

LEGACY

Keeping the History and Lessons of the Holocaust Alive



Spring 2018

BHEC Announces 2018 *L'Chaim* Honoree: Joel Rotenstreich

by Deborah Layman, VP of Programming

"Fundraising is my niche," says Joel Rotenstreich, "and I've learned that with fundraising, family, and business, you accomplish more face-to-face."

When Joel, a BHEC board member, agreed to co-chair the BHEC's annual fundraising efforts in 2016 and again in 2017, we learned firsthand the amazing results his "face-to-face" approach can produce. In his kind, direct, and soft-spoken way, Joel tirelessly makes the case for supporting the BHEC at countless lunches and meetings with friends and associates. When Joel is passionate about a cause, he is very compelling, and the BHEC has been the grateful recipient of the fruits of his passion for Holocaust education. "It's expensive to be my friend," he says, half-jokingly.

Education, social justice, and interfaith unity have been driving forces in Joel's years of community involvement, and he has served on the boards of numerous organizations over the years. Joel conceived of and led the Anne Frank Tree project. He was campaign chair and president of the Birmingham Jewish Federation. Joel served three five-year terms on the Mountain Brook Board of Education and was president from 2000 to 2002.

He is quick to point out, and to

reiterate, that none of the community work he has done could have been accomplished without the constant love and support of Bunny, his wife of 57 years. "I've never accomplished anything alone," he says. Joel has had his share of heartache, including two life-threatening illnesses which he survived with Bunny by his side. "Bunny and I have overcome some pretty unusual challenges that, together, have made me who I am, and I love life."

Introducing the wonders of the land of Israel to others has been another ongoing passion for Joel. He and Bunny have led 22 group trips to Israel, including seven interfaith/interracial study missions. In all, more than 600 local clergy, educators, city and county officials, community leaders, friends, and neighbors have experienced Israel through the interfaith study missions led by the Rotenstreichs, whose love for the land is deep and profound.

Joel and Bunny have two children, Mark (husband Jeff) and Beth, and twin eight-year-old grandsons. "Asher and Noah are my future," Joel says. "I try to teach them what my parents and mentors taught me: be nice, do the right thing, and tell the truth. Be the best you can be, and do the best you can do."

He adds, "The work of the BHEC is very close to my heart. We need more



teachers teaching kids what it means to be courageous and to speak up if they see something that's not right."

This year, 2018, is especially appropriate for Joel to be the BHEC's *L'Chaim* ("to life") honoree. Jewish tradition assigns numerical values to the letters of the alphabet, and the Hebrew letters that make up the word *chai* ("life") add up to 18. This number is considered a charmed or blessed number, and gifts of money are often given in multiples of 18. Joel's love of life and heartfelt gratitude for his blessings and opportunities make *chai* — 18 — especially meaningful for our 2018 *L'Chaim* honoree.

The BHEC is honored to announce the 2018 Co-Chairs of the *L'Chaim* campaign, Kate Cotton and David Silverstein. We greatly appreciate their commitment to raising funds for our vital mission.

The BHEC Welcomes Joyce Spielberger as Interim Executive Director



Joyce Spielberger, former BHEC board member and officer, is now serving as Interim Executive Director of the BHEC. Joyce is passionate about the mission of our organization and brings years of experience working for non-profits.

"I am thrilled to be working to further the mission of the BHEC," said Joyce. "Preserving and teaching the lessons of the Holocaust will help insure that never again will we let hate and bigotry reign."

Most recently, Joyce served as Executive Director of Magic Moments for four years. She has been a consultant with the Birmingham Bar

Volunteer Lawyers Program and previously was Director of Community Relations and Overseas Programs for the Birmingham Jewish Federation. Joyce is a graduate of both Leadership Birmingham and Leadership Alabama.

"The BHEC welcomes Joyce," said BHEC Board President Karen Allen, "Her expertise, insight, and leadership will be invaluable as we continue to advance our mission, increase our programming, and expand our impact throughout the state."



Planet Fundraiser and Amazon Smile: Quick & Easy Fundraising

The BHEC can now get support from merchants you already shop with!

Planet Fundraiser

Many local businesses have designated a percentage they'd like to donate to non-profits on purchases made at their stores! When you shop, they give back to a cause you care about!

- Download the Planet Fundraiser App on your smartphone.
- Select the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center as your Campaign.
- Search the list of participating merchants.
- When you shop, snap a picture of your receipt.
- A percentage of your purchase will be given to the BHEC!

