

Jewish Federation and Foundation of Greater Toledo

Federation initiative addresses antisemitism and promotes local literacy

By Daniel Pearlman, JCRC Director

A new initiative by the Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo (JFGT) will combat antisemitism and hate while working with the local nonprofit organization Read for Literacy (RFL) to promote local literacy efforts.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has curated a book list for children of all ages that relate to topics such as diversity, racism, antisemitism, tolerance, the Holocaust, and genocide. Overall, there are more than 800 books on this list.

Thanks to an anonymous donor, JFGT has purchased 220 total copies of four books from the list to be distributed to area students through RFL. The books were selected by Jewish community educators, Phyllis Wittenberg and Margie Siegel, and their focus was on books for students in grades K-2. Between 50 and 60 copies of each book were purchased for distribution.

“Our challenge was to identify books that would be distributed to children through the Read for Literacy Program, books that would instill or reinforce values of kindness, tolerance, and respect,” Margie reflected. “Phyllis and I share a respect for these values, a love of literature, and a cherished background in education. It was a win-win!” Similarly, Phyllis noted, “We chose books that we felt would be appropriate for young children. The books we chose have messages to help children recognize and deal with hatred, bullying, and discrimination.”

The initiative was developed by Stephen Rothschild, JFGT Executive Director. “Purchasing books for the Read for Literacy program with titles from the ADL’s curated reading list of age and grade-level

appropriate books on topics of Jewish culture, antisemitism, genocide, the Holocaust, religious bigotry and bullying, among other topics, addresses multiple needs,” he said. “Children who may not own any books are given a permanent gift to call their own while learning about topics that are not being taught nearly enough. If these gifts become part of a permanent home library with a reminder of this small kindness by the Jewish community inscribed inside, a lasting ripple of good may be the result.”

“Thanks to Read for Literacy and this ADL reading list, the Jewish Federation can make a positive impact in the lives of students who are struggling to read while educating young kids about antisemitism and hate,” said Daniel Pearlman, JCRC

Director. “This program exemplifies the Jewish values that drive our work.”

