



Legacy



A publication of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center, a division of the Alabama Holocaust Commission

Fall/ Winter 2011

DATES TO REMEMBER:

L'Chaim: Celebrating the Lives of Our Holocaust Survivors

Sunday, August 28, 2011
5:00 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.
Temple Beth-El Cultural Center

Echoes & Reflections Teacher Workshops

Wednesday, October 26
Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham

Evening Community Lecture:
Deborah Batiste, ADL

Friday, October 28
Florence City Schools
Central Office, Florence

Tuesday, November 1
Alabama Department of
Archives, Montgomery

Evening Community Lecture:
Shelley Rose, ADL;
Agudath Israel Etz Ahayem
Synagogue, Montgomery

Thursday, November 3
Faulkner State University,
Bay Minette



Please plan on joining us Sunday, August 28, for dinner and a heartwarming program as we honor our Holocaust survivors. We are well aware of the painful trials that our survivors suffered during the Holocaust and the stories they have shared so generously with students and community groups across the state.

On August 28, we will focus on their lives since the Holocaust, and celebrate the rich legacies they have given to their families and to our community. We hope you will be a part of this special evening.

Sunday, August 28, 2011

5:00 pm—6:45 pm

Temple Beth-El Cultural Center

Dinner and Program

Music by The Magic Shtetl Klezmer Band

\$36 per person

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Purchase tickets online at www.bhamholocausteducation.org or by mail: BHEC, P.O. Box 130805, Birmingham, AL 35213-0805.

BHEC Summer Fundraising Campaign

Deborah Layman, Fundraising Co-Chair

As you know, the BHEC is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that relies on private donations to continue and advance the many educational initiatives that are reaching students across the state with the important lessons of the Holocaust. As we prepare to launch exciting new projects for 2011-12, we turn to our supporters to help make them a reality:

- Present bi-annual statewide teacher workshop in 2011— \$35,000
- Create classroom-length videos of survivors' stories—\$13,000
- Create video clips of survivors' stories for the online version of *Darkness into Life*—\$9,500
- Create compact, lightweight, traveling version of the *Darkness into Life* exhibit for schools—\$13,000

For every teacher who is trained at one of our workshops, hundreds of students are exposed to the stories and lessons of the Holocaust. These students are being guided to understand the

Continued page 7



The Traveling Exhibit That Won't Stay Still

Barbara Solomon, Exhibit Coordinator

Darkness into Life just won't stay still, and we're thrilled!

The BHEC's premier teaching tool, created by Becky Seitel and Mitzi J. Levin, has been traveling around Alabama since its debut at the Birmingham Levite Jewish Community Center in 2007. The exhibit has been in high demand by schools, libraries, museums, and community centers state-wide, and the interest generated by this exhibit has far exceeded both the co-creators and the rest of the BHEC Board expectations.

Making the Rounds

This past academic year, the exhibit toured the state: from Wallace State Community College in Hanceville, to Montevallo Public Library, on to Opelika Public Library, and ending the school year at the Birmingham Public Library. As has become our policy, the exhibit stays "home" for the summer, in the offices of the BHEC, where it is accessible

for anyone in the community to view it.

Stories of 20 Survivors

The exhibit is a beautiful collection of incredible stories told through the photographs and paintings of Becky and Mitzi. Each story is unique and difficult to imagine. The exhibit seeks to allow participants a window into the experiences that our survivors had as a result of Hitler's rise to power and his mission to exterminate the Jewish people, as well as many other groups he termed as "undesirable." Their treatment at the hands of Nazi Germany was unfathomable in its cruelty and its disregard for the sanctity of life. The lives that our Alabama survivors have gone on to live defies this quest for extermination by Hitler, and, instead, their stories are of heroism, survival, and the creation of lives in our "Sweet Home Alabama."

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A Message

Phyllis Weinstein, BHEC Chair

Summer is supposed to be a quiet, down time where you catch up on all the things you wanted to do all year. But that has definitely not been the case with the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center. Our wonderful volunteers are creative and productive in their activity and have kept the wheels turning at a rapid pace during July and will continue through August.