Amazon Smile

AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice.

When you want to make a purchase from Amazon, go to **www.smile.amazon.com**. Enter "Birmingham Holocaust Education Center" in the search field, and follow the prompts. Products eligible for Amazon Smile will be indicated on the product detail pages.



ENHANCED SECURITY AT THE BHEC

by Joyce Spielberger,
Interim Executive Director

The Birmingham Holocaust Education Center has added enhanced security measures to our office thanks to funding from the Birmingham Jewish community's special security campaign. We now have a secure entry system complete with visual and audio capability, allowing us to "see and hear" visitors before they are permitted entry to the Center.

These enhanced measures have always been desired by the BHEC, but the need for increased security was made even more apparent amid last year's wave of bomb threats directed at Jewish Community Centers and Jewish institutions throughout the country. Four bomb threats were made to the Levite Jewish Community Center in Birmingham. In response to these threats, as well as to a rise in the number of targeted incidents nationally, the Birmingham Jewish Federation launched an emergency fundraising campaign to enhance security for community institutions. Longtime Jewish community volunteer leader Donald Hess chaired the campaign. In total, \$600,000 was raised to provide needed security measures and enhancements.

The BHEC is extremely grateful to receive this funding from the special security campaign and to Edward Goldberg and ALSCAN, Inc. for the installation of the system. In addition to the monitored outside entry door provided by Bayer Properties, our secure inner door now provides an important added layer of protection for which we are most appreciative.

Inspiration Breeds Inspiration

by Ann Mollengarden, VP of Education

As part of our partnership with Violins of Hope, the BHEC has been working throughout the year with social studies and art teachers at five Birmingham City High Schools: Carver, Huffman, Jackson Olin, Ramsay, and Wenonah. Training and educational resources on the Violins of Hope have been provided for teachers to implement in their classrooms. This year of targeted study will culminate in a full-day student learning experience in April.

We launched this educational outreach in October 2017 with a workshop for participating teachers. As always, you never know what will inspire a teacher. Shortly after the workshop, I received the following email from Howard Crosby, the art teacher at G.W. Carver High School.

...when I visited Temple Emanu-El for the Holocaust workshop, I was truly inspired by the Jewish Triptychs located in the hallway outside the conference room. I decided to create a

triptych-themed art lesson plan and had my students create Jewish triptychs.

The resulting artwork is beautiful and meaningful. Three of Crosby's students have now graciously donated their work to the BHEC: Kerrian Hinton (Grade 9), Angel Jones (Grade 9), Joel Pena Rios (Grade 10) Their works have been framed and now hang in our Center. We invite you to visit the BHEC and view these new acquisitions along with other pieces in our growing collection.



Triptych by Kerrian Hinton.



Triptych by Angel Jones.



Triptych by Joel Pena Rios.

Advanced Learning Opportunities for Teachers

by Ann Mollengarden, VP of Education

Recent discussions with several BHEC-trained Holocaust teachers have revealed an overwhelming consensus that our most impactful program for teachers has been the advanced training opportunities afforded by our Brenda and Fred Friedman Scholarships. Through this program, teachers receive scholarships to attend nationally-recognized, advanced Holocaust education training programs. At the end of each summer, the BHEC hosts a reception for scholarship winners, during which they share thoughts on their experiences. Teachers are encouraged to apply for subsequent scholarships in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the different approaches to teaching and learning about the Holocaust.

OUR 2018 FRIEDMAN SCHOLARS ARE:

Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR)

Advanced Seminar – January 2018

Logan Greene, West Blocton High School, West Blocton
Patricia Skelton, Opelika Middle School, Opelika
Mike Gadilhe, John Carroll Catholic High School, Birmingham
Kate Gholston, Opelika Middle School, Opelika

US Holocaust Memorial Museum Belfer Conference – Summer 2018

Lysa Augustin, Hampton Cove Middle School, Huntsville
Amanda Barrett, Hayden High School, Hayden
Samantha Englebert, West Blocton High School, West Blocton
Kelly Sorrell, Pizitz Middle School, Birmingham

Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR)

Summer Institute for Teachers – Summer 2018

Lisa Lawrence, Trinity Presbyterian School, Montgomery
Rachel Hartsell, Thorsby High School, Thorsby
Mindy Walker, Holt High School, Tuscaloosa

Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR)

European Study Program – Summer 2018

Patricia Skelton, Opelika Middle School, Opelika



Mike Gadilhe; Logan Greene; Stanlee Stahl, Executive Director JFR; Tricia Skelton; Ann Mollengarden; Kate Gholston; Amy McDonald.

