

# **Gail Littman Leadership Award Winners**



**Gail Littman, (z"l)**

# **Gail Littman Leadership Award Winners**



**Life & Legacy**  
ASSURE JEWISH TOMORROWS

# GAIL LITTMAN, (z"l)



Gail Littman, of blessed memory, was one of the pioneers of the Jewish community legacy movement. As the founder, along with Marjory Kaplan, former CEO of the San Diego Jewish Community Foundation, of San Diego's Endowment Leadership Institute, Gail trained and coached professionals and lay leaders in the art of legacy conversations and donor stewardship.

In a short time, Gail's efforts in San Diego gained attention and she was asked to share her success with other communities. As her national reputation grew, a coalition of philanthropists including Harold Grinspoon, asked Gail to lead a legacy program for four major cities and several Hillel campus affiliates. As a result of the success of that program, known as Areivim, Harold and Gail's partnership evolved, and they launched Life & Legacy®.

Marjory Kaplan, in her eulogy, described Gail as having the absolutely magical combination of common sense, vision, discipline, wisdom, creativity and joy.

The Harold Grinspoon Foundation established the Gail Littman Leadership award in Gail's memory to honor a Life & Legacy coordinator who shares Gail's passion for legacy giving, and has worked tirelessly to spread the legacy message, coach, and mentor partner organizations, assist donors in defining what aspects of Jewish communal life are most important to them, facilitate legacy commitments and integrate legacy giving into the community culture.

# 2016

## NANCY KIPNIS

Foundation for the  
Charlotte Jewish  
Community



# NANCY KIPNIS – 2016 Award

## Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community



**Phil Warshauer, Executive Director of the Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community, had the privilege of working with Nancy and shared the following:**

“Leaving a legacy to support the future of Charlotte's Jewish community is very personal to Nancy. She grew up in Charlotte and her four boys were raised with the support of the organization's that sustain and promote Jewish life. She has the unique ability to balance the love she has for Judaism and Jewish life with the tenacity it takes to keep 10 unique legacy teams on track. All you need to do is wind her up, get out of the way and watch her go. When you look into her eyes and hear the passion in her voice you truly understand the meaningfulness of her work. She leads by doing and the success of our legacy initiative is a direct result of the energy, compassion, and friendliness that she brings to work each and every day.”

### **Some of Nancy's remarks upon receiving the award:**

“I also want to take a minute to remember Gail Littman (OBM). I am so humbled to be presented with an award in her name. She made a huge impact on me and after just one visit to Charlotte, a memorable impact on our community. Two weeks after she spoke in Charlotte, she passed away. I often think about how pleased she would be with our success. Her vision and passion truly inspired action and achievement. I know she would have been thrilled to see Harold's commitment to legacy giving and all of us in this room. She once said ‘There are certain things that are fundamental to human fulfillment. The essence of these needs is captured in the phrase: **To Live, To Love, To Learn and To leave a legacy!**”

**The need to live** is our physical need for things such as food, clothing, shelter, economical well-being, and our health. **The need to love** is our social need to relate to other people, to belong, to love and to be loved. **The need to learn** is our mental need to develop and to grow, and **the need to leave a legacy** is our spiritual need to have a sense of personal meaning, of purpose and of contribution.”



# 2017

## GAIL MANDEL

Oregon Jewish  
Community Foundation



# GAIL MANDEL – 2017 Award

**Oregon Jewish Community Foundation**



**Julie Diamond (z”l), Executive Director of the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation had the privilege of working with Gail and shared the following:**

“Gail has played an enormous role in Portland and Oregon’s success in Life & Legacy®. She has led the program with passion and conviction. It’s her unique and impactful accomplishments, in addition to her generous time and focused one-on-one attention, that has resulted in our 10 partners meeting their goals every year and staying with the program for four years, in spite of numerous challenges related to mergers and leadership changes. Gail has contributed significantly to breaking down the organizational silos among our community partners, creating new opportunities for them to get to know and trust each other, something that didn’t take place before Life & Legacy. She cross promotes Life & Legacy at every opportunity, is well liked and respected by everyone who works with her and is a huge asset for her combination of passion, intelligence and attention to detail.”