We were honored to host a Book Signing-Reception for our treasured Holocaust survivor, Ruth Siegler, to launch her memoir, *My Father's Blessing*, a book written with assistance from Ann M. Mollengarden, BHEC Education Coordinator. What we glean from Ruth's incredible story will add to our knowledge of the Holocaust by learning how individual lives were affected and how this extraordinary woman was able to overcome these dark periods of her life.

Our annual Teacher Reception was held during the last days of July and was attended by a record audience. Our gratitude and appreciation to Brenda and Fred Friedman is boundless for providing the financial support and making our growing Teacher Workshop participation a huge success. Laurie Elmetts, Chairman of this committee, has more to say in this publication.

Mitzi J. Levin, volunteer librarian Michelle Hamrick, and BHEC committee member Vikki Flax are on their way to create a functioning library which you will read about in these pages.

Our much-in-demand exhibit, *Darkness into Life: Alabama's Holocaust Survivors Through Photography and Art*, has a full schedule in the coming months. You will want to learn more from DIL Coordinator Barbara Solomon's article in this issue of *Legacy*.

Our dynamic Education Coordinator, Ann Mollengarden, has moved our technology capability up dozens of notches, and we are proud we can reach out to our teachers by giving them current and important information for their classroom use. Ann gives details in her article.

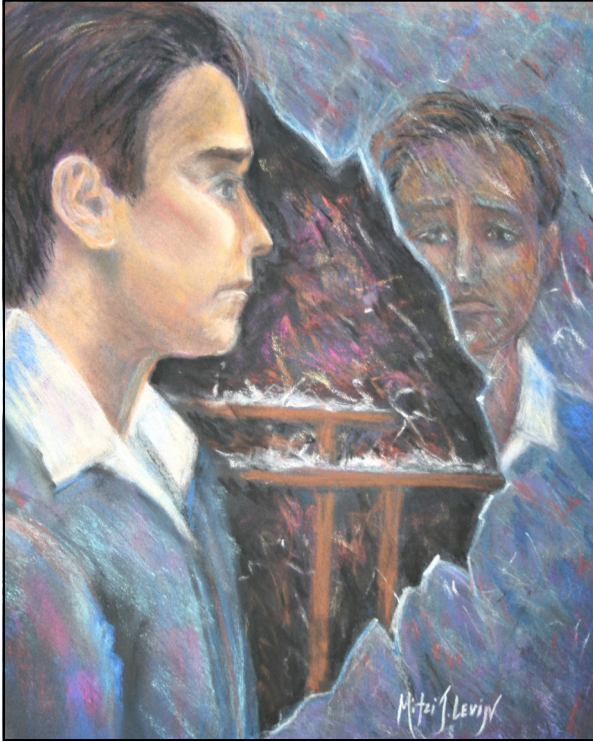
We look forward with great anticipation to "*L'Chaim: Celebrating The Lives and Legacies of our Holocaust Survivors*," a dinner and program to be held Sunday, August 28 at Temple Beth-El. This event is capably chaired by Barbara Aland and Deborah Layman, with strong support from Karen Allen, Ann Mollengarden, Lynn Raviv, and Barbara Solomon. We hope we will achieve our fundraising goal to accomplish our extensive education program and celebrate in this culminating event. We hope to see you there!

Enjoy reading this bi-annual report of Holocaust programming in our city and state!

Darkness Life

Alabama Holocaust Survivors Through Photography and Art

Darkness into Life: Survivor Robert May



Kristallnacht by Mitzi J. Levin

returned, everything in the apartment had been smashed. The situation was much worse in Camberg where Robert's parents had also been warned by a neighbor. Robert learned that his parents had spent Kristallnacht hiding in the Jewish Cemetery and were later taken to jail (in "protective custody") for a few nights. They were released unharmed, but their store and home were destroyed.

