

Coral Springs Forum

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NEWS

Trying to erase the hate

Community bands together to paint mural over swastikas at Springs temple.

By **LISA BOLIVAR**
SENIOR WRITER

Hope for tolerance was rekindled Sunday when about 100 people showed up to lend their hands in turning an ugly experience to one of solidarity.

When Rabbi Yossie Denburg of Chabad Lubavitch of Coral Springs, 3925 N. University Drive, found swastikas crudely scrawled across the walls of the synagogue in early July, he went through the usual emotions suffered by victims of such crimes.

But because of the outpouring of support from those around him, he and Rabbi Avraham Friedman were inspired to turn the experience around and use

it as a tool to bring the community together.

They enlisted the help of artist David Schluss, an Israeli patriot living in Deerfield Beach.

After painting over the swastikas, Schluss turned the walls into images of people dancing.

"This came from my nature," Schluss said, making a sweeping gesture with his hand and explaining that he grew up in an Israeli kibbutz where singing, dancing and laughter were the mainstays of his early life. "We are dancing, music and togetherness."

Schluss said that theme seemed appropriate in the synagogue's quest to unite the community.

"We are celebrating from the walls of hatred to the walls of love," he said. "To change the whole picture upside down."

So, on Sunday the community showed up, picked up paint brushes, and added their own form of local color to the mural.

Arthur Schreider of Coral Springs stood and



PAINTING OVER PREJUDICE: Coral Springs resident Ariella Len, 7, paints her colors between the lines of the mural created by artist David Schluss which now covers the swastikas which were emblazoned on the outside walls of Chabad Lubavitch of Coral Springs.

Staff photo/Lee Hershfield

watched the throng of people waiting for their turn with the paintbrush, a

smile on his face.

Schreider, a Reform Jew, is not a member of the

Chabad movement. He,

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however, said he approves of the mural.

"I think it's a good way of turning it around," Schreider said, noting that Jew and Gentile stood side by side to create the art. "I think the swastika brings out reactions from everybody."

The Sunday event saw support from dignitaries such as Israeli Deputy Consul General Matty Cohen, Congressman Clay Shaw, local rabbis, police and State Sen. Mandy Dawson, who said she, as an African-American, can

identify with being a victim of ignorant acts.

"Obviously I am not Jewish," she told the people gathered in the synagogue. "I am of the human faith and my community stands with you. And I am here to say to the bad guys that we stand united."

Coral Springs Police Major Jeffrey Chudnow vowed that police will aggressively pursue whomever "committed this act," which was the second bit of vandalism of the facility in 10 days. Rocks were thrown at windows several days prior to July 4, shattering but not breaking the glass.

Police still are investigat-

ing both incidents, which under the hate crimes label change from a misdemeanor to a second-degree felony carrying with it time in jail, and fines up to \$1,000.

"There is an ongoing investigation and we're going to work diligently to make sure the people who committed the graffiti are brought to justice," Chudnow said.

Those with information about this crime or others are asked to call (954) 493-TIPS.

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