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A time of reflection, action for our Jewish community

The Jewish New Year has come during one of the most difficult moments in modern Jewish history. On Oct. 7, 2023, the people of Israel and Jewish people everywhere experienced a terrorist attack that far exceeded our worst nightmares — and the consequences are still unfolding.

As president and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Broward County, my heart is heavy, but I have immense pride in the resilience and solidarity of the Broward Jewish community. The attacks took us back to the horrors of past generations, and yet, we came together as one community to stand up to terror and hate.

Shortly after the attacks, I had the opportunity to travel to Israel and witness firsthand the depth of the impact and the strength of our response. I shared in the anguish and fear of the hostage families, grieved with survivors of the Nova Music Festival, and visited the brutally attacked neighborhoods along the Gaza border. Seeing the direct consequences of this tragedy and our community's immediate mobilization for aid and support deepened my sense of responsibility for the vital role our Jewish Federation plays in the healing and rebuilding process.

This year alone, we've invested over \$21 million in more than 100 global programs and contributed to an \$854 million national effort benefiting nearly 500 organizations addressing urgent needs in Israel. Yet, our efforts extend far beyond financial support. We've intensified our commitment to the safety and security of our local Jewish community, partnering with law enforcement and providing unprecedented levels of support to our Federation agencies, synagogues and schools. Our proactive initiatives against antisemitism and ongoing dialogue with faith-based communities emphasize our



By **Audra Berg**

resolve to build a future where every Jew can express their identity freely and fearlessly.

The tragedy of Oct. 7 showed us that even through the darkest times, we can find light, transforming grief into action and pain into purpose. Guided by the values of social justice, our commitment to repairing the world has never been stronger.

As we mark this solemn anniversary, we also look forward with hope. On Oct. 6, we will gather for a communitywide commemoration to honor the innocent Israeli hostages — those still with us and those lost — and to celebrate the bravery of those who defend our homeland. We will come together to reflect on the pain of the last year, hear testimonials from families of the victims, pray for the return of the hostages, and be moved by student art installations and musical tributes.

At the Jewish New Year, we reflect and prepare for the year ahead. Our Federation makes a pledge to ensure that our children inherit a world where their heritage is a source of pride, and their Jewish future is vibrant.

This anniversary, while somber, is also a call to action. Broward County is one of the largest Jewish communities in the country, and we urge everyone, Jews and non-Jews alike, to raise their voices as advocates for the broader fight against hate. I urge you to engage — whether by attending a remembrance event, volunteering or supporting local or international initiatives. Proactive engagement with allies, education and public presence are key elements in building a safer, more inclusive environment for all. Let's harness our collective resolve to turn memory into momentum and sorrow into solidarity.

Audra Berg, of Davie, is the president and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Broward County.





A Bring Them Home display at the David Posnack JCC in Davie is a 5-foot-high dog tag in the style that many people have been wearing as necklace charms with hostages' names on them commemorating the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel. MIKE STOCKER/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