The next month, it was arranged for Robert to travel to Brighton, England, to attend a Jewish boarding school. In June, 1940, because of the bombing in England, he and the other students were evacuated to Wales. Meanwhile, his parents moved from Frankfurt to Holland to England. The family anxiously awaited visas so that they could leave war-torn Europe and travel to America. On August 8, 1940, they boarded a ship in Liverpool, England, and docked in New Orleans on September 9, 1940.

Not everyone in Robert's family escaped the Holocaust. Three family members perished, including his Aunt Emma who died at Auschwitz.

Today, on a shelf, in a special place in Robert's home, sits one small remnant of his childhood—a tiny silver bowl that was rescued from the rubble of Kristallnacht. As he turns the bowl around in his hand, his thoughts return to the past.

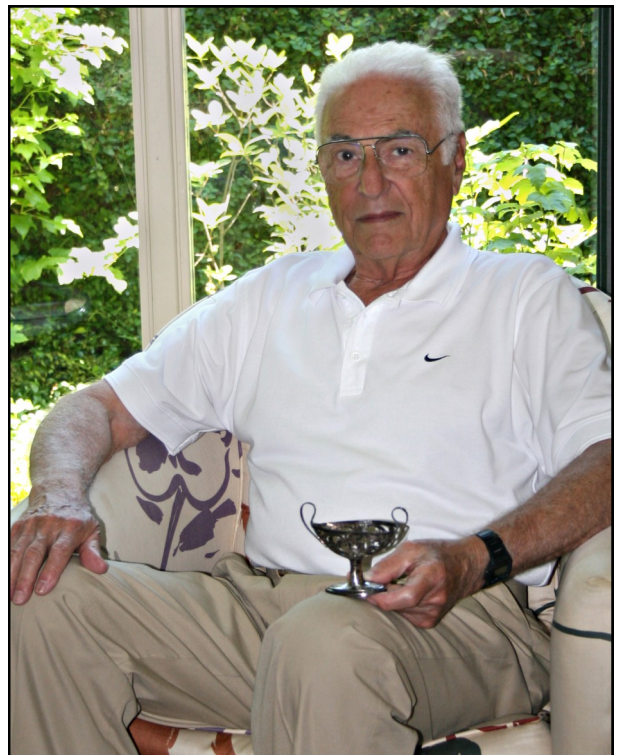
"So much was destroyed that night, but I have this one piece that survived, this one small keepsake from home."

Twelve-year-old Robert May looked at his reflection in the broken glass and saw a young boy whose eyes were filled with fear and uncertainty. He remembers thinking, "Broken glass, broken spirits...no place is safe. Everything has changed and our lives will never be the same."

Kristallnacht occurred on November 9, 1938. In one night, hundreds of Jewish synagogues were destroyed; 91 Jews were killed; 30,000 Jews were thrown into concentration camps; 7,500 Jewish businesses were destroyed; and thousands of Jewish homes were ransacked. In the aftermath, Hitler's regime made certain that Jews would no longer be safe. Kristallnacht came to stand for the shattering of Jewish existence in Germany.

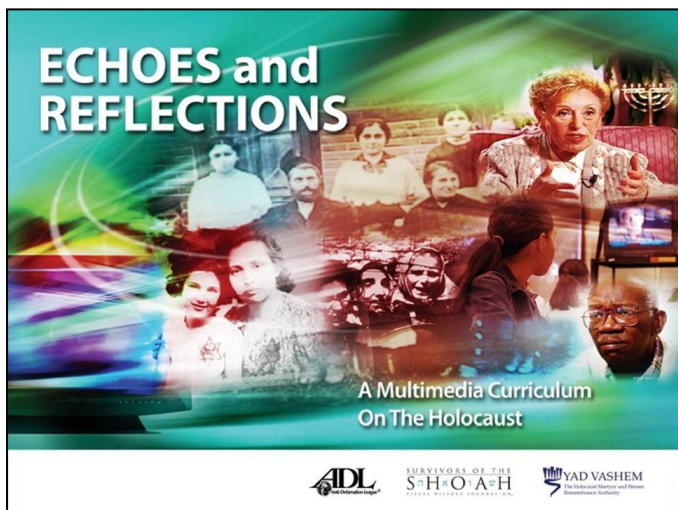
When Hitler came to power, Robert was a seven-year-old student in public school in Camberg, Germany. At first, neither he nor his parents felt threatened or experienced antisemitism. But within three years, everything changed. By the time Robert entered third grade, he was tormented by the Hitler Youth and his parents' store was boycotted daily.