**Some of Gail’s remarks upon receiving the award:**

“I had the privilege of meeting Gail Littman, of blessed memory, in May 2012 when OJCF invited her to visit Portland to speak to community leaders and financial advisors about the importance of Jewish legacy giving. Her passion for working with families, organizations, and communities to help build endowments to support a strong Jewish future was obvious and contagious. She energized the room.

To receive this award, named in her memory, is a true honor. And furthermore, it is an honor to do the work that helps make Gail’s vision to create healthy and strong Jewish communities a reality.”

# 2018

## MARGO PARSOW

Jewish Federation  
of Omaha Foundation





# MARGO PARSOW – 2018 Award

Jewish Federation of Omaha Foundation



**Arlene D. Schiff, National Director, Life & Legacy® had the privilege of working with Margo and shared the following:**

“Just like Gail Littman, Margo places great value on building partnerships, thinking strategically, understanding a donor's passion and giving them the opportunity to fulfill that passion in a way that will be both personally satisfying and have a positive impact on the community...”

From my visits to Omaha and my interactions with her over the phone, it is very clear to me that Margo lives and breathes Life & Legacy. Her passion for securing the future of her Jewish community is evident in everything she does, and in every interaction, she has with a member of the Omaha Jewish community. She values the work of the volunteers and professionals from each of the partner organizations and goes out of her way to express her appreciation and gratitude for their efforts. She also puts extensive time and effort into honoring her community's legacy donors at the very well attended legacy celebrations when she runs into them at events, or on the street, and in the local Jewish newspaper.”

# 2019

## STEVE BROWN

Jewish Federation  
of East Bay



# STEVE BROWN – 2019 Award

Jewish Federation of East Bay



**Dena Morris Kaufman, Life & Legacy® Community Consultant has had the privilege of working with Steve and shared the following:**

“In a community with mountains, a tunnel, a bridge, and horrible traffic as well as vastly different organizational cultures, Steve has shown the ability to kindly, but with steely determination, motivate, assist, and inspire organizations to create and implement legacy programs that work within each of their unique cultures. He listens with an open mind and heart and is always respectful of the many demands facing organizations, their volunteers and their staff while helping them to move their legacy initiative forward. He is a dedicated and knowledgeable professional and an amazing steward. I have a collection of 15 handwritten thank you notes from Steve, one for every visit I have made to his community!”

**Some of Steve’s remarks upon receiving the award:**

“As Margaret Mead said, ‘one person can and does make a difference’. But if you want to make a bigger difference, you can’t do it alone. If you want to make a bigger difference, it’s all about leadership. Leadership is about granting others leadership and granting others the chance to make a difference. That idea is woven into Create a Jewish Legacy and Life & Legacy -- and that’s why they have been so successful. It starts with legacy team members giving donors the chance to make a difference, to team leaders leading their teams... all the way up the chain to Harold and the fabulous Life & Legacy team.

Gail Littman was a leader of leaders. She was instrumental in helping East Bay to launch our Create a Jewish Legacy program in 2010. She was a mentor and role model to me -- and many others. Create a Jewish Legacy -- and Life & Legacy-- is part of her legacy. So, to have my name in the same *paragraph* with her is extremely meaningful and an enormous honor.”



