

SevenDays of Kindness is important for everyone ©
By Alana Muller, SevenDays Co-chair

My life's purpose is to "Connect, Inspire and Empower Community." That is the mantra I live by – not just in business, but in everything that I do. If we seek to come together as united citizens of the world, there is no telling the heights we can reach. And yet, from time to time, someone tries to prove me wrong. To challenge the assumption that none of us is as strong as all of us.

That was true on April 13, 2014, when a tragedy befell our community. A lone shooter pulled into the parking lot of the Jewish Community Campus and murdered Dr. William Corporon and his 14-year old grandson, Reat Underwood, as the young man was preparing to audition for a high school singing competition being sponsored by the Jewish Community Center. From there, this madman turned south and drove about a mile more to Village Shalom, where he shot and killed Teresa LaManno who had been visiting her mother. Hatred had a devastating impact on our town that Sunday afternoon... but the perpetrator of this hate crime did not win... instead of instilling fear, as he had hoped, the broad community banded together, propped up one another and unified to show its mettle and support for our diverse city.

Sadly, similar scenarios played themselves out on other days, too. On December 4, 2014, a vehicle outside of his mosque purposely struck 15-year old Somali immigrant Abdisamad Sheikh-Hussein; the perpetrator had been waging anti-Islamist threats to the Muslim community for months. Then, most recently, on February 22, 2017, at a bar in Olathe, Srinivas Kuchibhotla was shot and killed by a bigoted individual who accosted the Garmin engineer and his colleague with anti-immigrant verbal threats and, ultimately, brandished a gun.

Who would have thought that these acts of violence could happen in our town? Such ugliness is enough to drive one to stay indoors and hide away from the world. However, that simply won't do. We cannot allow this type of evil to rule our minds, feelings or actions.

One way that I have personally sought to work through all of this hatred and stay true to my mission statement of connecting, inspiring and empowering community is to immerse myself headlong into a very special organization called **SevenDays**.

SevenDays promotes interfaith dialogue by engaging all people to discover commonalities and overcome evil with acts of kindness. Specifically, for one heavily programmed, highly concentrated week in April of each year, and supported by other activities and by a youth movement at other times of the year, SevenDays seeks to bring together the community.

Our Jewish faith teaches us that to save one human life means to save the world. To that end, I believe the work that **SevenDays** is doing to eliminate hate crimes by bringing together people of different backgrounds is life-saving work. Each program and activity hosted by the organization helps to educate, inform and unite those who attend. I feel it is my personal responsibility – as a Jew, as a member of this diverse and beautiful community, as a citizen of the world, to engage in these initiatives with **SevenDays**.

For anyone interested in connecting with community to prove the power of love, faith, community and determination, I invite you to join me for **SevenDays** 2017 from Tuesday, April 18 – Monday, April 24. Once again this year, in an act of community-wide solidarity, support and love for one another, with the partnership of a number of organizations, including the Jewish Community Campus and Village Shalom, the families of the victims of the April 13, 2014, shooting have spearheaded a weeklong series of events and activities. Together, we will embrace diversity across races, religions and cultures to promote understanding and encourage kindness to “Make a Ripple to Change the World.”

Be sure to visit www.GiveSevenDays.org for details and to register for events.

About Alana Muller

Alana Muller is a Networking speaker, workshop facilitator, coach and author of the book, “Coffee Lunch Coffee: A Practical Field Guide for Master Networking” and a companion blog, CoffeeLunchCoffee.com. She is an active member of the Kansas City Jewish community and serves as the co-chair for SevenDays 2017, which promotes interfaith dialogue by engaging all people to discover commonalities and overcome evil with acts of kindness. Alana has been a contributor to Forbes.com, The Huffington Post, CNBC and other publications and was a featured speaker at TEDxOverlandPark. Follow Alana on Twitter at @AlanaMuller.

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