Dear Friend of AJU:

As you probably already know, KNBC television aired two reports a few weeks ago, followed by another report on November 9, about the status of the site cleanup at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL). That site sits on the very southern border of our Brandeis-Bardin Campus (BBC) in Simi Valley.

In their most recent broadcast, KNBC suggested strongly that AJU, and the prior managers of Brandeis-Bardin, sought to conceal evidence that our property is contaminated. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. I am writing to you now, so that you can hear and judge the facts for yourself:

Decades ago at the SSFL, tests were conducted on rocket engines. As a result, there was some soil contamination on their property from the rocket fuel. They also experienced a nuclear accident in 1959 that released contaminants into the air.

Some of the contamination from the rocket engines did cross into the Brandeis-Bardin campus. This affected some 100 acres of the property, in an inaccessible area far away from the developed center of the campus. Ultimately, the owners of SSFL acquired that property from us and undertook the responsibility to clean it up.

For many, many years we (and those who managed BBC before us) have conducted frequent tests to confirm that the soil and water on our campus are clean. All of the test results have indicated BBC has been and continues to be absolutely safe. Even the ground water on our campus is safe to drink, although we do not use it for that purpose, since we get our water from the Calleguas Water District which supplies water to Simi Valley. Just to reiterate, there is absolutely no concern about the safety of BBC. Furthermore, the reporter from KNBC is well aware of these facts.

As you may know, AJU assumed responsibility for BBC in 2007. I am sure you realize that AJU would never have undertaken this responsibility if we had even the slightest concern about the safety of the property. The former leaders of BBC were very open about the incidents at SSFL, which have been well-known in the community
for more than 35 years. As is normally done in such cases, we engaged a law firm that conducted all of the due diligence investigations prior to our assuming the management of BBC. This due diligence included a comprehensive environmental report that confirmed the safety of the property.

Nevertheless, because of a rather public disagreement about how the next phase of the SSFL cleanup should proceed, we at AJU were included in KNBC’s initial investigation. Based on the way the KNBC reporter posed his questions to us, we quickly understood that any answers we provided would likely be misrepresented. When asked for our test data, we referred the KNBC reporter to the thousands of pages publicly available. Apparently, KNBC did not follow through with checking the publicly available data, but rather chose to give the impression in the news segment that AJU refused to provide data. This was an obvious attempt to make it look as if we had something to hide, and to create an artificial controversy where none exists. In general, the news broadcast created several false impressions by relying on innuendo, partial information and speculation rather than evidence and facts.

Despite the clear bias of the KNBC reporting, AJU’s many friends in the community urged us to provide more detailed responses to the inquiries from the KNBC reporter. We therefore have supplied KNBC with answers to all of their questions plus access to a great deal of information about test results. The data clearly show that BBC is safe. Of course, that fact does not make for an interesting story. We cannot know exactly how KNBC will continue to "spin" the information we provided – but based on their previous reporting, it is reasonable to expect more sensationalized, misleading stories that attempt to raise groundless concerns about BBC.

As you can well imagine, we are very saddened by the attempts of the KNBC reporter to mislead the public and do harm to a wonderful nonprofit institution that has served the community for years. All we can do in response is provide you, our friends, with the same information we provided to KNBC, so that you can make a judgment for yourself. All of that information is available on this website with additional links to public information regarding the testing.

We can use your help in setting the record straight. If someone asks you about the safety of BBC, please refer to the attached material. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact either Joanna Gerber, vice president for communication (310-440-1529) or Rabbi Jay Strear, AJU senior vice president (310-440-1204).

We regret the need for this communication, but I am sure you understand why we now felt that some response to the inflammatory misrepresentations by KNBC was in order.

My best,

Bob Wexler

Dr. Robert Wexler
President