# 2020

## RACHEL ROSENMAN

Jewish Federation  
of  
Greater Seattle





# RACHEL ROSENMAN – 2020 Award

**Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle**

**Tamra L. Dollin, Life & Legacy® Community Consultant has had the privilege of working with Rachel and shared the following:**

“Rachel has been the shepherd of Seattle’s Life & Legacy initiative since September of 2016. She came on board enthusiastic, passionate, and well-armed with educational and practical experience in community organizing, storytelling and organizational leadership. She got to work quickly and with great determination and grit. She personally went out to meet each organization’s team leader and built relationships with team members. She became their chief resource, coach, cheerleader, liaison to the Federation, confidante, and friend. The smallest organizations received as much of Rachel’s attention as the larger ones, as she traveled more than 150 miles to the furthest participating synagogue. Life & Legacy’s results in the Greater Seattle community demonstrate Rachel’s caring and commitment. The results achieved under Rachel’s leadership are dazzling, but none more than the legacy of love, caring, creativity and commitment she has brought to the Greater Seattle Jewish Community.”

**Some of Rachel’s remarks upon receiving the award:**

“Finally, last night, as I was preparing these remarks, I took time to read through papers and reflections I had written as part of my graduate program in Organizational Development. There was one quote that kept drawing me in, and it’s attributed to Edith Wharton, the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Literature. In her words: ‘There are two ways of spreading light. To be the candle, or the mirror that reflects it.’ I think that the work we are all doing through Life & Legacy: shining a light on legacy donors who care so deeply about our organizations, giving them the opportunity to make a meaningful difference to Jewish life through their legacy, and supporting each other in the process so that our rising tide really does raise all of our ships, implies that our choice is not whether to be the candle OR the mirror, but that our calling is to be BOTH the candle and the mirror.”



# 2021

## GISELE PINTCHUCK

Jewish Federation  
of  
Sarasota-Manatee



# GISELE PINTCHUNK – 2021 Award

## Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee

**Tamra L. Dollin, Life & Legacy® Community Consultant has had the privilege of working with Gisele and shared the following:**

“When Gisele first got involved with Life & Legacy, she observed veteran legacy coordinators with awe, wondering to her unassured self, ‘Will I ever be like them?’ ‘Will my community be as successful as theirs have been?’ I can say unequivocally the answer is ‘YES!’ Gisele has brought her warm personality, prodigious talents, and undeterred enthusiasm to the Life & Legacy effort in Sarasota-Manatee. She met and worked with each team, encouraging, mentoring, cajoling, and gently nudging them. When new team members or new staff came on board, she trained them to understand the potential and significance of legacy giving. Gisele celebrated their achievements as if they were her own, helping each team reach their fullest potential, and bringing her community together in unprecedented ways. Gisele’s sophisticated, inspirational, and enjoyable legacy donor events became the hit of the social season in Sarasota! She has taken advantage of every opportunity to learn more about legacy giving, meet with colleagues, attend conferences, and legacy coordinator cohort calls. She readily mentored other legacy coordinators to improve their legacy effort and I recall her once crediting Life & Legacy with ‘bringing you back where you belong...at the Federation’.”

### **Some of Gisele’s remarks upon receiving the award:**

“It was not long ago that I sat at my first Create a Jewish Legacy Leadership Gathering in 2017 and watched in awe as an inspiring and extremely accomplished Life & Legacy colleague from Oregon, Gail Mandel, received this prestigious award. Her words that evening on her Life & Legacy journey and philanthropy still ring loudly in my mind. That evening her message became the roadmap for what I wished for my community to become and the legacy professional I wished to be. That year, the team that joined me in Springfield met with Harold Grinspoon for a special one-on-one session. He spoke about his lifelong dedication to Jewish Philanthropy and how each one of us –individuals committed to the Life & Legacy program – are carrying out his mission and passion exponentially. We returned home inspired, motivated, and eager to apply the countless notes and lessons learned to the success of the program here at home. That collective learning became the blueprint for all of us to fulfill our responsibility to create our Jewish legacy that will support the next generation and beyond in a way and on a level that we have only imagined in the past. Life & Legacy opened up a whole new world of collective understanding of **the need to secure the future – Together!** I truly believe that it became something even more transformative: the catalyst of the true meaning of community building – the mortar between the bricks of our organizations.”