In 1936, Robert went to live with his Aunt Emma in Frankfurt so that he could attend the Philanthropin, a Jewish Day School. On Kristallnacht, he and his aunt were warned that something bad was going to happen and that they should be out of the apartment that night. They left and spent the day and night on the street. When they



Keepsake from Home by Becky Seitel

AHC and ADL Bring *Echoes & Reflections* Curriculum to the State Ann Mollengarden, Education Coordinator



This fall, the Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) will be hosting four teacher workshops in the state. The ADL will provide the facilitators as well as the curriculum, *Echoes & Reflections: A*

Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust. This award-winning curriculum was developed by the ADL, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, and Yad Vashem. It includes a modular curriculum design allowing educators to choose age-appropriate materials; visual history testimony of survivors, rescuers, liberators, and other witnesses to individualize the history; primary source materials, including photos, artwork, diaries, etc.; and finally, there is a comprehensive website with even more support materials.

The workshops in Birmingham (Wednesday, October 26) and Florence (Friday, October 28) will be facilitated by Deborah Batiste, Project Director for *Echoes & Reflections*. Deborah will also speak to the Birmingham community on Wednesday evening, October 26, about the importance of Holocaust survivor testimonies. Shelley Rose, Associate Director of the ADL/Atlanta will facilitate the workshops in Montgomery (Tuesday, November 1) and Bay Minette (Thursday, November 3). Shelley will also speak to the Montgomery community about the work of the ADL on Tuesday evening, November 1.

Kristallnacht—A Turning Point in History

Phyllis Weinstein, BHEC Chair



While the Jewish people of Germany had been stripped of their human rights, beginning in 1933, the events

of Kristallnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass") which occurred on November 9, 1938, marked the first assault on their homes, synagogues, and lives. It was a turning point in history.

For over 48 hours, violent mobs made up of Nazi Party officials, Nazi storm troopers, and Hitler Youth dressed in street clothes and joined by some civilians, rampaged through the streets of German cities assaulting Jews and vandalizing their property. They destroyed hundreds of synagogues, setting many of them on fire. Under orders to let the fires burn, but to prevent the flames from spreading to other buildings, firefighters stood by. These pogroms marked a shift from anti-Semitic rhetoric to violent, aggressive anti-Jewish measures that would culminate in the Holocaust—the systematic, state-sponsored murder of Jews.

You may read in Dr. Robert May's biography in this publication how his life was impacted by the events on these days that occurred 73 years ago; Ruth Scheuer Siegler devotes a chapter in her memoir, *My Father's Blessing*, to Kristallnacht which she states, "was the beginning of a long nightmare for my family and millions of other Germans." The late Jack Bass was almost killed in the street on this fateful night. The late

Rabbi Davin Schoenberger, Chief Rabbi of Aachen, Germany, who spent his retirement in Alabama until his death in 1989, fled Germany with his wife, Ilse, and daughter, Elaine (Katz), after their synagogue was burned to the ground. This wanton destruction spread through Germany on this well-planned and organized effort of the German government that changed their lives forever.

We mark November 9 as a Day of Remembrance and are challenged to be ever mindful of those measures, even in our life today, that can cause us to lose our 'moral compass.'

For more information about Kristallnacht please visit the BHEC website: www.bhamholocausteducation.org.



New Library: Small, but Growing

Mitzi J. Levin, Library and Media Coordinator

The Birmingham Holocaust Education Center Library houses books, audio tapes, videos and teaching material about World War II, the Holocaust, and other genocides. The BHEC website will soon offer online viewing access to our library's holdings. We welcome donations of books, audio tapes, and videos that cover these specific topics.

