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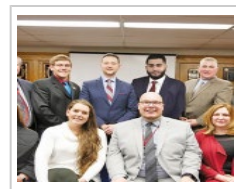
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Heart of NJ Jewish Federation Fights Hate 'Behind the Scenes'

By Deborah Melman | December 19, 2019



Remembering Rabbi David Beitler, z"l



Clifton BOE Anti-Israel Comments Draw Criticism



The Jewish Federation
IN THE HEART OF NEW JERSEY

Anti-Semitic incidents in central New Jersey have concerned the Jewish

Federation in the Heart of New Jersey and kept their staff busy with initiatives that reach elected officials, school children, religious leaders and many segments of the community. Serving Greater Middlesex and Monmouth counties, the Federation has been actively working to combat hate in all forms.

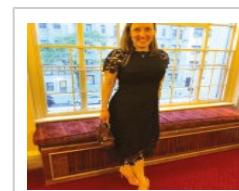
Noting that New Jersey has the third highest incidence of anti-Semitic acts in the United States, Executive Director Susan Antman told The Jewish Link that there are many organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League which use their expertise to fight anti-Semitism. She said one of the roles of Federation is to get the facts out about various aspects of anti-Semitism, Israel and other issues so that people can better understand the issues involved and act accordingly.

She said that Federation works to avoid duplication of efforts of other organizations, to be better able to use their resources to add value. Much of their work is done "behind the scenes" and may not be immediately visible to the general public, but is eminently responsible for positive actions on behalf of the community.

The recent attack in Jersey City highlights the importance of the work Federation has been doing making safety and security a priority. Their efforts have brought millions of dollars in grants and donations to Middlesex and Monmouth counties for security purposes at Jewish organizations and educational institutions. There is no shortage of organizations that are divisive and preach messages of hatred; the Federation outlined efforts to counteract those messages via educational neighborhood-based briefings for on hate and security for concerned citizens. Other activities include partnerships with civic leaders, elected officials and public safety professionals to spread awareness, develop solutions and increase involvement.

Federation's Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) was revamped and expanded earlier this year to focus on addressing issues tied to anti-Semitism and hate; building and strengthening interfaith relationships; identifying and reacting to Jewish interest opportunities and the local, state, and federal levels; and training the next generation of leaders. Using a multi-pronged approach encompassing advocacy, bridging communities and government relations, the JCRC actively works to overcome the challenge of achieving intra-faith consensus on certain issues and to present a united front to reach their goals.

Education and advocacy are critical components of the effort. Encompassing all ages, levels of religious observance and segments of the community, engagement has had proven results. From solidifying personal connections to Judaism through attendance at Jewish summer camps, trips to Israel, Sunday schools and day schools, or books sent to preschoolers, strengthening Jewish identity is critical to unification of the community.



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Lessons Learned, and Prepping for Year 2, at Ohr Yisroel of Tenafly



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Federation-funded educational programming touches many different levels of society. Students at Rutgers Hillel have been educated in identification of overt and hidden anti-Semitism at #StandUpAgainstHate. School-age youth are taught about the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and how to intervene in a case of bias or discrimination via the Building Bridges program on tolerance. Communal leaders have been trained to identify issues and be advocates for Jews and Israel. Law enforcement officers have been taught to recognize bias and ways to create safer and more secure communities.

Interfaith clergy have been brought to Israel to see the country first-hand as a means of counteracting propaganda and stereotypes they may have absorbed. The clergy return with new perspectives and share what they have learned with their congregations.

The Federation actively engages mayors, council members and other local elected officials to educate them on concerns of the Jewish community and keep the channels of communications open. At the national level, the Federation will be going to Washington, DC next month as part of a delegation of Jewish Federations from across New Jersey to talk about issues of importance to the Jewish community with members of Congress. Dan Rozett, manager of community and Israel engagement, noted that "if something needs to be changed, elected officials are often among our valued partners."

The Federation has made it abundantly clear that they support the State of Israel as a democratic and Jewish country and they abhor any organization, label or movement that delegitimizes that designation.

Some people may view Federation only as something to which to donate money. While money is needed to fund these efforts, the combined synergized output is a united effort working to advance community interests in safety and security for Israel and the local Jewish community, among other initiatives.

The Federation posted a blog earlier this year regarding the "P is for Palestine" book reading in Highland Park. Noting that knowledge of the event had not reached all parts of the Jewish community, they invoked the age-old question: "If a tree falls in the forest, does it make a sound if nobody hears it?" The blog continues that the fallen tree does matter even to those who didn't hear it fall. Now that the tree has fallen it is time to cut it apart and use the wood to build a big table – and get more community representation in the seats around the table. They hope to see you at one of those seats.

For more information about involvement opportunities, go to www.JewishHeartNJ.org or call 732.588.1800.