

# LEGACY

Keeping the History and Lessons of the Holocaust Alive



BIRMINGHAM  
HOLOCAUST  
EDUCATION  
CENTER

Summer 2016

## *L'Chaim* 2016 — Honoring Betty Allenberg Goldstein

Anyone who knows Betty Goldstein knows that her energy and enthusiasm are boundless. *L'Chaim* Co-Chair Joel Rotenstreich describes Betty as “a giver, doer, goer, helper, and more. She is all heart, and the first one there.”

As a friend and longtime supporter of the BHEC, Betty has worked behind the scenes through the years to tell our story and help us develop valuable partnerships. This year, we are delighted to honor Betty at our annual *L'Chaim* event for her dedication and commitment to Holocaust education.

Betty visited Auschwitz in 1994 with a group from Birmingham as part of the “March of the Living.” Of that trip Betty said, “It was life-changing. I haven’t been the same since. I became interested in the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center because they work to eradicate the hatred and intolerance that are rampant today. What they’re doing is so important.”



Betty is particularly impressed with students’ creative expressions in response to Holocaust studies. She often brings visitors to the BHEC to show them the student artwork on display. In her honor, this year’s *L'Chaim* program will feature scenes from “I Never Saw Another Butterfly,” a play about the children of Terezin performed by drama students from Benjamin Russell High School in Alexander City. In another nod to Betty, who is a longtime fan of Frank Sinatra, *L'Chaim* will feature songs that Sinatra made famous, performed by acclaimed local pianist and vocalist Ray Reach and his band, along with Cantor Jessica Roskin.



We hope you’re planning to join us on Sunday, August 21, 2:30-4:00 pm, at the Sirote Theater in the Alys Stephens Center for this special event to honor a very special lady.

Tickets are available at [www.2016lchaim.eventbrite.com](http://www.2016lchaim.eventbrite.com).

## L'CHAIM CAMPAIGN IN FULL SWING

Letters have been mailed encouraging everyone to come to the *L'Chaim* event on August 21 honoring Betty Allenberg Goldstein for her many years of continuous support and to make a contribution so that the vital work of the BHEC can continue successfully.

The demand for exhibits, speakers, and materials has expanded exponentially as word of mouth has spread. When one teacher tells another and one parent tells another about the benefits of teaching and learning the history and lessons of the Holocaust, requests for BHEC programming increase. This is a good problem to have, but the increased demand means increased costs.

We greatly appreciate all donations, and we feel good about reaching our goal. We want to thank the donors who have already stepped up to support the work of the BHEC. Your gifts have given us encouragement and inspiration.

With all that is going on in our country and the world, we need more love, love, love. And we need more people to learn the lessons of the Holocaust.

Thanks & Love, Joel Rotenstreich & Carole Pizitz, Co-Chairs, *L'Chaim* 2016

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



At the Passover Seder we say, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” As President of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center, I say, “How have the past few months differed from those we have experienced in years past?”

We are grateful that Greg Odrezin has accepted a position on our Board. Before moving into the field of education, Greg spent a number of years in medicine, in addition to being an extraordinary volunteer. We know we will benefit from his service. Greg is filling the position that opened as a result of Michelle Konigsburg’s relocation to Connecticut. We thank Michelle for her dedication to and support of this organization.

We also welcomed Kendall Chew as our Programs Administrator. Kendall is a graduate of UAB and most recently served as an Education Assistant at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Not only will her educational background serve her well in this position, but also her prior professional training and experience will be valuable to us as our programs and outreach are increasing at a fast pace and will require her professional expertise.

Bringing an air of excitement to *L’Chaim* 2016’s campaign, Carole Pizitz and Joel Rotenstreich, our fundraising co-chairs, are creating goals and achieving them every day!! They, along with Development Committee Chair Cathy Friedman, know this will be the best year for Holocaust education and programming made possible by YOU, our wonderful donors. We are grateful for your past support and look forward to your being with us again at this year’s event on August 21, at the Alys Stephens Center’s Sirote Theater.

