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By STEWART AIN

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FBI active shooter expert advises community on shoring up security

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Former FBI agent and active shooter expert Jin Kim told those gathered at a federation-sponsored security session that "every individual has it in them to be their own first responder." Photos courtesy Jewish Federation

Most people caught up in an attack like the Oct. 27 mass shooting at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh would try to run to safety.

Such a move, however, could be a fatal error, Jin Kim, a retired FBI agent and active shooter expert, told a group of 150 leaders from the Jewish and interfaith communities in Middlesex and Monmouth counties. They were gathered Nov. 29 for security training sessions sponsored by the Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey.



Kim, who retired earlier this year after 23 years with the FBI, told those gathered at each of the two sessions that "everyone has it in them to be their own first responder."

While generally it has been recommended that individuals who find themselves in an active-shooter situation be told to follow the "run-hide-fight" scenario, Kim said that is not always the best possible blueprint for every individual.

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He stressed that to maximize the chance for survival, each person needs to think about how they personally react physically and mentally to stressful situations and then plan out a realistic course of action in the event of an attack. Kim, who served as active shooter coordinator on the Crisis Management Unit for the FBI's New York Division, has formalized his approach by creating the T.A.S.K. (Threat Adaptation Strategies & Know-How) method.



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That concept hit home for Eric Sigoura, security director for the Deal Sephardic Network and volunteer security consultant for Hillel Yeshiva in Deal. He said the program — he attended the session held at iPlay America in Freehold — gave him a new perspective.

"It really opened up my mind to looking at things differently in the way we instruct our staff and administration in the event of an active shooter," he told NJJN. "They tell you to run, hide, fight, but maybe you're the person who can't fight. These are national initiatives that have been pushed on us, but [Kim] dispelled some of those initiatives. They make sense, but in reality, few individuals can do all those things, so you have to think what you can do to survive."



Denise Wolferson of Temple Emanu-El in Edison shares her synagogue's experiences with security issues during

He said as a result of what he learned, he would be rethinking security strategies for his organizations.

Roni Salkin, executive director of Jewish Family Services of Middlesex County, said learning about the T.A.S.K. method "gave us real information we could understand and use in our organizations and agencies."

She understands that to prepare for any eventuality, people have to work on how they're going to respond, "because some people will freeze; some will fall to the floor; and some will start running, crying, and screaming," said Salkin.

For her one of the most thought-provoking pieces of information she heard from Kim was that a fire alarm might be a ploy to create easy targets. Salkin said she was surprised to learn that in the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. — in which 17 students and staff were killed and 17 others injured — a fire alarm was pulled to bring victims out into the open.

Now she is aware "that if you hear a fire alarm you have to assess first. It's something I never would have thought of in the past," said Salkin, who attended the session held at Highland Park Conservative Temple-Congregation Anshe Emeth.

She said that as a result of her attendance she would be updating and improving security policies at her agency.

In an emergency, Kim also urged implementing such steps as securing doors that don't have locks, obscuring oneself from view, and looking for unexpected places for concealment.

Rabbi Eli Garfinkel of Temple Beth El of Somerset said the one thing that stood out for him was "to be aware of your surroundings and think about it before it happens."

He particularly noted one "very important thing" that Kim suggested: "not to be in the shooter's line of sight. You should be running if you can, but in some cases, it's better to strategically hide rather than run in the shooter's line of sight," Garfinkel said.

The rabbi said he also appreciated the recommendation that people should "know in advance where you can hide [and] that there are things in a sanctuary or anywhere — such as a fire extinguisher — that can be used to slow an attacker down."



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However, for Garfinkel, who attended the temple session, what made the biggest impression was that in most cases, no matter how quickly the police respond to a call, the shooting incident will likely be over before they arrive; "we can rely on them to catch the offender," Garfinkel said he learned, "but we have to save our own lives."

Amy Keller, federation leader for security initiatives, said the organization has established a fund to continue such programming.

"The federation began responding to increases in anti-Semitism and acts of violence several years ago, with the establishment of our Security Task $\,$ Force, which to date has performed or facilitated community-wide vulnerability assessments, conducted dozens of trainings, and helped some 50 institutions secure more than \$3 million in government and $\,$ federation security grants," Keller said.

"In the wake of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, we are redoubling efforts to do more - including launching a dedicated campaign to fund efforts countering anti-Semitism and strengthening community security, because it does take money. We need everyone in the community to give what they can."

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