



Erev Rosh Hashanah, Wednesday, September 24

Rosh Hashanah, Thursday, September 25

L'Shana Tova Tikatevu

The Officers, Board and Staff  
Jewish Federation of El Paso



# THE JEWISH VOICE

ELUL 5774/TISHREI 5775

SEPTEMBER 2014

## Looking Back and Looking Ahead: An Update on Our Federation

Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, is a time for introspection and new beginnings. While it might seem cliché to write this particular article for this particular issue of "The Jewish Voice," it is a most appropriate time to briefly review our recent journey, establish where we are now and communicate what you can expect from Jewish Federation going forward.

The vision for today's Jewish Federation of El Paso was born several years ago when community leaders reached out to the community to learn what it is they wanted from their Jewish Federation. Change, of course, takes time and might have been nearly imperceptible as it was taking place, but look where we've come since then. Federation has returned to a more traditional model, one that is aligned with Jewish Federations around the nation.

- ◆ Federation endowed \$1,500,000 to the Jewish Community Foundation from which we expect to earn considerable annual return

- ◆ We moved to a smaller and more efficient location at The Summit at the intersection of Mesa and Mesa Hills

- ◆ We restructured and downsized staff to practical, fiscally responsible levels

- ◆ Programs previously run under the Federation umbrella have been successfully launched as independent organizations

- ◆ The granting and allocation process has been refined and approved, operating now around dollars in hand rather than pledged dollars

- ◆ We created a new executive director position and hired Daniel Chejfec (pronounced "hayfetz") to fill the position

Jewish El Paso can expect our successful programs, such as Informal Jewish Education, CLAL, the Jewish Film Festival, and PJ Library, to continue in 5775. We are building the Jewish Community Relations Council with broad representation across the community to develop strategies and be prepared to manage Israel advocacy, security issues, and the media, and build relations with our elected officials and the Hispanic, Arab and Christian communities. And we're developing Israel connections through a Sister City project and a Women's Mission Trip in 2015.

There are clear signs of spirited engagement in our Jewish community, including sellout crowds at both the Holocaust Museum's presentation of the movie "Monuments Men" and the CLAL Community Wide Shabbat. Around 300 people attended the Israel solidarity event in August which brought out media and local elected officials and raising \$40,000 for the Israel crisis. Beto O'Rourke's NO vote on additional Iron Dome funding became a catalyst for political action prompting a meeting with O'Rourke at the Federation and a strategy to build a stronger, more informed relationship. The Jewish Community Foundation has record assets nearing \$11,000,000.

We're laying groundwork now to insure the future of our community and Federation, but are not looking so far ahead that we can't see the present. Stay tuned to future issues of "The Jewish Voice," your mailbox, and our website, [www.jewishelpaso.org](http://www.jewishelpaso.org), for regular updates.

-- Dori Fenenbock  
Federation President

--Debra Pazos, Board Member

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For New Year  
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**"Stop the Sirens"  
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Due to unexplained mailing issues at the Westside Post Office, many households in the 79912 zip code did not receive their copies of The Jewish Voice for June. We are working with our mail house and the post office to ensure that this does not happen again. To read the issue online, please visit [www.jewishelpaso.org/Read-The-Jewish-Voice](http://www.jewishelpaso.org/Read-The-Jewish-Voice)

# EL PASOANS SUPPORTING ISRAEL



## Solidarity With Israel Rally



Around 300 people attended the event at Temple Mount Sinai

Around 300 people from throughout the region's Jewish community, representing each of El Paso's congregations, along with other supporters of Israel, gathered at Temple Mount Sinai on Tuesday, August 5, for a special "Stop the Sirens" event

UTEP professor and musician Dr. Larry Lesser opened the program with an original song, "Sderot Sky." Rabbi Larry Bach, Rabbi Sandra Bellush, and Rabbi Stephen Leon led us in prayer and spoke during the program, along with Daniel Chejfec and new Federation president Dori Fenenbock. Also on the program were three El Paso teenagers, Jackson Culter, Ben Mansfield, and Patterson



Middle East expert Micah Halpern speaking to a reporter before the Israel Solidarity program

showing the community's support for Israel and the Iron Dome defense program. The program was quickly organized by Jewish Federation executive director Daniel Chejfec in response to Hamas' aggression against Israeli civilians.

For the program's keynote speaker, Chejfec arranged to bring in Micah Halpern, one of the media's go-to experts on terrorism and the Middle East. In addition to regular guest appearances on network TV and radio, the author/columnist hosts his own weekly television show entitled "Thinking Out Loud." Halpern was in El Paso for one evening between cross-country speaking engagements; he divides his time between New York and Jerusalem. His on-the-ground details and behind-the-scenes insights helped us all have a better picture of the ongoing situation in Israel.

Stuart Schwartz introduced the keynote speaker, Micah Halpern

Keim, who had been in Israel in July at camp during some of the rocket attacks. Patterson recounted how they saw a Hamas rocket heading right toward the beach they were visiting – and then saw an Israeli missile blow it up in mid-air.