From the Archives: The Jerry Rosenberg Collection

by Melissa Young, BHEC Archivist

Editor's Note: Dr. Jerry Rosenberg of blessed memory passed away on February 2, 2018. His work had a profound influence on Holocaust education in Alabama; the BHEC is grateful for our long-standing association with Dr. Rosenberg.

When I began working as the BHEC archivist in May 2016, I was excited to learn we had recently received a large donation from Dr. Jerry Rosenberg, a University of Alabama professor of psychology. Dr. Rosenberg began analyzing the Holocaust in 1977 and started developing the university's Holocaust Studies program in 1982. He worked at New College, a department that allows students to customize their programs of study. Because Dr. Rosenberg organized and participated in many Holocaust remembrance programs, seminars, and conferences, I knew his collection would be an incredible asset to our repository.

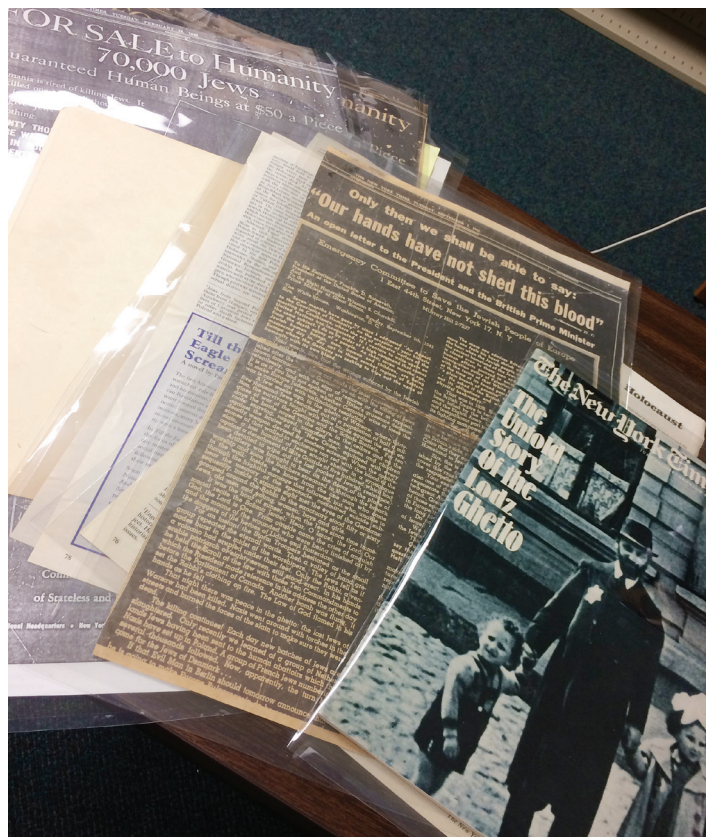
By the time he retired in January 2012, Dr. Rosenberg had

created and collected hundreds of education and exhibition materials related to global genocide, survivors, Nazi perpetrators, and World War II. He was an important member of the Alabama State Holocaust Advisory Council from 1985 to 2006, serving as its president in the 1990s. His materials include correspondence that records the activities of the Council as well as his speeches and research on the psychology of both survivors and Nazi perpetrators of hatred and violence. Since he also donated studies of genocide and the Holocaust, teaching materials, oral testimonies, images, cultural journals, and student projects, his collection is a great resource for scholars, teachers, and students.



Dr. Jerry Rosenberg.

I was saddened to learn of Dr. Rosenberg's death on February 2, but comforted in the knowledge that he made the BHEC part of his desire to pass on his love of teaching and learning. Although they won't replace him, the items and documents he collected will be a cherished section of our archives and embedded into our mission to educate. I will always remain incredibly grateful for his generosity and for trusting us with his materials.



Items from Dr. Rosenberg's collection

Violins of Hope Bring the Community Together

by Deborah Layman, VP of Programming

When Birmingham community member Sallie Downs first learned about Violins of Hope two years ago, her creative wheels started turning, and she decided to bring these restored Holocaust-era instruments to Birmingham. “The story touched me,” Sallie remembers.

Nearly 50 years ago, a Holocaust survivor brought a violin to Israeli luthier Amnon Weinstein for restoration, saying he had played the instrument while Nazi soldiers marched others to their deaths. When Weinstein opened the violin’s case, he saw ashes and could go no further with the restoration. He was overwhelmed at the thought of his own relatives—400 in all—who perished in the Holocaust.