No garden grows overnight. And so it is with our Birmingham Holocaust Remembrance Garden in the Theatre District downtown. It was 2013 when Deborah Layman assumed the leadership of this very important project, working with an architect/designer, educators, city government, attorneys, Design Review Board, REV Birmingham, and countless other appropriate departments in our city. She has skillfully followed through on each detail. Navigating all of the steps in this initial process has come to an end, as we have finally received approval from the Birmingham City Council to lease the site.

Now we move on to the next level of development, which includes raising the necessary funds to finance and endow the Garden for years to come. We are proud to be a part of adding an important destination in the center of revitalized downtown Birmingham. Soon we will invite our friends and supporters to join in the effort to make the Birmingham Holocaust Remembrance Garden a reality as it will be an educational highlight located so strategically.

What will the next several months bring? Please read of our events in these pages and participate when you can. We welcome your support and encouragement. Please visit our Education Center in the Bayer Properties Building on Arlington Avenue, as we have interesting and important exhibits open for viewing daily. We continue in our mission of keeping the history of the Holocaust alive, along with the crucial lessons we have learned from this dark period of human history.

*Phyllis Weinstein*

## Dreams Becoming Realities

by Deborah Layman, Vice President

For three years, the BHEC has been working with the City of Birmingham to finalize a long-term lease for a site on 19th Street North between Third and Fourth Avenues for the Birmingham Holocaust Remembrance Garden – a public sculpture garden with educational components that use the stories of local Holocaust survivors to teach visitors about the history and lessons of the Holocaust.

We are very pleased to report that the agreement and lease have been approved by the City Council, along with a financial commitment of \$45,500 from the City.

Over the next few months, we will share detailed plans as we launch our fundraising effort for this very exciting project which will give us a presence in downtown Birmingham and the opportunity to greatly expand the reach of our message.

## Keeping the History & Stories of the Holocaust Alive

We are approaching the day when Holocaust memory will become Holocaust history. Fortunately, several local Holocaust survivors are still able to share their stories in schools and with community groups and corporations. The BHEC also hosts field trips at the Center, and Staff and Board Members present historical lectures for those wishing to learn more about the events of the Holocaust.

One of our newest focuses, corporate outreach, has proven very rewarding. Max Steinmetz spoke at the law firm of Baker Donelson, and his presentation was video-conferenced to 19 of their other offices around the southeast. Bob May presented a "Lunch and Learn" program at Protective Life.

The BHEC will continue to tell history from a personal perspective. Our "Guardians of Remembrance" program has two new volunteers: Barbara Brande is developing a PowerPoint on deceased survivor Aisic Hirsch, and Tandy Graves is doing the same for deceased survivor Jack Bass. These ready-to-go programs will facilitate the development of additional speakers to meet our growing requests.

For information on scheduling a speaker or planning a group visit, please visit our website.



Riva Hirsch in Gardendale

## Locally Speaking...

by Denise Lewis, Speaker's Bureau

Since September 2015, speakers have presented their stories at the following venues:

Rebecca Dobrinski, BHEC Executive Director – Arc Stories, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham Public Library, NE Miles Jewish Day School, Parkside Middle School, Rotary Club of Jasper, Shelby County High School, UAB Historians Craft Class

Max Herzel, Survivor – Alabama School of Fine Arts, Auburn University-Montgomery, First Christian Church, Hartselle Middle School, John Carroll High School Drama Class, New Era Study Group, Rotary Club-Hoover, Southern Museum of Flight, St. Martin in the Pines

Riva Hirsch, Survivor – Gardendale Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church, Homewood Middle School, Leeds Middle School, Riverchase Middle School, St. Francis Xavier School, Simmons Middle School, Sparkman Middle School, Temple Sinai Youth/New Orleans

Bari Katz, Guardian of Remembrance – Birmingham Public Library, NE Miles Jewish Day School, Parker High School

