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Tracking signs of hate

Incidents raise concerns, but finding connections difficult

DEBORAH SUSSMAN SUSSER
Associate Editor

What constitutes a hate crime against Jews in Phoenix, and how do the authorities report and track those crimes? The answers, it turns out, are not as simple as the questions.

On June 5, Phoenix police responded to an incident of vandalism at Scottsdale's Temple Kol Ami. Someone had thrown a cinder block at the plexiglass window in the front of the temple. The window was damaged although not broken, said Joel Breshin, associate director for the Anti-Defamation League's Arizona Region, and the cinder block was found lying on the ground in front of the window.

In addition, a billboard was destroyed and a large flowerpot thrown onto the ground.

Five days later, the police received a report of vandalism at Har Zion

Congregation, also in Scottsdale and just a mile from Kol Ami. This time, the perpetrators had drawn swastikas and

is a hate crime and one is not.

Because there were no signs of anti-Semitism in the attack on Kol Ami, apart from the fact that the target itself was Jewish, the police department considers the incident property damage and not a hate crime. The vandalism at Har Zion, however, counts as a hate crime, because the graffiti explicitly expressed a hatred of Jews.

Detective Jeff Wood, Phoenix Police Department liaison to the Jewish community, said that the bias crimes unit of the Phoenix P.D. probably would not hear about Kol Ami. "It's just the way things are structured."

Nor would the bias crimes unit necessarily be aware of the break-in at Pardes Jewish Day School on July 10, in which three computer towers were stolen, because the incident is classified

written anti-Jewish slurs on two walls in the synagogue's parking lot.

The two crimes may seem comparable. But as far as the police are concerned, one

'(Report) even little things that you might not think are a big deal — better safe than sorry.'

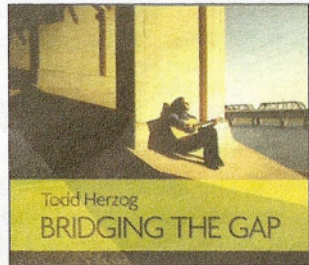
— Jeff Wood, Phoenix police detective



Feature

Countering terror

ASU students visit Israeli security sites ... Page 16



Todd Herzog
BRIDGING THE GAP

Arts & Culture

Jewish soul music

Todd Herzog builds bridges with CD ... Page 12

Community

Jews and science

Page 5

See 'Tracking' on Page 7

Songwriter building bridges on latest CD

JENNIFER GOLDBERG
Special Sections Editor

Between his duties as cantorial soloist at Temple Solel in Paradise Valley and his engagements at events around the country, Todd Herzog is a busy guy. Nonetheless, he somehow found time to release "Bridging the Gap," his new album. A CD release party for "Bridging the Gap" will be held Saturday, Sept. 6, at the temple.

The album is a joy to listen to — a thoughtful, uplifting collection of songs that radiate positivity.

It represents Herzog's first album to contain only music inspired by Judaism.

"Jewish thought was certainly part of the last album (2007's "Proverbs"), but this is the first one where there's been Hebrew in some of the choruses, and the ideas for all of the songs were taken either directly from liturgy or inspired by something from text," Herzog says. The common theme of the songs is "appreciating each moment and trying to feel a connection to life and to something larger than ourselves."

Tracks on "Bridging the Gap" include "Tree of Life," an extended metaphor inspired by a discussion with students at New Community Jewish High School in West Hills, Calif., where Herzog used to teach.

"I took the metaphor of the Tree of Life and brought it into a more literal sense, in terms of it actually being a tree planted by my grandfather. In that case, the grandfather could refer to any of our ancestors, anyone who has come before us and passed down this sense of wisdom and what it means to live righteously and with a sense of integrity," Herzog says.

One track in particular represents a unique collaboration with children and teens across the Valley.

"Hearts to the East" is a song about Israel that Herzog wrote with students from local Jewish day schools Jess Schwartz College Prep, Pardes Jewish Day School, The King David

School and Phoenix Hebrew Academy.

Herzog is artist-in-residence for those schools thanks to a three-year arts grant from the Jewish Community Foundation.

"We had some meetings with the heads of the different schools, and then we decided that since it was Israel's 60th anniversary, the best approach would be to create a song.

"I suggested the title 'Hearts

participate in family services.

He also recently participated in two national conferences: the annual Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE) conference in Burlington, Vt., where he taught a class on songwriting in the classroom and performed in the closing night concert; and the JCC Maccabi ArtsFest in Minneapolis, a creative conference for Jewish teens, where he was the vocal music artist-in-residence.

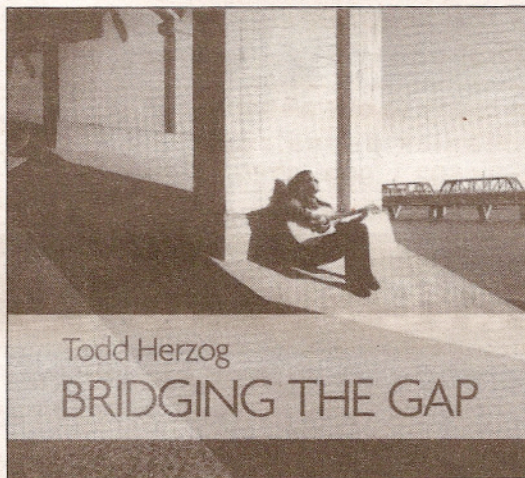
Wherever he goes and whatever he does, Herzog's goal remains the same: "to really bring the community together," he says. "Music has the power to cut through where sometimes words and politics fall short.

"I'll be working again as an artist-in-residence with the four day schools this year, and my hope, and I think the hope of the educators, is that working together on these types of creative

projects (will eliminate) boundaries drawn between different Jewish groups, starting in our own backyard of Phoenix.

"Hopefully, by using artistic means, we can really break through and unite this community. We're such a small minority; if we don't stick together, what's the point?"

"Bridging the Gap" is available at cdbaby.com and oysongs.com. The Todd Herzog Web site is currently being updated; e-mail karen@toddherzog.com for more information.



Todd Herzog
BRIDGING THE GAP

to the East,' because I was interested in talking with the students and finding out what Israel meant to them," Herzog says.

He found differences in perspective between students from more observant backgrounds and those from a more liberal background, as well as between younger students and older students.

"I was really blown away by their insights," Herzog says.

He wrote the chorus for "Hearts to the East," then asked each school's students to contribute a verse or bridge. He performed the song with local students at the Israel at 60 Community Celebration, held at the Ina Levine Jewish Community Campus in Scottsdale on April 6.

Herzog also recorded a version of the song with the students singing the verses and him singing the chorus, although on the album version the students only sing on the refrain.

"Bridging the Gap" is not the only project Herzog has been working on; at Temple Solel, he is involved with the new volunteer choir and is starting a children's choir that will

Details

What: Todd Herzog "Bridging the Gap" CD release party

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 6

Where: Temple Solel, 6805 E. McDonald Drive, Paradise Valley

Cost: Free

Contact: 480-991-7414