

JEWISHLINK

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Middlesex and Monmouth Counties Mark Anniversary of Oct. 7

- [By Harry Glazer](#)
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(l-r) Roy Tanzman; Brenda Tanzman; Congressman Frank Pallone; and Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey's Susan Antman (executive director) and Dan Rozett (director, community relations and Israel engagement).

Reportedly, some Jewish communities across the U.S. struggled with whether or how to conduct an event to commemorate the second anniversary of the attacks in Israel of Oct. 7, 2023. They were concerned with conflicting feelings in the community about the war in Gaza, the possibility of pro-Palestinian protesters, and other factors.

Fortunately for the Jewish communities in Middlesex and Monmouth counties in New Jersey, the Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey went ahead and organized a thoughtful event that drew roughly 200 people on Sunday, Oct. 5, for a spirited program that raised voices, uplifted spirits, and inspired hope.



(l-r) Dan Rozett; Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey’s Amy Keller (director, security initiatives and external affairs) and Susan Antman (executive director); Chief John McCabe of the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office; and Detective Dan Chernavsky.

The Federation’s approach began with assembling a broad array of community groups in support of the event—15 synagogues, representing Orthodox, Conservative and Reform affiliations, as well as the JCC of The Jersey Shore (which co-sponsored the event), the JCC of Middlesex County, United Synagogue Youth, and the Jewish Student Union.

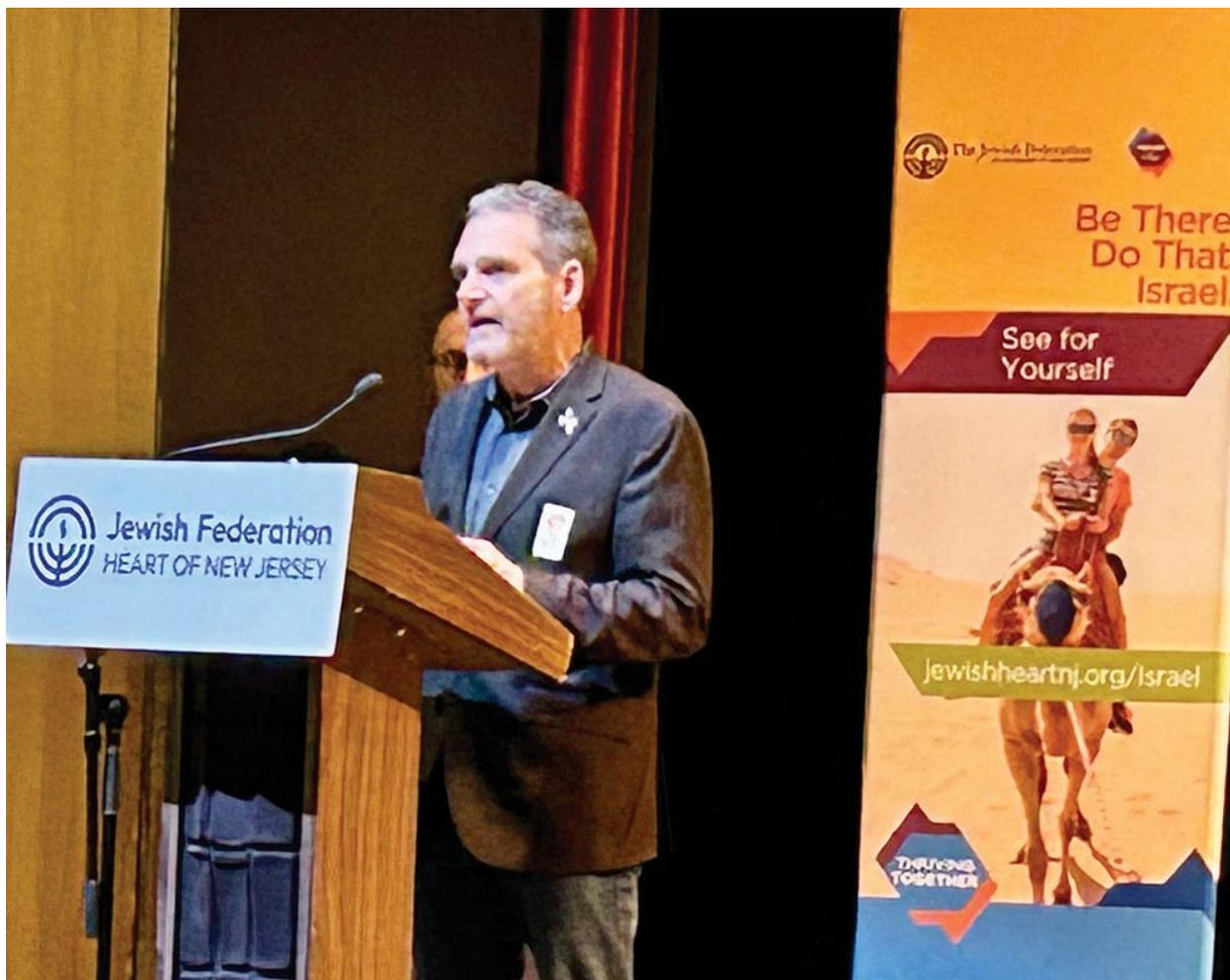
The 'Marking October 7th' event, held at The JCC of The Jersey Shore, included a moment of silence accompanied by five shofar blowers from synagogues in the area, a communal singing of "Hatikvah" and the National Anthem led by the Kol Halayla student a cappella group from Rutgers University Hillel, a performance by Guy Rosmarin and the Tone Deaf Preachers of "Father Hear Me," an original song in tribute to Hamas victim Carmel Bachar of Kibbutz Be'eri, remarks by dignitaries in attendance, video vignettes from Liat Atzili, Edit Ohel and Mayan Sherman—three mothers who lost loved ones on Oct. 7, 2023, and a recitation of prayers for those killed on Oct. 7, for the release of captives, and for IDF soldiers.