Esther Levy, Second Generation – Birmingham Public Library, Comer High School, Helena Middle School, Homewood Middle School, Jacksonville State University, Moody Junior High School, NE Miles Jewish Day School, Parker High School, Pilgrim Church, Redstone Arsenal/Huntsville, Riverchase Middle School

Denise Lewis, Second Generation – Benjamin Russell High School Drama Class, Birmingham Public Library, Pizitz Middle School, Maddox Middle School Jasper, Alabama School of Fine Arts, Cherokee Bend Elementary School, FBI Birmingham, Social Security Administration/Birmingham

Bob May, Survivor – Bragg Middle School, John Carroll High School, Protective Life, Temple Emanu-El, Brookwood Forest Elementary School, Teacher Workshops in Birmingham/Huntsville/Livingston

Ruth Siegler, Survivor – Brookdale Senior Living, Canterbury United Methodist Church

Max Steinmetz, Survivor – Auburn University-Montgomery, Baker Donelson, Chelsea High School, Etowah Middle School, Mountain Brook Jr. High, Rotaract Club of Birmingham, Spain Park High School, Shelby High School

Field Trips to BHEC - Brookdale Senior Living, N.E. Miles Jewish Day School, Parker High School, Parkside Middle School, Road Runners Study Group, Shelby County High School



Ruth Siegler at Canterbury UMC



# New Holocaust Studies Class in Montgomery

by Lisa Lawrence, Teacher, Trinity Presbyterian School

As an English teacher who has devoted much of my graduate work to Holocaust literature, I joined the faculty of Trinity Presbyterian School in Montgomery as an English teacher last year. Lucy Thrasher, a teacher at Trinity for over 20 years, teaches World History. At the BHEC's "Teaching the Complexities of the Holocaust" fall workshop, Lucy and I discovered our common interest for the Holocaust. The excitement from the workshop, along with our fervent desire for student engagement in

cross-curriculum pursuits, led to our idea of creating a Holocaust course. Because Trinity graduates are required to have a one semester credit of humanities, we designed the course to fulfill this requirement. We agreed that Lucy would cover the historical aspects while I would teach complementary literature. We approached the administration with our idea and were given the green light to create a course description to present to the Academic Committee.



*Lisa Lawrence & Lucy Thrasher teach at Trinity Presbyterian School in Montgomery*

## Course Description: The World Must Know - Holocaust Studies

This hybrid course provides the student with an in-depth study of the Holocaust focusing on decisions that led individuals, groups, and nations to act or not to act, which also presents insight into history and human nature. The student will investigate the collaboration and complicity emphasizing tolerance, respecting the values, religion, heritage, and ethnicity of others, the danger of conformism, and the loss of self due to succumbing to mob mentality by allowing the student to consider the many factors and events that contributed to the Holocaust. The student will examine diverse literary interpretations including memoirs, fiction, drama, advertising/propaganda, and political writing. Students should expect an extensive and complex reading load.

Our Holocaust Studies course was unanimously approved and placed on the 2016-2017 course selection sheets for juniors and seniors. Twenty-one students have signed up for the course to date.

While working through the class objectives, description, and curriculum, we applied for and were each awarded a Friedman Scholarship for professional development. Lucy attended the Summer Institute for Teachers presented by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, and I attended Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior.

The Facing History workshop provided more than thirty unique teaching strategies focusing on the Holocaust. Facing History's scope and sequence helps teach students empathy while also teaching content. The sequence begins with the individual and society to focus on one's identity and how that influences behavior and decision-making. Next, the focus shifts to "we and they" and how human connections are made, but also what contributes to misunderstanding, stereotyping, and conflict. Then, the content of a case study teaches the specifics of the Holocaust to allow the student to confront the atrocities – "the choiceless choices." Finally, the sequence looks at ways students can take what they learn and connect with issues today; students can explore what it means exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a democracy to make a more humane and compassionate world.