We express our appreciation to Tatyana Shitsel and Karen Allen for donating books; Isabel Siegal for a classroom set (25 books) of Art Spiegelman's graphic novel, *Maus*; and Phyllis Bass and Mountain View Baptist Church for bookcases.

All materials are available to the public and are housed in our offices on the first floor of the Bayer Properties building at 2222 Arlington Avenue. Visiting hours are Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Our offices are closed on holidays.

Volunteer Spotlight—Michelle Hamrick

Mitzi J. Levin, Library and Media Coordinator



Michelle Hamrick, Library Volunteer

When working in a volunteer environment, there are those who step up and shine. We have one such person to spotlight—Michelle Hamrick. She came to us when the library was nothing more than one bookcase and a few boxes of teaching materials. During the past year, she worked countless hours to bring our library up to the standards of a resource library.

"I was drawn to the library because I'm a student of history. While at UAB, I focused as much as possible on World War II. When the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center Library internship opportunity was posted, I jumped at the chance to work on such an important task," says Michelle.

"The BHEC Library will have several benefits for the Birmingham metro area. It is a single location with a growing collection devoted to the study and discussion of the Holocaust. Some of the items in this collection are rare in our region. Few

public libraries have the resources to hold hundreds of items on a single topic. That is a niche this library can fill," explains Michelle.

"I am always drawn to open the books and sometimes get lost in the stories I find there. One book that caught my attention in this collection is the biography *Hiding Edith*, by Kath Kacer. The book is written for young readers. Edith was one of a hundred children who survived the Holocaust at a special refugee home in a small French village where local villagers hid the children. This story is important to me because it is written at a level appropriate for younger readers, and it will introduce some of the basic concepts we all should take from this time in history: the importance of remembering the fact that anyone can do the right thing," shares Michelle.

Michelle lives in Birmingham with her husband and children. Until recently, she worked at the Birmingham Public Library in the computer center and as a trainer for Jefferson County Library Cooperative. In May, she received her Masters in Library and Information Studies. She is currently the Coordinator for Public Services with the Irondale Public Library.

BHEC Website

Ann Mollengarden, Education Coordinator

The BHEC website continues to develop to meet the needs of teachers throughout the state and even the world. Yes, we have had several hits from outside the U.S.

The BHEC Library will soon be accessible online. Interested individuals will be able to access all of our book and video titles, see if they are available, and then come in to our office to check them out. Through the generosity of many donors, as well as our own purchases, our library is developing into a unique resource.

We are also developing an Alabama Survivors page which will provide information about survivors in the state who were not a part of our *Darkness into Life* exhibit. Although our exhibit features 20 survivors, there are many more in the state whose stories add vital information to the tapestry of history and remembrance. Sherry Blanton from Anniston will share her *Anniston Survivor Stories*. Louisa Weinrib's oral histories of Montgomery survivors will be linked from their home at the Alabama Department of Archives and History. It is also our hope that families will come forth with additional histories, photos, and artifacts of Holocaust survivors throughout the state.

We hope you will visit our website, www.bhamholocausteducation.org. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Guardians of Remembrance: Preserving Personal Stories

Denise Lewis , Speaker Coordinator

As we continue to listen to the personal stories of our courageous survivors of the Holocaust, we realize how very important it is that these stories continue to be told.

The mission of the Guardians of Remembrance is to learn these stories and be able to continue telling the lessons and experiences that the survivors have to share. The Guardian will become a bridge to remembrance and play a vital role in the continuing education of the Holocaust.

If you are interested in becoming a "Guardian" for one of our Holocaust survivors and are willing to listen and learn their stories, please email me at DBL50@aol.com for further information.

Our Holocaust survivors have continued to speak and share their stories to area churches, civic groups, and schools, as well as programs from Huntsville to Montgomery. The groups are always so gracious and welcome our speakers with such enthusiasm. If you would like to have a speaker, please fill out the request form on our website and our speaker coordinator will get back with you.

