



DOLCEFINO CONSULTING

Letter to the Editor of The Jewish Herald Voice:

On December 23, 2021, the Jewish Herald Voice posted the latest press release from the Houston Hebrew Free Loan Association titled “Hebrew Free Loan celebrates growth, success.”

Your readers may wrongly believe this was a factual news presentation by JHV. It was not. It was simply a regurgitation of a charity press release, part of a PR campaign by a failing charity. Houston’s Jewish Community should have been told this by your editors.

There is no mention of the absolute upheaval in the HFLA during 2021, the embarrassing resignations of multiple members of the Board of Trustees, the widening financial questions about the use of charity funds, or the revelations about false statements on the charity’s 2019 tax return.

Last fall, the Texas Attorney General agreed to review multiple complaints about the mounting financial discrepancies. We have offered the charity multiple opportunities to explain these discrepancies and they have refused. Instead, the organization has attempted to use the most cherished Jewish organizations in town to shield themselves from legitimate scrutiny: The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, Jewish Family Services, and the Houston Jewish Community Foundation.

The article touts a 90 percent increase in the size of the Board of Trustees, yet on the HFLA website the names of these new board members are kept secret. We know many of the individuals listed are no longer members of the board and are no longer even affiliated with HFLA.

It is that kind of secrecy that is ruining a once storied charity, providing a blessing with interest free loans to members of the Jewish Community who need assistance. HFLA used to be a transparent charity, and all its donors were allowed to see the financial records of the organization. That is no longer true. Ask yourselves why.

Now a secret board gets to decide if a donor to HFLA can become a member. The charity cherry picks what financial information they release publicly. The organization refuses to enforce a conflict-of-interest policy amidst evidence some of their loans have been given to friends and relatives of members of the Board of Trustees.

This unfortunate move from charity to private club coincides with the leadership of David Loev, a Houston lawyer with a documented history of trouble with the Securities and Exchange Commission because of his involvement with companies linked to financial fraud.

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Ask yourselves why a charity would want that association as they ask for financial support from the community. Ask yourselves why HFLA reports investment losses when all their money was invested in a Jewish Community Foundation Fund that reported substantial gains.

Notice in the December 23 article there is no mention of an increase in donations. That is because donations have dropped off dramatically, yet HFLA refuses to open its books.

A Harris County judge has now cleared the way for a jury trial into allegations a now former HFLA official physically assaulted a major donor as they sought financial transparency. The vulgar tirade at a charity meeting held at the Jewish Community Center has been made public. This is not the kind of conduct legitimate organizations in our community should tolerate.

I am most disappointed that several Houston rabbis and more credible organizations have ignored calls to help create change in the Hebrew Free Loan Association. They know something is wrong, and their silence only allows a once great charity to continue to disintegrate.

Respectfully,

Wayne Dolcefino
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