By approaching the Holocaust with this scope and sequence, students are led to understand civic responsibility and what could have happened had more people during the Holocaust exercise this responsibility. I cannot wait to take the skills and information I learned in my workshop, combined with information that Lucy has learned in her workshop, and present the Holocaust to our students effectively. We hope to keep you updated on our progress in the next issue of *Legacy*.

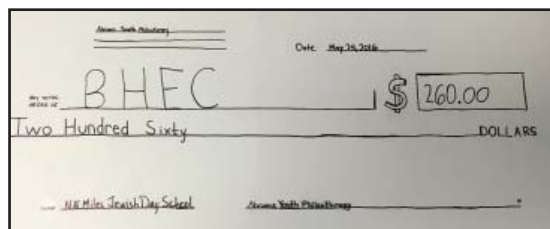


## NE Miles Day School Supports BHEC

by Rebecca Dobrinski, Executive Director

In May, the Abroms Philanthropy Class at the NE Miles Jewish Day School awarded the BHEC a grant of \$260. Students conducted fundraising for the project and met with local nonprofit organizations to determine allocations. We were pleased to be one of the organizations selected by the students for an award.

The award presentation was made by student Talia Fleisig, granddaughter of board member Cathy Friedman. Talia talked about the Holocaust Studies Library as one of the important services the BHEC provides to the community. The BHEC will use this grant to purchase books that enhance the Juvenile Section of the Library and provide age-appropriate learning tools for middle and high school students.



## BHEC Honored as Finalist at BBJ Awards

by Kendall Chew, Programs Administrator



On June 23, the BHEC was honored as a finalist in the *Birmingham Business Journal's* (BBJ) Fifth Annual Nonprofit Awards honoring local nonprofit organizations and corporate citizens.

The finalists' luncheon was held at the Regions Field Ballroom where canned foods were collected from the finalists on behalf of the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama. The BHEC was a runner up for bringing the most canned goods!

The finalists were grouped by revenue categories, with the BHEC in the Less than \$500,000 Revenue category with Alabama Possible, Heart Gallery Alabama, and the Laura Crandall Brown Foundation. Alabama Possible was the winner in this category.

The winners in other categories were:

\$500,000 to 1 Million Revenue	Birmingham Education Foundation
1 Million to 2 Million Revenue	Firehouse Shelter
2 Million to 10 Million Revenue	Crisis Center, Inc.
10 Million Revenue and Up	Glenwood, Inc.
Corporate Citizen Winner	Stewart Perry Construction

We were honored to have board members Karen Allen, Cathy Friedman, and Joel Rotenstreich present, along with BHEC President Phyllis Weinstein, Ex-Officio Board Member Lynn Raviv, L'Chaim 2016 Co-Chair Carole Pizitz, Programs Administrator Kendall Chew, and Executive Director Rebecca Dobrinski.

"This is a great opportunity for the BHEC to get our name out there and meet our peers in the Birmingham nonprofit community," said Rebecca Dobrinski. "We hope that after this recognition our corporate partnerships will expand and our presence in city philanthropy will increase."

## AT THE OFFICE



### New Staff Member Joins BHEC

The BHEC is happy to announce Kendall Chew as the new Programs Administrator. Kendall has worked in the nonprofit community for over 10 years. Prior to joining the BHEC team, Kendall was Education Assistant at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) for four years under Vice President of Education and Exhibitions Ahmad Ward.

"I am very excited to be with the BHEC, an organization that is quickly growing and expanding," Kendall said. "The BHEC has such an important mission to fulfill, especially as we watch what is happening globally. I'm just honored to be a part of its journey of educating."

Kendall is a graduate of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). She interned at the Birmingham Museum of Art and at BCRI during her undergraduate studies in Art History. "I actually had the pleasure of installing *Darkness into Life* for its grand opening at BCRI when I was an intern in 2008. It's amazing how that exhibit has impacted my career's journey," Kendall said.

After completing her Masters in History at UAB, Kendall started her own film company, Southern Storyboard. Kendall is a member of the 2016 Class of the Jekyll Island Management Institute of the Southeastern Museums Conference and currently serves as Secretary for the Alabama Museums Association.

