



EMERGENCIES

Security training offered to all in Jewish community to defend against antisemitism

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Jewish Federation organizations around the country help provide kosher Meals on Wheels, summer camp experiences, counseling services, family activities — and security training.

In the wake of a growing wave of antisemitism, most recently seen in a terror attack in Colleyville, Texas, in which a rabbi and congregants were taken hostage on Jan. 15, Jewish Federation groups around New Jersey and the nation are encouraging every community member to partake in the Secure Community Network's offering of a new safety training program.

Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker of Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville credits security training from SCN and other groups with helping him and his congregants escape the hostage situation.

“In Monmouth and Greater Middlesex counties, Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ and its partners like SCN bring security training to synagogues and Chabads, schools, camps, JCCs and cultural centers, (such as) Chhange, Axelrod, Rutgers Hillel and many more — routinely and free of charge, training nearly 300 leaders and countless more community members multiple times each year,” said Susan Antman, executive director of the Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ.

The Jewish Federation of Ocean County also links to the new training from its website.

The national online kickoff of the new program from SCN, called "BeAware: An Introduction to Situational Awareness," is set for 1 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 27.

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BeAware training is designed for all members of the Jewish community across the United States — from parents to professionals and receptionists to rabbis — organizers say, and will "provide attendees with an improved ability to recognize suspicious behavior and criminal activity, guidance on how to report it, and strategies to protect themselves and others from violence."

BeAware is an interactive training course that can be presented online or in person.

It was designed by security professionals with experience in training thousands of members of the Jewish community, as well as law enforcement in the United States and abroad.

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"As we saw in Texas, we cannot pick the time and date of the next incident that will impact our community, but we can choose to prepare," said Michael Masters, CEO of SCN.

"A critical component of preparing is training, and this training will provide crucial skills the Jewish community needs to stay safe. I hope every synagogue and Jewish facility in the United States will participate."

SCN is the "official homeland safety and security initiative of the organized Jewish community in North America." It was founded in 2004 under the auspices of The Jewish

Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

“As (the) Federation continues investing in security and combating antisemitism while caring for those who are vulnerable and nurturing Jewish life for today and our children's tomorrows, may we all be safe, send prayers of healing to anyone impacted by antisemitic violence, and know peace,” Antman said.

To register for Thursday's national preview of BeAware, visit hsecurecommunitynetwork-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_roVSrYVyQjeOtn6kctW3og.

For more information about the Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey, visit jewishheartnj.org or jewishoceancounty.org for the Jewish Federation of Ocean County. Visit jewishfederations.org to find your local Federation.

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