

Show of unity against symbols of hate

Gathering follows appearance of swastikas

BY KEITH EDWARDS
Staff Writer

WINTHROP — A swastika amateurishly scrawled in blue paint and stretching across both lanes of Outer Highland Avenue, near a Jewish family's home, should not be taken as representative of the community, several church leaders said Sunday.

Nor should it be taken lightly.

"When something like this happens, most of us just drive past, and act like it's no big deal," said Rev. Karen Munson, of Readfield United Methodist Church. "The most significant moral step we can take in our lives is to pay attention. Pay attention to each other in the community, and just take care of each other when one is wounded."

Sunday, in a special inter-faith service at Winthrop United Methodist Church, about 45 people denounced the swastika and reassured those of all faiths such hate messages will not be tolerated.

Rabbi Susan Bulba Carvutto, of Augusta's



Staff photo by Andy Molloy

SPEAKING OUT: Rabbi Susan Bulba Carvutto, left, addresses people attending an inter-faith service Sunday in Winthrop to denounce swastikas discovered in that community more than a week ago. Ministers and people from several denominations attended the meeting.

Temple Beth-El, said Sunday she got a call last Saturday night from one of the families in her congregation, telling her a swastika had been painted in the street near where they live.

"It wasn't right in front of their home but, nevertheless, it gave them a terrible feeling," she said.

Carvutto said even if the person who painted the swastika doesn't really understand the meaning behind the hateful Nazi symbol, the swastika's mes-

sage should still not be taken lightly.

In response, she called her fellow members of the Winthrop Area Ministerial Association to talk about putting together a service to speak against the swastika and other symbols of hate.

"They responded with no hesitation," Carvutto said of the response of the leaders of other area houses of worship. "Immediately, I felt the Jewish community was not alone in responding. This is a community characterized

by respect for each other. Regardless of religious differences."

Winthrop Police officer Paul Ferland said Friday police received a criminal mischief complaint on April 24 saying someone painted swastikas on a handful of telephone poles and trees in a residential section of Outer Highland Avenue. Swastikas are still there, though it appears they have been painted over. The large

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