## Jewish Motorcyclists Visit Birmingham

You may have heard an increase in the rumbling engines of motorcycles throughout Birmingham in May. The BHEC was the proud host of the Jewish Motorcyclists Alliance (JMA) for their 12th annual Ride to Remember, May 19-21.

Each year, the JMA selects a city and a Holocaust organization as their destination for this event. The members raise funds to support Holocaust education in the selected city. We were very excited the JMA chose Birmingham and the BHEC for this year's fundraiser. The JMA presented the BHEC with a donation of \$20,000.

Members visited the Levite Jewish Community Center for a luncheon and stopped by the BHEC for a tour. They rode through the Talladega National Forest, down to Selma, and over to the Barber Museum while spending the weekend in our beautiful state. At the Friday Shabbat Dinner, BHEC Teacher Cadre member Mike Gadilhe (*below*), a teacher at John Carroll Catholic High School, spoke to the group about the impact the BHEC has had on Holocaust education throughout the state of Alabama.

We thank the JMA, their member clubs, and the individual riders who supported the 2016 Ride to Remember and the BHEC. Their donations will help fund our upcoming fall teacher workshops.



## Cataloguing the Past

by Melissa Young, Archivist

Our archive is growing! This summer, we acquired the collection of Dr. Jerome (Jerry) Rosenberg, the retired Director of Holocaust Studies at New College, an interdisciplinary department at the University of Alabama that allows students to develop individualized courses of study. A professor of Psychology, Dr. Rosenberg specialized in ethics and genocide. He researched the long-term psychological effects of the Holocaust upon the human psyche and often taught and sponsored Holocaust programs, classes, and conferences at the university. Dr. Rosenberg was Chair of the Alabama Holocaust Council from the early 1980s to 1999. His papers include not only his personal accomplishments, speeches, and class material, but also historical photographs of the Holocaust, videos, rare books, transcripts of survivor testimonies, and research he gathered on the "Final Solution," the Nazi mentality, genocide, and racism.

We are expanding our ability to effectively store and catalog documents including our press clippings, survivor papers, and programs and posters related to *Darkness into Life*, *Yom HaShoah*, *L'Chaim*, and other BHEC exhibits and events. Some of our most delicate artifacts—identification papers, Nazi textiles, World War II propaganda posters, and Holocaust art—will now be housed in large, acid-free boxes and in newly-acquired filing cabinets.

Our new cataloging system will allow individuals, scholars, and teachers to expand their research. The archive's many resources will be easily searchable and can be accessed by appointment with the archivist. We are establishing a reading room to provide researchers with a comfortable environment in which to locate or study information. We are adding several collections of academic journals and a microfiche reader. To be a part of this wonderful development or to set up an appointment, please contact [info@bhamholocausteducation.org](mailto:info@bhamholocausteducation.org) or 795.4176.