In 1996, though, Weinstein put out a call for violins from the Holocaust and began restoring them, hoping to honor the memories of those who died in concentration camps and to give voice to their stories. His son Avshi worked with him on the restoration project, which came to be known as Violins of Hope.

Sallie Downs is a person who doesn’t go halfway with an idea, and she began dreaming as large as her imagination would go. Her first step



Amnon Weinstein with Violins of Hope.

was to book a flight to Tel Aviv to meet with Amnon Weinstein, who agreed that Birmingham would be a most appropriate and meaningful place for the violins to be heard because of the city’s civil rights history.

Sallie envisioned more than just a concert, though. Her vision was for a community-wide, multi-faceted, rich and unifying tapestry of programs including concerts, educational events, and interfaith dialogue built around the historic violins. “It’s important to bring contemporary relevance to everything we do connected with Violins of Hope,” Sallie said. “This was the inspiration for bringing Violins of Hope to Birmingham in the first place, and it’s

the piece that will leave guests from the greater community with a sense of inclusiveness where they might not have connected the dots before. The lessons of the Holocaust are not just for Jewish people, but for all who aspire to live in harmony and with mutual respect for one another.”

With Jeffrey and Gail Bayer as co-chairs of the project, Sallie enlisted a team of community leaders, professionals, fundraisers, artists, and volunteers to help make her big idea a reality. The Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Red Mountain Theatre Company, the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center, the UAB Institute for Human Rights, the Birmingham Jewish Federation,



Sallie Downs, Jeffrey Bayer, and Gail Bayer working on Violins of Hope programming.

the Birmingham Islamic Society, 16th Street Baptist Church, Alys Stephens Center, the Birmingham Museum of Art, ABC 33/40, and others have partnered on the project, and Sallie's vision is rolling out with a lot of creative energy and commitment. The wide-reaching spectrum of Birmingham programming that began last September will culminate in four days of musical and educational events beginning April 11 and featuring the Violins of Hope, Amnon Weinstein, his wife Assi, and their son Avshi.

The BHEC's role in this exciting project has been planning and coordinating teacher training workshops about the Violins of Hope along with concerts and educational experiences for area students. In addition, the BHEC's annual Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) Commemoration will feature the historic violins in a musical program at Temple Emanu-El on April 13. For more information about Violins of Hope programming, visit www.violinsofhopebirmingham.org.



JOIN US ON FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 2018

**Violins of Hope Events at Temple Emanu-El
(Free and open to the public)**

**5:00 p.m. - Yom HaShoah
(Holocaust Remembrance Day) Commemoration
featuring the Violins of Hope**

Performers include Alan Goldspiel, Jeanette Hightower, Pei-Ju Wu, Cantor Michael Horwitz, Rabbi Moshe Rube and Sarah Metzger.

5:50 p.m. - Survivors' Sabbath
This special Sabbath service honoring Holocaust survivors will feature speaker Assi Weinstein, daughter of Asael Bielski, one of the anti-Nazi partisans immortalized in the movie *Defiance*.

A reception will follow the service.



*Jeanette Hightower playing the "Auschwitz" violin.
This photo and the photo of Sallie Downs & the Bayers
courtesy of Karim Shamsi Basha.*

Jeanette Hightower: Playing a Violin of Hope

Jeanette Hightower, violinist and Executive Director of the Mason Music Foundation, has had the distinct honor of being the first Birmingham violinist to play one of the Violins of Hope. At two of the initial Violins of Hope events last fall, Jeanette performed several pieces on the "Auschwitz Violin," an instrument originally owned by a Holocaust survivor who had played in the men's orchestra at the concentration camp in Auschwitz.

"The sound of the Auschwitz violin was very different from the violins I've played before," said Jeanette. "It's not a bright sound, but has darker tones. It's mellow and soothing, yet powerful at the same time. It was a surreal feeling, knowing I was playing a violin that had been played at a concentration camp during the Holocaust. People say that the violin is the instrument most like the human voice, and I felt that this violin carried the voices of the many who were lost, so they could still be heard."

BHEC Speakers Bureau: Telling and Re-Telling the Stories

as reported by Denise Lewis, VP of Engagement



Mrs. Velma Small, Bob May, Pastor Steve Small Jr., and Ann Mollengarden at True Life Missionary Baptist Church in Forestdale.

