

Dear Community Friends,

Starting mid-December, you will notice bright, pink billboards across the city with very powerful – and somewhat provocative – messages calling out antisemitism. This is part of a local and multi-faceted antisemitism awareness campaign launched by your Jewish Federation. Nine billboards containing three different messages will run across the city for eight weeks total. These along with other strategic marketing efforts are intended to create much-needed awareness and foster meaningful discussion about antisemitism across the community. We know that courageous, public action is necessary to bring light to this issue.

From Kanye West to Kyrie Irving, antisemitic rhetoric and comments have been on the increase and more normalized. ADL statistics show that incidents have increased by 34% year over year; nearly a 75% increase in the southeast. A local candidate spread antisemitic tropes about Jews and slavery. More recently, antisemitic fliers were found on UTC's campus and on the grounds of a local church. Just two years ago, swastikas were painted on the Walnut Street Bridge. Whether subtle or blatant, antisemitism is antisemitism.

The Jewish Federation takes these threats very seriously, and has always worked with our multi-faith partners, elected officials and security authorities to build partners and advocates in our efforts to condemn antisemitism. Through the Jewish Federation Community Relations Committee (CRC), your Jewish Federation board has decided to partner with two national organizations that are fighting against antisemitism: JewBelong and Shine a Light.

JewBelong (jewbelong.com) was founded nine years ago to promote greater participation and pride in Jewish life, particularly among youth, and launched a national antisemitism awareness campaign just two years ago in the wake of rising antisemitism across the country. Chattanooga will be the smallest city to partner with JewBelong. Shine a Light (shinealighton.com) offers resources to dispel the darkness and shine a light on antisemitism.

We are taking a public, city-wide approach to show our Chattanooga community that antisemitism is an issue that affects everyone. Once again, the goal is to create awareness of the issue while fostering meaningful and productive conversations. This multi-faceted approach will include:

1. Nine bright pink billboards placed throughout the city with messages about antisemitism and security. The billboards will be posted for 8 weeks beginning the week of December 12.
2. Mailing thousands of postcards that mirror the pink billboards in look and message to community members, including our multi-faith friends and churches. They will also include a link to our web site (www.jewishchattanooga.com) with multiple resources and ways people can get involved.
3. Distributing special candles, asking our multi-faith friends to “Shine a Light” on antisemitism by talking about it with friends, family and colleagues and sharing the message on their social media.
4. Working with local officials to support this campaign and local media outlets for additional coverage.

What can you do? When you see these billboards, take photos and share this awareness campaign with your friends and family through social media. Encourage community conversations and explain why bringing awareness to this issue is so critical. Ask others to stand up and say something and do something when they see something or hear something. The Jewish community cannot and should not combat antisemitism alone!

As we celebrate Chanukah together this year and light the menorah, let's also commit to working together to "shine a light" on antisemitism in this community and our country. We appreciate your continued support, advocacy and commitment to the Jewish community and your Jewish Federation.

Rob Lowe
Federation Board Chair

Michael Dzik
Executive Director