Congressman Frank Pallone views a photo exhibit at the event.

Speaking to the assembled, Congressman Frank Pallone (District 6) stated: “It’s been a horrible two years since the attack on October 7th. And in Washington, D.C., we have so much divisiveness. We all want peace, but we can’t have peace at the price of surrender to terror.”

Susan Antman, Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey’s executive director, told the audience: “We are gathered here with hearts that are still heavy. October 7, 2023 changed the Jewish soul forever and our sense of safety was shattered. ... We must never stop believing in the future of Am Yisrael. And we must commit to writing the next chapter of Jewish history with strength, compassion and hope.”



Ocean Township Mayor John Napolitani speaks at the event.

Dignitaries in attendance included Pallone, Ocean Township Mayor John Napolitani, Assemblywoman Margie Donlon (District 11), Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul (District 11), Ocean Township Councilman Gita Kaplan, and Ocean Township Councilman Jeff Weinstein.

Two community members who spoke with The Jewish Link were very pleased to have participated in the program.

“This situation affects me deeply,” said Marla Zirin of Monroe. “I wear a sticker each day with the number of days the hostages have been held, because I heard from Rachel Polin-Goldberg that if you want to take one measure of pain from the parents, this is how you do it. And I’ve explained the meaning of the sticker with the number to hundreds of people. We have to keep this topic in people’s minds. Sure, we’d prefer to be at the beach today. But this is too important to miss.”



Shofar blowers at the event.

Shari Tepper, president of Congregation B’nai Israel in Manalapan, shared: “My husband, my son and I felt that it was very important to mark this tragic occasion and to do so surrounded by our community members. We are grateful to the Jewish Federation for holding an event that brought great meaning to the anniversary and provided us with thoughtful reflection and hope for the future.”

Speaking to The Jewish Link before the event, Antman eloquently stated: “Federation organized this commemoration event not only to remember the unimaginable horror of October 7, 2023, but to affirm that memory itself matters. To honor the lives lost, to stand with the survivors and families left in trauma, to confront the truth so it cannot be erased or distorted. In coming together, we don’t just mourn; we assert the dignity of every victim, pray for the return of the remaining hostages, reject hate, demand accountability, and draw strength from one another. A

community remembering is a community refusing to stay silent—because silence is complicit, forgetfulness is betrayal, and justice begins in remembrance.”



Kol Halayla performs.