HISTORY AND MEANING

Inspired by efforts from South Florida Jewish community leaders and the Jewish Museum of Florida, Rep. Debbie Wasserman of Florida and Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania led the successful campaign to recognize the more than 350-year heritage of Jewish Americans by designating a month in honor of Jewish contributions to American culture. The resolutions they presented passed unanimously in both the House of Representatives in December 2005 and in the Senate in February 2006. Their efforts ultimately came to fruition in April 2006, when President George W. Bush officially established May as Jewish American Heritage Month, and each year since, presidents have continued to declare May as Jewish American Heritage Month. Prior to the establishment of the heritage month in 2006, President Jimmy Carter and subsequent presidents annually declared a week in April as Jewish Heritage Week.

IN THE NEWS

National

The Trump administration appointed Elan Carr to the position of envoy to combat anti-Semitism. Carr, who is a Jewish Iraq War veteran and lawyer, had wide bipartisan support for his appointment.

Nashville

A historical marker is set to be placed at the former Nashville Jewish Community Center site, at 3500 West End Blvd. The community center, which hosted meetings in support of desegregating Nashville schools and sporting events around the city, was bombed in 1958 by the “Confederate Underground.” The building was quickly repaired and the community continued to meet there until they later moved to their current location on Percy Warner Boulevard in 1980. The dedication ceremony for the historical marker will be held on June 3, 2019.

Jewish American Heritage Month is dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the hundreds of years of Jewish contributions to the United States.

This resource is part of a toolkit created by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to highlight religious and cultural observances that members of our community may practice. This toolkit is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead to provide a general overview of how we can support staff, faculty, students and postdocs. We continually refine this information and welcome your suggestions.

For more information, please contact Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at edi@vanderbilt.edu. For more information on the university’s policy on religious holy days and observances, contact the Office of the University Chaplain and Religious Life at religiouslife@vanderbilt.edu or Human Resources at human.resources@vanderbilt.edu.
CULTURAL OBSERVANCES

Jewish American Heritage Month

Vanderbilt
Vanderbilt Jewish Studies collaborated with the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation and Jewish Foundation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee to present a roundtable discussion on anti-Semitism in contemporary American politics. The event included guest scholars Pamela Nadell, Patrick Clendenen Chair in Women’s and Gender History and director of the Jewish Studies Program at American University; Barry Trachtenberg, Michael R. and Deborah K. Rubin Presidential Chair of Jewish History, associate professor of history, and director of the Jewish Studies Program at Wake Forest University; and Jonathan Judaken, Spence L. Wilson Chair in Humanities and professor of history at Rhodes College.

LOCAL HISTORY
To learn more about Jewish history in Nashville, visit the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities Nashville Historical Overview website.

RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Vanderbilt
Jewish Studies Program
Maimonides Jewish Student Organization
Peabody Jewish Association
Jewish Law Student Association
Owen Jewish Business Association
Vanderbilt Chabad Jewish Student Group
Vanderbilt Hillel
Jewish Law Association of Middle Tennessee
Ben Schulman Center for Jewish Life

Nashville
Jewish Federation and Jewish Foundation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee
Gordon Jewish Community Center
Akiva School
Chabad of Nashville
Hebrica
Jewish Children’s Regional Services
Jewish Family Service, Nashville Chapter
Nashville Holocaust Memorial
National Council of Jewish Women, Nashville Chapter
Nashville Jewish Film Festival

National
American Jewish Congress
American Jewish Press Association
Jewish Federations of North America
Jewish Community Center Association
National Council of Jewish Women
Anti-Defamation League

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