Scholarship Recipients

Laurie Elmetts, Scholarship Coordinator

The Birmingham Holocaust Education Center received a record number of applications for scholarship funding to attend Holocaust Education Workshops this year. These scholarships are generously funded by community leaders Brenda and Fred Friedman.

Six scholarships were awarded to Birmingham-area teachers attending the Belfer Conference for Educators at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Two awards, from the Alabama Holocaust Commission, were given to Alabama teachers attending the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR) Summer Institute in New York City. As in years past, these teachers have returned with increased passion, insight, and knowledge to share with their many students and colleagues. These teachers will be important resources for their schools and our BHEC community. Each scholarship recipient has committed to teach the Holocaust in their classroom for a minimum of three years.

Amy McDonald, an AP history teacher at Shades Valley High School who attended the JFR Summer Institute, shared "As a result of this experience, I will be better equipped to address and educate my students on the many complicated and multifaceted issues which arise when broaching this enormous and emotional topic. I have been exposed to a community of educators, historians, and colleagues. I feel that a personal challenge and baton have been handed to me that will be far reaching."

The Belfer Conference was attended by: Amanda Beason, Leeds High School; Faith Burns, Springville Middle School; Wes Cable, Hoover High School; Logan Green, Pinson Valley High School; Justin Hefner, Montevallo Middle School; and Mitzi Weems, Cleveland High School. The following teachers attended JFR Summer Institute: Amy McDonald, Shades Valley High School, and Ken Wiggins, Ranburne High School. Jeremy Brown attended the Jewish Labor Committee's Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teachers' Program.

These teachers were honored at a reception on July 28, 2011.

Remembering Paul Filben



Paul Filben was a central figure in Holocaust education in our state and we are saddened to know that death has taken this stalwart figure. He and his beloved late wife, Mary, organized a Christian-Jewish dialogue over 30 years ago in their home city of Mobile, and they continued to nurture it throughout the years. Their passion and strong belief in the dignity of each individual led them into Holocaust studies and education.

Paul served on the Alabama Holocaust Council and became the Chair of the newly-established Alabama Holocaust Commission in 1999. He served in this capacity for six years.

We remember with deep gratitude his devoted years of service to the strengthening of Holocaust awareness and knowledge and the leadership he provided. He and Mary led the way, and both were highly-regarded and respected for their dedication and willingness to expend countless hours and energy on behalf of a better relationship between people in our state. We know their efforts were not in vain.

May his memory be a blessing.

Signposts Along the Road to Auschwitz



Irving Roth, a Holocaust survivor and the Director of the Holocaust Resource Center at the Temple Judea of Manhasset, New York, spoke to a standing-room-only crowd on July 12 at Temple Beth-El in Anniston.

Mr. Roth, a survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, was born on September 2, 1929, in Czechoslovakia, and later moved with his family to Hungary in attempts to evade Nazi control of his homeland. By 1945, he and some of his family members were eventually sent to Auschwitz where he narrowly escaped.

One of Mr. Roth's life's ambitions is to convey the lessons that can be learned from his experiences, and he actively works to heighten engagement with this sensitive subject matter, guiding his audience from shock to compassion and social action.

He is the author of *Bondi's Brother*, and has received the Spirit of Anne Frank Outstanding Citizen Award, along with numerous other honors. Today, he is one of the most sought-after Holocaust educators throughout America, Europe, and Israel.

The event was sponsored by the Jacksonville State University Writing Project and Temple Beth-El of Anniston, Lisa Light, Donoho School, Chair.

BHEC Summer Fundraising Campaign (continued)

Deborah Layman, Fundraising Co-Chair

consequences of prejudice, discrimination and cruelty—not only in history, but in their everyday lives.

As our survivors are getting older and less able to share their personal experiences, we are being pro-active in preserving their stories. We have video footage from a wide variety of speaking engagements and interviews ready to be edited into segments for classroom use and for posting on our website. Long after the last survivor is gone, these first-hand stories will be accessible for teachers and students everywhere.

