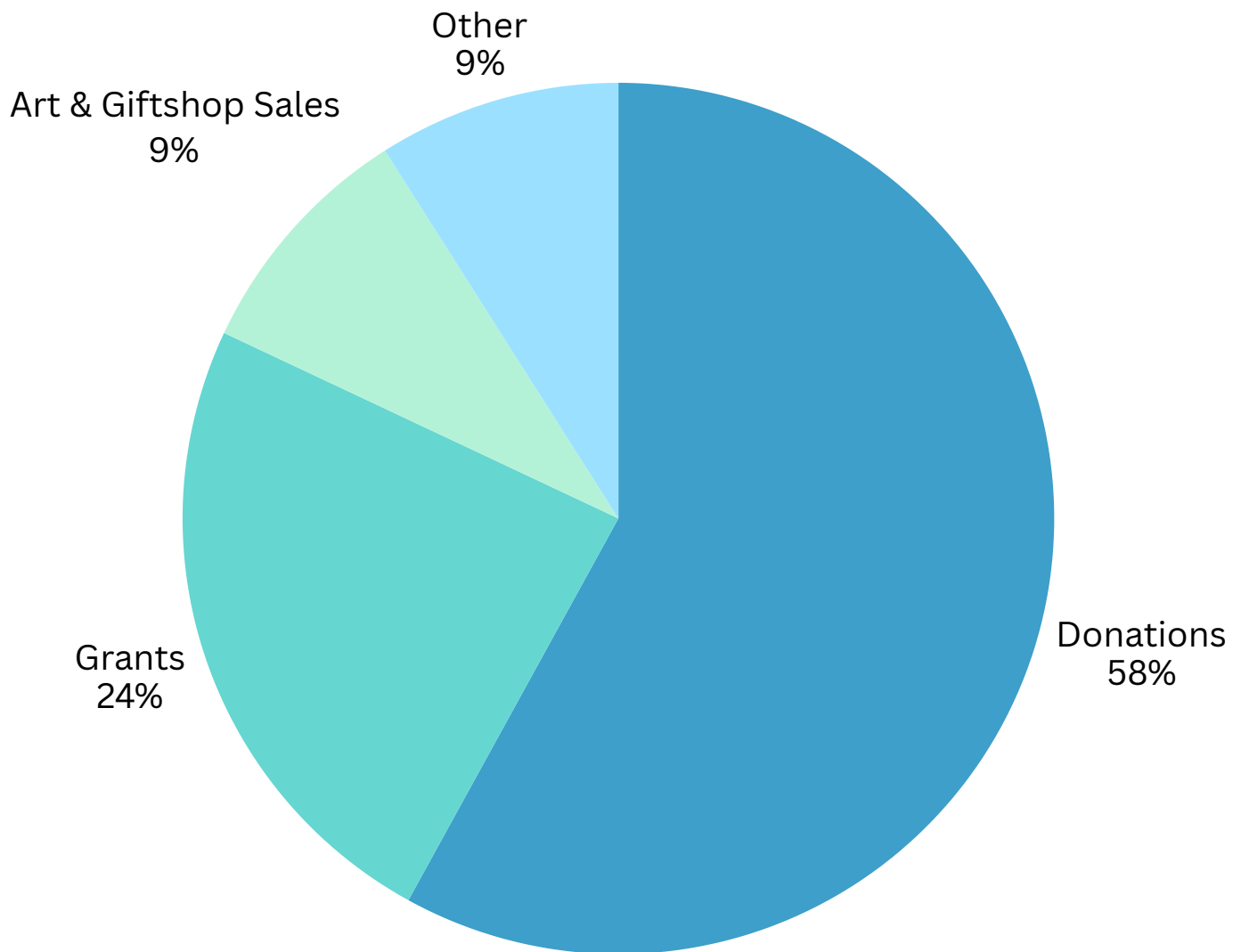
Looking ahead, MJM has engaged **Bryan Potter Design** of Portland, Oregon — renowned for museum and cultural storytelling — to lead our Core Exhibition Redesign. After an interactive workshop with stakeholders from across Maine, the team is crafting a new exhibition that integrates history and art, highlights layered interpretations within our historic synagogue setting, and reaches outward into our garden and cityscape.

Our work is sustained by visitors, volunteers,
sponsors, and donors like you.

Please give generously — and help us connect
more people to the stories that make Jewish
Maine shine.

mainejewishmuseum.org/donate

2026 Projected Revenue Sources



TODAH RABAH!

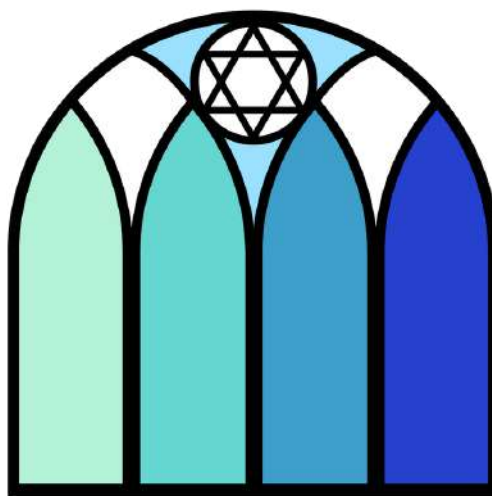
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[donation!](#)



Maine Jewish Museum

267 Congress Street
Portland Maine 04101

mainejewishmuseum.org



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