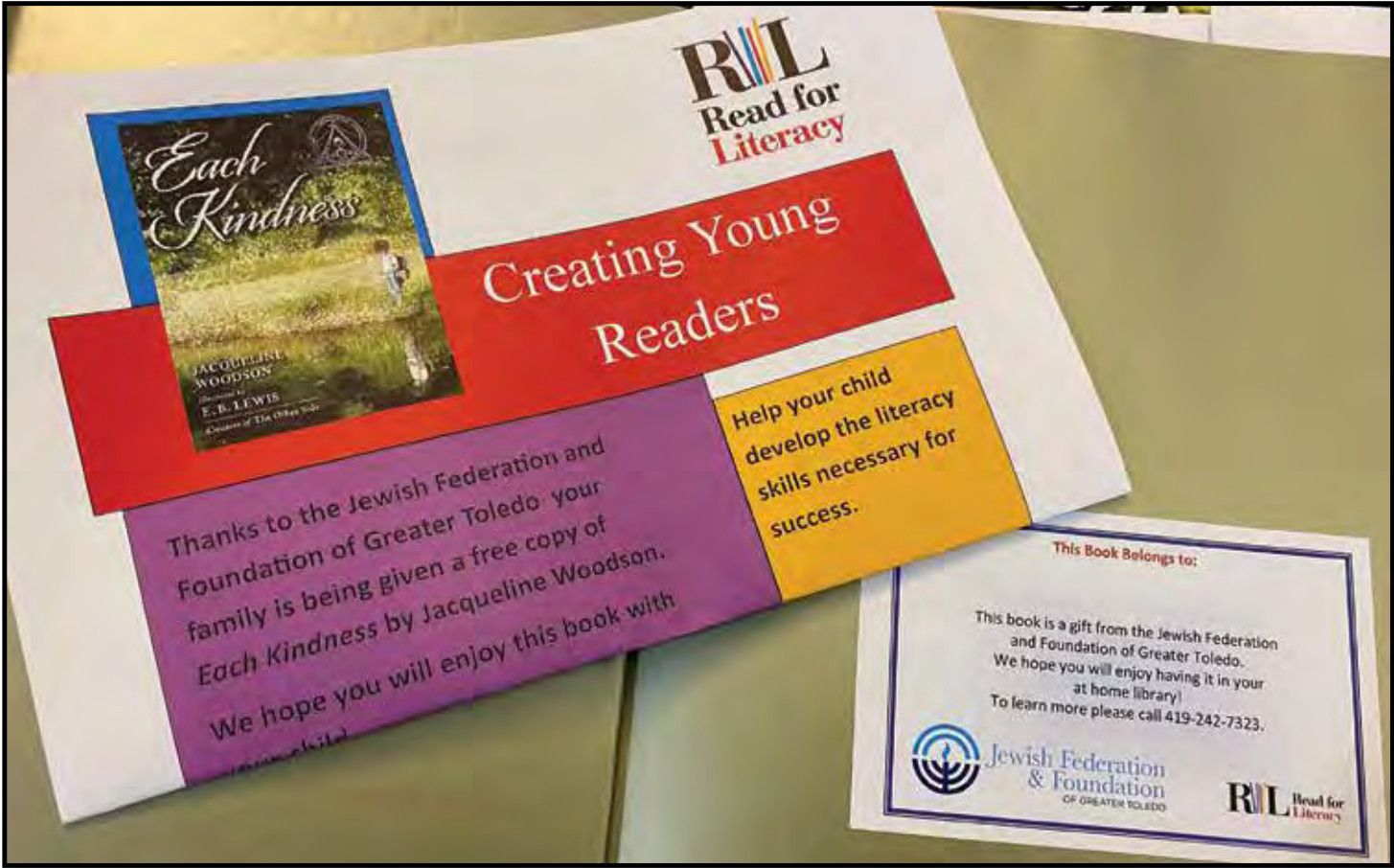
Part of JCRC’s mission includes combatting antisemitism and other forms of hate. Another aspect of JCRC’s work includes partnering with local community organizations to address community issues. Investing in educational projects in the greater community helps keep our Jewish community relevant and secure, while providing knowledge about antisemitism and other forms of hate helps students understand stereotypes and biases.

Locally, Read for Literacy distributes age and skill level appropriate books to children and adults. They have connections to K-12 teachers and local school districts, including districts that have had issues with antisemitism and hate.

RFL also distributes books for K-2 students at Connecting Kids to Meals programs, which the Federation recently authorized a gift to support.

The four books that were chosen for distribution include: *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust* by Eve Bunting, recommended for ages 6-12; *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson, recommended for ages 4-8; *Mrs. Katz and Tush* by Patricia Polacco, recommended for ages 3-7; and *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni, recommended for ages 3-7.

There are nearly endless opportunities to identify and purchase additional books for distribution as part of this program. If you are interested in supporting this initiative, please contact Arleen Levine, Toledo Jewish Community Foundation Director, at arleen@jewishtoledo.org.



THE CHALLENGE OF ANTISEMITISM

Sunday, October 24 at 7 p.m. • Program via Zoom

Jewish Community Relations Council of Jewish Federation in partnership with Temple Shomer Emunim, Congregation B’nai Israel, and Congregation Etz Chayim present



A lecture with Jonathan S. Tobin, Editor in Chief of the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS)
The challenge of anti-Semitism: why Jews must confront both left and right-wing anti-Semitism

The Jewish News Syndicate — JNS.org — is an international wire service covering the Jewish world and Israel. On a daily basis, Mr. Tobin’s writing covers the American political scene, foreign policy, the U.S.-Israel relationship, Middle East diplomacy, and the Jewish world. He’s also a senior contributor for *The Federalist*, and a columnist for *Newsweek*, the *New York Post*, *Haaretz*, and *Israel Hayom*, as well as writing regularly for other publications such as the *Washington Examiner* and *Commentary* magazine.