# 2022

## AMY ZACKS

Jewish Community  
Foundation of  
Greater Mercer





# AMY ZACKS – 2022 Award

## Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Mercer

**Arlene D. Schiff, National Director, Life & Legacy<sup>®</sup>, has had the privilege of working with Amy and shared the following:**

“Amy has worked tirelessly to integrate legacy giving into the culture of the Greater Mercer and the Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren County Jewish communities. While Amy joined the Foundation in Year 3 of Life & Legacy, she jumped right in and her passion for this work has never wavered. She immediately connected with legacy team members and has strengthened those relationships over the past five years. As organizations experienced turnover in both Jewish communal professionals and lay leaders, Amy immediately connected with them and engaged them in the legacy effort. She continued to hold workshops and trainings on a regular basis even after completing the four-year Life & Legacy curriculum and has planned and implemented many creative legacy donor stewardship events during her tenure. Amy undertakes every effort with grace, warmth, sincerity, and an unbridled commitment to the Jewish future.”

**Some of Amy’s remarks upon receiving the award:**

“This is my 6<sup>th</sup> Life & Legacy/CJL Leadership Gathering and each year I have watched with admiration as accomplished colleagues from around the country have been awarded the GLLA. I never envisioned that I would receive the same recognition. I am incredibly honored to receive this award and very grateful to the HGF, to the Life & Legacy national team, and to my friend and mentor, Arlene Schiff. It is humbling to receive an award named in Gail’s memory and to know that we honor Gail’s legacy with each new promise received, each one-on-one partner meeting, each online workshop, stewardship event, promotional video, social media post, or donor listing. On a personal note, my daughter Noa, celebrated her Bat Mitzvah at the start of the pandemic and we are now preparing for my son, Jacob’s Bar Mitzvah next June. In reaching these milestones, my husband, Eran and I have encouraged, both kids to find personally meaningful and authentic ways to connect with Judaism, and to lead a Jewish life. I hope that their mom’s work as part of the amazing network of Life & Legacy professionals, volunteers, and donors provides yet another example.”



# 2023

**DIANA  
KALEF**

**Calgary  
Jewish  
Community**



# DIANA KALEF – 2023 Award

## Calgary Jewish Community

**Tamra L. Dollin, LIFE & LEGACY® Community Consultant has had the privilege of working with Diana and shared the following:**

I have had the honor and pleasure of working with Diana since Calgary became the first Canadian community to join LIFE & LEGACY in 2019. Diana was unflinchingly determined that every Jewish organization in Calgary, from the smallest to the strongest, could succeed - securing their financial futures by building endowment through legacy giving. She intuitively understood, from the very beginning, that legacy giving was their key to sustainability. Along with her pivotal role as Federation's Director of Development, she took on the coordination of Calgary's legacy efforts. Diana takes advantage of every learning opportunity we offer. Her efforts have certainly put Calgary on the map! She brought a contingent of 9 people to our conference this year, to celebrate their incredible achievement.

### **Some of Diana's remarks upon receiving the award:**

I wish I had the privilege of meeting Gail - I have so many questions! What I do know, is that Gail had the foresight to understand the importance of legacy giving and how to engage with donors in a way that was easy to understand and palatable. In Calgary, we had Donna Riback, zichrona livrachá, who was a dear friend and mentor. She, like Gail, wanted to ensure our Jewish community's future. Back then, about 16 years ago, I had very little experience with legacy giving and I didn't fully understand it. But together with Donna, through her educating me and her persistence, we received a few more Lion of Judah endowments...and then I understood that our community needs to create a culture of legacy giving or we will be in trouble down the road. The opportunity to apply to the LIFE & LEGACY program came at the perfect time. In the midst of the LIFE and LEGACY application process, Donna became very ill. I remember it so clearly - I told her that we were applying and that I was going to make it my duty to continue her legacy. Sadly, she passed away before we were accepted. A few months before we finalized our application, and a couple days before she passed, she sent me a text that read **“Go get those legacy people!!!!”** I have kept that text on my phone for over 5 years. I don't take any of this for granted – our community has incredible volunteers and leadership who have made this dream of legacy giving a reality. Thank you to Arlene, Tammy, of course Harold and everyone at the Grinspoon Foundation who has allowed us to be part of something that is vital and important.