The program ended with a disturbing announcement from Chejfec: while Micah Halpern was speaking, Hamas had just broken another ceasefire agreement and resumed rocket attacks. The news reinforced the need for us all to stay informed and give generously



Marcia Dahlberg joins others contributing to the "Stop the Sirens" campaign

to support Israel in this difficult time.

**-- Cindy Graff Cohen**  
Editor, *The Jewish Voice*

Photographs by Buddy Schwartz

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# EL PASOANS SUPPORTING ISRAEL

*The following is a reprint of a letter to the editor published in the El Paso Times August 5, 2014*

Dear Editor,

The recent vote against Israel's Iron Dome funding is understandably upsetting to constituents here in El Paso. We are directly affected by events taking place there. In fact, a group of young El Pasoans were in Israel when the conflict erupted.

Consider this scenario: Your fourteen-year old son is in Israel enjoying a summer camp with his cousin and best friend. They are on a beach in Tel Aviv. Sirens go off. People run for shelters. Your son, confused and not able to reach a shelter in 90 seconds, sees an incoming missile ripping through the sky.



Dori Fenenbock, president of the Jewish Federation, speaking at the rally

### Follow-up from Dori Fenenbock:

Congressman Beto O'Rourke responded personally to this letter and other letters written to him on the topic of his Iron Dome vote and accepted an invitation to meet with a group of leaders of the Jewish community. This meeting was held Thursday, Aug. 14, at the Federation.

The congressman brought his two top staff members, David Wysong and Cynthia Cano. In attendance from the Jewish community were Dori Fenenbock, Daniel Chejfec, Rabbi Larry Bach, Tommy Goldfarb, Stuart Schwartz, Norman Gordon, Phil Rothstein, Peter Svarzbein, Rebecca and Alan Krasne. Rabbi Leon and David Kern were invited but unable to attend.

The group discussed the Iron Dome, Iran and domestic issues including emergency funding for unaccompanied minors. Congressman

There is nowhere to go. Then, an Iron Dome missile intercepts it and an explosion occurs, like fireworks, overhead. That missile may have saved your son's life.

This was my family's experience three weeks ago.

Congressman Beto O'Rourke's decision to stand apart from 395 fellow congressmen and every senator in the U.S. Congress indicates a particular confidence on the issue. However, our congressman has not yet traveled to Israel to become better educated on their extremely difficult, if not impossible, situation.

We all share the deep concern for the hardship and loss of life of the Palestinians. However, the measure of civilian casualties, rather than attempts to avoid civilian casualties, further endangers the Palestinian people. The world must hold Hamas accountable for exploiting civilians for their strategic advantage.

We hope Congressman O'Rourke will explore opportunities with us to find the right path forward.

Faithfully,  
Dori Fenenbock

President, Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

O'Rourke stated his general philosophy that peace is better accomplished through sanctions and diplomacy and that over the past 60 years the United States has overreached in global military intervention with negative consequences. He frames all issues, including Israel, in that context.

He acknowledged that he is not as informed as he needs to be on Israel-related topics. He suggested that he would like to meet regularly with representatives of the Jewish community and agreed to create a channel of communication between his office and the Federation through which he will receive relevant information. He also agreed to make a trip to the region, Israel and the Palestinian areas, before year end. The group will be meeting again next month to solidify the details of that trip.

## Sderot Sky



Larry Lesser performs his original song "Sderot Sky" while a photo of the caterpillar-shaped bomb shelter for children that inspired his song is displayed behind him

*Songwriter and UTEP mathematics education professor Dr. Larry Lesser opened the August 5 "Stop the Sirens: Standing Up for Israel" community-wide program by performing his original song "Sderot Sky," set in a western Negev town about one mile from the Gaza border. Since 2001, thousands of Qassam rockets from Gaza have forced spending \$150 million on bomb shelters in Sderot, including colorful painted caterpillar-shaped concrete shelters for outdoor playgrounds. The image of those children's shelters inspired his song, which is reprinted here with permission.*

At our town's playground, all children love  
To climb the slides and jungle gyms with clear skies above.  
A hollow caterpillar of reinforced cement  
Winds through the center – ev'ry kid can fit.

Now loudspeakers warn, *Red Alert, Red Alert:*  
In fifteen seconds, a rocket will hit.  
The kids know to run *fast* as they can  
Into the caterpillar, holding hands.

Caterpillar – under sky  
Caterpillar – wonder why

From a children's school, that rocket was launched –  
So if our planes strike back, more young pay the cost.  
Under such a sky, try to live each day:  
Heaven only knows the common ground, common faith.

Caterpillar – wonder why  
Caterpillar – thunder sky  
Caterpillar – wonder why  
Can it change to butterfly?

On our playground, all children love  
To climb the slides and jungle gyms with clear blue skies above....

Lyrics & music © 2009, 2014 Lawrence M. Lesser



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