## History Comes Alive for UAB Grad Student

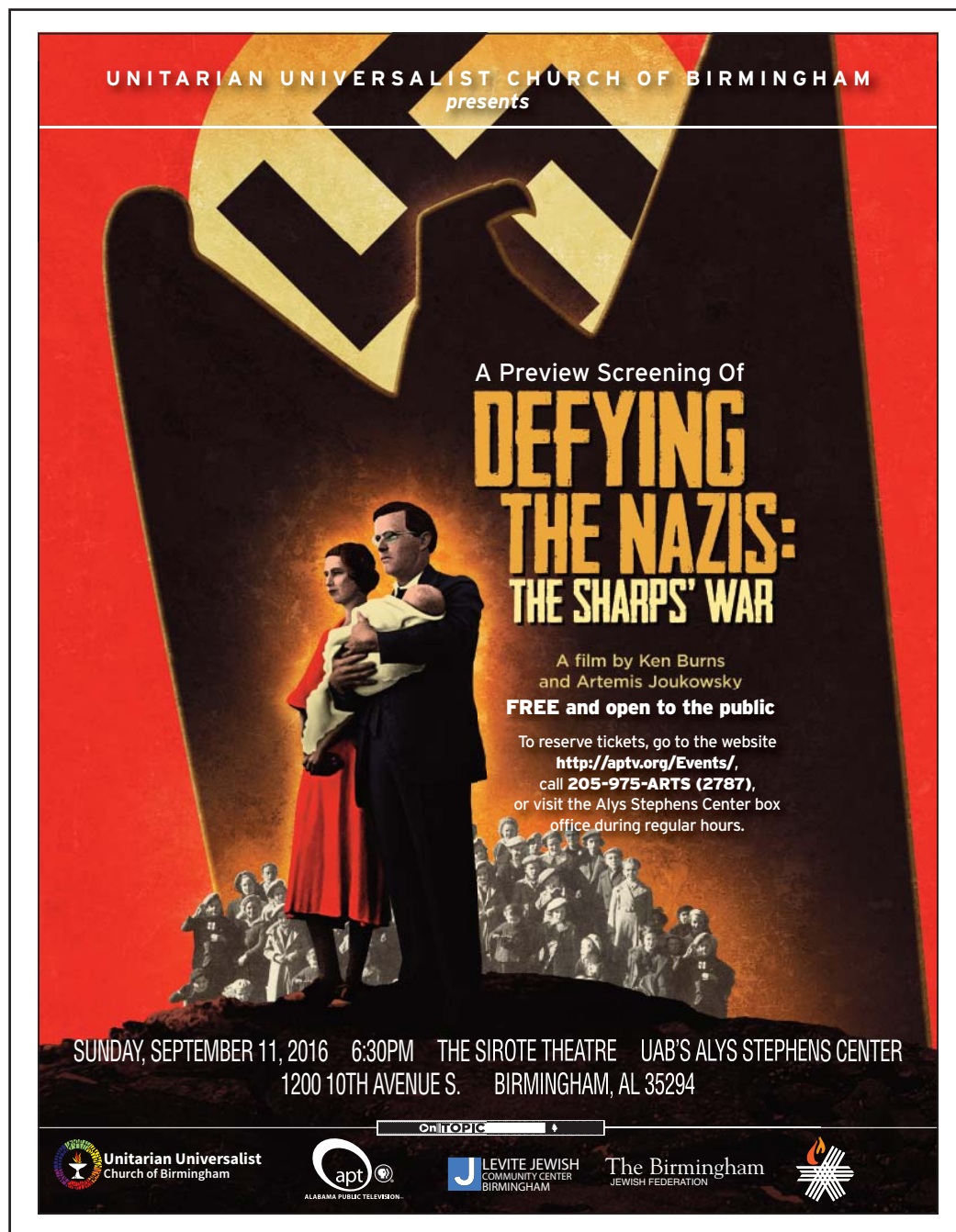
*Paige Estefan is completing her internship in Public History with the BHEC. She has spent this summer working with Archivist Melissa Young. We asked her to share about her experience:*

I have spent most of my time in the new BHEC archives, working with a variety of items and materials and establishing a cataloguing system. Working with Executive Director Rebecca Dobrinski, I have helped develop a thorough system of cataloguing that will facilitate future research.

I have had the opportunity to handle some amazing artifacts that have been donated, and I have learned how to store them properly. For me, this has been a thrilling experience. I am currently working on our large newspaper collection, learning how to properly record, store and preserve paper items, both old and new.

Besides learning how a nonprofit historical organization works and how to preserve artifacts, I'm getting a very personal and up close look at the Holocaust and World War II. My entire time at the BHEC has been an immersive history lesson. Hearing a survivor speak was one of the most powerful experiences I've ever had. I'm convinced there's no better way to learn, and I'm thrilled to have had this opportunity to do so.





## Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War - Special Preview in September

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham will present a special viewing of *Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War*, a new documentary by Ken Burns and Artemis Joukowsky. The BHEC is proud to be a partner with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham, Alabama Public Television, the Levite Jewish Community Center, and the Birmingham Jewish Federation to bring this important film to Birmingham.

*Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War* is an account of a daring rescue mission that occurred on the precipice of World War II. It tells the previously untold story of Waitstill and Martha Sharp, an American minister and his wife from Wellesley, Massachusetts, who left their children behind in the care of their parish and boldly committed to a life-threatening mission in Europe. Over two dangerous years, they helped save scores of imperiled Jews and refugees fleeing Nazi Occupation across Europe.

This event is free and open to the public. The screening will include a panel discussion featuring director Artemis Joukowsky via Skype and will be followed by a reception. Call 205.975.ARTS or visit the Alys Stephens Box Office to reserve your tickets. The screening will take place on Sunday, September 11, 6:30 pm at the Alys Stephens Center.

# Going the Extra Miles

by Amy McDonald, Teacher, Shades Valley High School

I am currently writing a book about Holocaust survivor Max Steinmetz's life. To that end, I have previously visited Germany with the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous to better understand Max's time at Dachau and its subcamps of Kaufering and Landsberg. But it was Max's birthplace of Târgu Lapus, Romania that remained an unknown.

On my second attempt, I was awarded a grant from Alabama Public Television's Fund for Teachers to further explore Max's story in Germany and Romania. Not only was I thrilled, but so was Max. The planning began, and BHEC Education Coordinator Ann Mollengarden agreed to accompany me on the trip.

My primary goal was to visit Max's birthplace, a place to which he had never returned, to bring his story full-circle. Because of Max's passion for Holocaust Education and speaking to students, I could think of no better tribute to him than to go back and tell his story to students in his hometown. It was also important to try to uncover the now lost traces of what the Jewish community was like in Târgu Lapus when he was growing up.

The grant focused heavily on working with teachers and students in Târgu Lapus. My emphasis was on using this information to finish the book and make it accessible as a classroom resource for my students as well as students and teachers in Târgu Lapus.

Traveling to Germany was something I had done before, but Romania was a different story. I had no clue what to expect. For six months prior to leaving, I communicated via Facebook with three teachers who live and teach in Târgu Lapus. These connections played a significant role in the visit.

Ann and I first traveled to Germany. I had found a contact who plans and organizes a yearly commemoration for the Dachau Death March. He showed us the route of the Death March through several small German towns and the memorials that have been established. We then traveled to Bad Tolz, Germany, where Max was liberated. We spent three days in Munich where we visited Kaufering I and III, sub-camps of Dachau where Max was imprisoned. We then flew to Cluj, Romania and drove to Târgu Lapus, where we stayed for five days.

It is impossible to write in a few lines how much I was impacted by visiting Târgu Lapus



Synagogue in Szaszregen (now Regen), now being used as a clothing market

and other sites in northern Romania. It was an amazing trip and beyond anything I could have ever expected. While we saw many important sites, the most valuable and touching times were the times spent with teachers and students. Their hospitality, warmth, and kindness were truly humbling. Their openness to Max's story was genuine, and their messages, words, and gifts back to him reflected their respect and admiration. I was deeply touched by their honest questions and desire to know more, as well as challenged to look deeply at my own perceptions. There is much work to be done here, and my belief in the value of Holocaust Education was strengthened even more.



Amy & Ann Mollengarden (center left, right) with teachers in Targu Lapus: Mihai Burzo, Technology High School and Zamfira Timbus, Petru Rares High School



Elie Wiesel's home, now a museum in Sighet



## BHEC Kicks Off Book Club in November

In Jewish tradition, following a family member's death, it is customary for the family to engage in a year of study in tribute to their deceased loved one and to ease the pain of their loss. For the BHEC, the recent death of Elie Wiesel, z"l, was a loss as profound and affecting as the loss of a family member.

In honor of this great man and the enormous impact he has had on human relations in the world, we are initiating the BHEC Book Club. Under the direction of Board Member Greg Odrezin and community member Gary Mollengarden, the Book Club's first year will be devoted to the works of Elie Wiesel.