# 2024

## WENDY ARENSEN

Jewish Community  
Foundation  
Orange County





# WENDY ARENSEN – 2024 Award

## Jewish Community Foundation Orange County

**Arlene D. Schiff, Senior Advisor, Life & Legacy has had the privilege of working with Wendy and shared the following:**

Wendy's commitment to creating a strong and vibrant Orange County Jewish community is unmatched. She has worked diligently to engage as many organizations as possible in the program. After completing the first four years of the Life & Legacy curriculum, Wendy kept the initiative going for another six years, bringing on new organizations, offering training sessions, and incentive grants, all without expecting additional funding from HGF. When Wendy learned about the Life & Legacy Plus funding, she immediately applied and used HGF's support to provide additional incentives to her local partners. Wendy is a skilled mentor and coach who knows how to motivate her teams. Wendy has been a fantastic mentor to many legacy coordinators. She generously shares the strategies that have worked in her community with others and is always available to provide samples and insight to those who reach out to her."

**Some of Wendy's remarks upon receiving the award:**

"This honor is profoundly meaningful to me for many reasons, including the pride Gail would feel for all we've accomplished – not only in Orange County but together across North America as a Life & Legacy community. In the world of nonprofit work, collaboration is not just important – it's essential. It's what allows us to amplify our impact, to reach more people, and to create transformative, lasting change. As leaders, it's our responsibility to foster a culture of collaboration, to break down silos, and to build bridges between organizations, between communities, and between cultures. The key to the success of Life & Legacy is that while we are all unique, we can all agree on a unified goal of ensuring a vibrant Jewish future. In these times of virulent antisemitism on college campuses and a horrific war in Israel, sharing a united goal of supporting a strong Jewish community is more important than ever. We have shown that when we work together, there's no limit to what we can achieve."



# 2025

## Rebecca Engel

Jewish Endowment  
Foundation of  
South Carolina



# Rebecca Engel– 2025 Award

## Jewish Endowment Foundation of South Carolina

**Tamra L. Dollin, Community Consultant, Life & Legacy has had the privilege of working with Rebecca and shared the following:**

I have had the pleasure of working with Rebecca since Charleston began Life & Legacy in 2015. Rebecca has been a joy to work with. She is creative and thoughtful – a perpetual ‘idea machine’ - always looking for and trying out new ways to engage donors of all ages in philanthropy. She has been an incredible mentor to the Jewish organizations in Charleston. She shares donor stories that really touch the heart, because her passion for Judaism and Jewish community comes from her heart! Following her own loss this past year of her beloved father, she (together with her family) established the Mike W. Leibowitz Family Fund at the Foundation, showing others that a legacy gift is not only about our being remembered, but can also be about honoring the memory of a loved one, someone who shaped the person we are today, and about carrying their legacy forward.

### **Some of Rebecca’s remarks upon receiving the award:**

Legacy isn’t only about how we want to be remembered. It’s also about how we remember people who showed us what a life of purpose looks like—and how we use that memory to shape a more meaningful future. This work—what we’re building together—is about securing Jewish life. It’s about ensuring that our values outlast any single moment. It’s about creating bold, intergenerational conversations that move us from memory to meaning, from preservation to purpose. Raising funds is not enough—we must also raise leaders, raise purpose, and raise impact for the future of Jewish life. This recognition belongs to my beloved Charleston Jewish community and all our local partners — dedicated leaders and generous souls who believed that legacy giving could be part of our everyday conversations, and not just a footnote in our philanthropic ecosystem.