Our small, steadfast group of active speakers—comprised of Holocaust survivors and Guardians of Remembrance—are typically booked months in advance to tell their stories at schools, churches, and civic organizations in the greater Birmingham area and across the state. Since the first of the year, BHEC speakers have given 15 presentations, in person and via Skype.

At this time, Riva Hirsch and Dr. Robert May are the only survivors in our community who are still able to manage regular speaking engagements, making us painfully aware of those we have lost and those whose health or situation no longer permits public speaking. Max Steinmetz, who was one of our most active speakers, is now accepting a limited number of engagements, and will be speaking at the Social Security Administration in April. Martin Aaron, Max Herzel and Ruth Siegler, all of whom spoke regularly in the past, have now “retired” from public speaking.

Guardians of Remembrance
Denise Lewis, Esther Levy, Ann



Denise Lewis speaking at Eura Brown Elementary School in Gadsden.



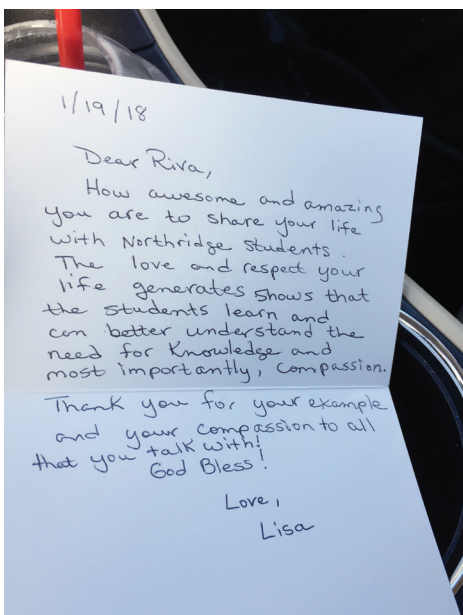
Denise Lewis with students at Hilltop Montessori School, with guest Riva Hirsch.



Eli Pinhas speaking at Indian Springs School.



Eli Pinhas speaking at the Decatur Rotary Club.



Letter to Riva Hirsch from a teacher at Northridge High School in Tuscaloosa.



Riva Hirsch on the stage at Troy University.



Esther Levy with students at Our Lady of the Valley Catholic School in Birmingham.

Mollengarden, and James Sedlis, children of Holocaust survivors, were recently joined by Eli Pinhas, the son of Holocaust survivors, who first told his family's story at the 2017 *Yom HaShoah* Commemoration presented by the BHEC. Eli has developed a presentation with the help of Ann Mollengarden, and has stepped up to tell the experiences of his family in Thessaloniki (Salonica), once a burgeoning center of Greek Jewry which was occupied by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

We welcome Eli to the BHEC Speakers Bureau, and we thank him and all of our dedicated speakers for telling and re-telling the stories that help listeners understand and embrace the lessons of the Holocaust.

To book a BHEC speaker, go to www.bhecinfo.org.

GUARDIANS OF REMEMBRANCE

The BHEC's Guardians of Remembrance program offers family members the opportunity to tell their stories at schools, churches, and civic organizations. To facilitate this, we help craft concise scripts and PowerPoints for participants. The program is also open to community members who would like to be trained to tell the stories of deceased Holocaust survivors. In this way, even when the survivors are no longer with us, their personal stories will remain tools that teach the lessons of the Holocaust to future generations. If you are a second or third generation Holocaust survivor, we encourage you to learn your family's stories and to share them! Call 205-795-4176 for more information.

Adult Education in Action at the BHEC

by Ann Mollengarden, VP of Education



Rabbi Douglas Kohn teaching a Community Education session.

What book can I read to learn more about the Holocaust?

Why doesn't the BHEC teach an adult class?

In response to these questions asked by members of the Birmingham community, I started looking for the right book to use as a text for an in-depth study. The world of Holocaust literature is vast and varied, but it was not until I was introduced to Peter Hayes' book *Why? Explaining the Holocaust*, that I knew I had found the right vehicle for an adult education class.

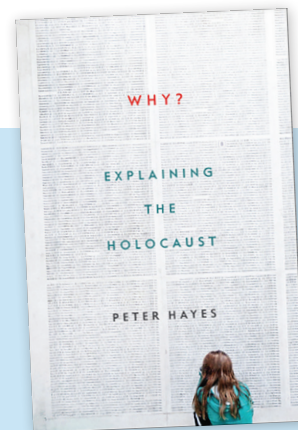
The BHEC Community Education Series was designed around Hayes' text, with the gracious input of scholars from the Birmingham area to lead each of the eight monthly sessions, which started in October and will run through May. Facilitators to date have included Rabbi Douglas Kohn of Temple Emanu-El, Dr. Andy Millard of UAB, Mike Gadilhe of John Carroll High School, and Dr. Clark Hultquist of the University of Montevallo. Each scholar brings a new approach and perspective to this complex, layered topic.