Currently, our *Darkness into Life* exhibit is shipped to venues in six, heavy museum crates. When the exhibit goes to schools, the BHEC covers the considerable shipping costs. Another problem with shipping the permanent exhibit is that the paintings and photographs suffer wear and tear every time they are shipped and displayed. A lightweight, free-standing version would cut our long-term costs, preserve the permanent exhibit, and allow us to make *Darkness into Life* available to many more venues.

Thanks to our volunteers, our recent phone campaign brought in many, many pledges for which we are grateful! If we didn't reach you by phone, **please consider making a donation at this time using the enclosed envelope.**

Help us keep the stories and lessons of the Holocaust alive!

The Traveling Exhibit That Won't Stay Still (continued)

Barbara Solomon, Exhibit Coordinator

Excitement Generated

Whenever the exhibit travels to a different venue, we are amazed at the response of the host community. The exhibit has the ability to generate such excitement and enthusiasm that the community hosting it typically creates programs and themes to accompany it. This happened in Montevallo this past year where the group created an introductory video that has since become part of the exhibit; it happened in Hanceville where the exhibit inspired Wallace State to suspend classes while speakers Riva and Aisic Hirsh came to present their stories to a group of more than 2,000 students and community members, and it happened at the Birmingham Public Library where the exhibit collaborated with the annual BHEC participation in the Brown Bag Lunch Series.

Borrowing the Exhibit

Your community is invited to host this inspirational and thought-provoking exhibit. Within the state, all fees are waived, and additionally, shipping fees for the exhibit are paid by the BHEC for all educational facilities who host the exhibit.

Please visit our website where you may view the exhibit online and contact us regarding your interest. You are also welcome to contact Barbara Solomon, DIL Exhibit Coordinator at 205-422-3584.

We are looking forward to visiting your community next year!

**Alabama Holocaust Foundation
Birmingham Holocaust Education Center**

**A Resource Center for Holocaust and Genocide Education
P.O. Box 130577
Birmingham, AL 35213-0577
Phone: 205.795.4176
www.bhamholocausteducation.org**

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Max Herzel	Barbara Solomon
Sharon Kahn	Lemarse Washington
Deborah Layman	Dr. Steven Whitton
Mitzi J. Levin	Eva Wilensky

BHEC MISSION STATEMENT: *The Center seeks to facilitate education and understanding of the Holocaust by providing information, materials, speakers, teachers' workshops, community events, and programming. The Holocaust, the most significant event in recent world history, revealed both the peaks of heroism and the depths of cruelty and depravity that humans can experience. The Center hopes that, by learning from the past, students will fortify their knowledge and will be leaders in preventing such evil from recurring.*

FYI

Project Heart

If you, or your family, owned movable, immovable, or intangible property that was confiscated, looted, or forcibly sold in countries governed or occupied by the Nazi forces or Axis powers during the Holocaust era, you may be eligible to participate in the Holocaust Era Asset Restitution Taskforce Project (Project Heart). Project Heart is a nonprofit initiative of The Jewish Agency for Israel, funded by and in cooperation with the Government of Israel. For information visit

<http://www.heartwebsite.org>

Thanks to:

Bob May for his help in assembling a metal storage shelf for our storage room. We appreciate his willingness to provide us with his expertise.

Alexander Thompson, Zachary Mollengarden, Nick Layman, Cathy O. Friedman for their help in our fundraising phone blitz.

Summer Reading

William Shulman, President of the Association of Holocaust Organizations, has a great recommendation: if you read only one book on the Holocaust this summer, make sure it is Dr. Alvin Rosenfeld's *The End of the Holocaust*.

Ideals Cannot Die

Their frames, so frail
Their bodies, malnourished
They made it through hell
And again they flourished

They'd been broken and beaten
Without mercy, tortured,
Treated like demons
Enduring the morbid

They faced these things
With faltering stride
For a God who gave wings
To all that had died.

The Nazi's had failed
The Species, still strong
You cannot kill IDEALS
Hitler was wrong

Dedicated to Mr. Max Steinmetz and Mr. Max Herzel
AUM Holocaust Education Day
Brad Hintz, Florence—April 6, 2011