As with any study of the Holocaust,

there are no simple answers. At the end of the series, participants may still not fully understand "why" there was a Holocaust, but they will appreciate the nuances in both history and human behavior that made such a cataclysmic event possible and will have a basis for continuing study of the Holocaust. Each session is independent and drop-ins are welcome; the cost per session is \$20.

The BHEC's main focus in the past has been teacher education and student education, and we have had great success and results in these areas. Adding an adult education component to our programming has provided a new outreach opportunity for us and fills a stated need in the community. About half of the series attendees are new to BHEC programming. We're reaching a new group of people who are serious about considering the difficult questions about the Holocaust, and who will hopefully use their newly-gained knowledge to educate and influence others.

Learn more about the BHEC Community Education Series at www.bhecinfo.org.



Why? Explaining the Holocaust

by Peter Hayes (*Professor of History and German, Theodore Zev Weiss Holocaust Educational Foundation Professor of Holocaust Studies Emeritus*) is a masterful overview of key questions on the Holocaust. Rather than a traditional narrative account of events, Hayes divides his book into eight thematic case studies, such as "Targets: Why the Jews," "Attackers: Why the Germans," and then proceeds to offer in rich detail the explanations. What is particularly helpful, besides the dispelling of some myths, is the author's summary of the most recent scholarship and interpretations of this period. This book will be helpful to those first learning about these events but also enlightening to those well versed in Holocaust studies.

Book review by Dr. Clark Hultquist,
University of Montevallo.



TRIBUTES

January and February 2018

In Memory Of:

Leslie Allen

Judy & Hal Abroms
Melanie L. Appell
Lindsay & Lee Ascherman
Merry & Richard Bodziner
Judy Borisky-Metzger
& Robert Metzger
Thomas Bryant
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Sherry Dortch
Laurie & Craig Elmets
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Phyllis Weinstein

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Nadav Raviv

Phyllis Weinstein

Shirley Schlaff

Cecille & Max Herzel

Phyllis Weinstein

Joy & Robert Fleischer
Judy & Peter Jablow
Denise & Wayne Lewis
Judith Rattner



ALABAMA HOLOCAUST COMMISSION

The Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC) was established in 1999 by the Alabama Legislature in order to foster remembrance of the horrible atrocities committed during the Holocaust and other times in human history as the result of bigotry, discrimination, and the abuse of power; and to foster understanding, through education and awareness, of the basic principles of human rights and equal protection under the law.

STATE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTERS

Birmingham Holocaust Education Center

Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education

UPCOMING EVENTS

Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) – State Commemoration

On Tuesday, April 10, 2018, the Alabama Holocaust Commission will host a program and luncheon at the State Capitol in Montgomery to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day.

To reserve seats, contact Aaryn Johnson at 205.795.4176.

Association of Holocaust Organizations (AHO) 33rd Annual Conference

June 2-5, 2018

Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education

Mobile, Alabama

For more information: 516.582.4571

2018 Quarterly AHC Meetings:

April 29 Birmingham

July 22 Montgomery

October 28 Birmingham



**BIRMINGHAM
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CENTER**

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and Lessons of the
Holocaust Alive

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Dates to Remember

Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Programs

Birmingham, Temple Emanu-El April 13
Montgomery, AL State Capitol April 10

L'Chaim 2018 August 19
Alys Stephens Center

Why? Community Education Series

Why Limited Outside Help? April 3
What Legacies? What Lessons? May 8

Violins of Hope ASO Concert

April 14

Alabama Holocaust Commission Meetings

Spring, Birmingham April 29
Summer, Montgomery July 22
Fall, Birmingham October 28

AHO Conference, Mobile June 2-5

The mission of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center (BHEC) is to educate the people of Alabama about the history of the Holocaust so that new generations will apply the lessons of the Holocaust to the construction of a more just, humane, and tolerant future. By preserving and sharing the stories of local Holocaust survivors and commemorating the events of the Holocaust and the lives of those who perished, the BHEC seeks to promote a moral and ethical response to prejudice, hatred, and indifference for the benefit of all humanity.