On November 9, the eve of the 78th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Book Club will convene at the BHEC at 6:30 pm to begin a study of Elie Wiesel's renowned book, *Night*. This short and powerful book recounts Wiesel's time at Auschwitz and Buchenwald. It is a case study on how a book helped create a genre, how a writer became an icon, and how the Holocaust was absorbed into the American experience.

We are pleased to have Church Street Books & Coffee in Crestline as the presenting sponsor.

Several copies of *Night* are available for loan from the Holocaust Studies Library, or participants can purchase the book on their own. Light snacks and coffee will be provided.

To participate, please RSVP to 795.4176 or [info@bhamholocausteducation.org](mailto:info@bhamholocausteducation.org).



## In Memoriam

Agnes Tennenbaum  
1922-2016

Elie Wiesel  
1928-2016

*May their memory be a blessing.*



## Teachers Mark Your Calendars!

### TEACHER CADRE

Enhance your knowledge about the Holocaust in these 2 hour sessions offering CEU credits. Sign up for the BHEC Teacher Cadre to receive mailings. Check the BHEC website for program topics. All sessions are held at the BHEC.

Tuesday, September 20, 5:00 pm

Thursday, November 3, 5:00pm

Tuesday, January 24, 5:00 pm

Thursday, March 16, 5:00 pm

### TEACHER WORKSHOPS

Learn to engage and inspire students by teaching about the 30,000 Jewish Partisans who fought back against the Nazis and their collaborators. Presented in conjunction with the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation.

Thursday, November 17  
Friday, November 18

University of Alabama in Huntsville  
University of Alabama at Birmingham

## State Commission Update

by Dan Puckett, AHC Chair

This year's legislative session ended with the Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC) receiving an increase in state appropriations. The AHC's appropriation was increased to \$40,000 for 2016-2017. This is the third year in a row the AHC has received state funding. Thank you to Commission members Rep. David Faulkner and Sen. Jabo Waggoner (both of Birmingham) for their support of Holocaust education.



Birmingham-area Holocaust Survivors with Rep. David Faulkner, AHC Chair Dan Puckett, and Governor Robert Bentley

On May 3, the state held its annual Yom HaShoah Commemoration in the Old House Chamber at the State Capitol. Dr. Steven Jacobs provided the keynote speech, "A Child of a Survivor Speaks." Governor Robert Bentley presented a Proclamation to our state's survivors, and Rep. Faulkner presented a Joint Resolution from the legislature, including moving testimony

of how the impact of the Holocaust and his work with the Commission has affected him. The eighth grade class of St. James School, Montgomery, attended the Commemoration. Afterwards, Faulkner arranged for survivors to be recognized on the floor of the House of Representatives, where they received a standing ovation by members of the House and the audience in the gallery.

This year's meeting of the Association of Holocaust Organizations was held in Cincinnati in June. The state of Alabama was represented at the multi-day conference by Rebecca Dobrinski, BHEC Executive Director, Don Berry, Commissioner and Director of the Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, and myself. Highlights included sessions for center directors and state commissions, teaching pedagogy, a fascinating presentation on the prosecution of Nazi war criminals in the US by Eli Rosenbaum of the Justice Department, and a tour of the American Jewish Archives on the Campus of Hebrew Union College.

## Dedicated Educators Become Teacher Fellows through USHMM Fellowship Program

by Ann Mollengarden

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum's Teacher Fellowship Program seeks to develop a national corps of skilled educators to help lead the Museum's efforts to ensure quality Holocaust education in secondary schools. To date, 230 teachers have become Teacher Fellows through this program.

The BHEC is proud to recognize Dominique Linchet, Alabama School of Fine Arts, and Jeremy Brown, Oakman High School, for having completed their initial Fellowship training in Washington, DC. We wish them continued success as they complete their practical experience over the coming year. They join Amy McDonald, Shades Valley High School, who completed her Fellowship training during the 2014/15 school year.

### Dedicated to Learn

by Laurie Elmetts, Education Committee

Thanks to the generosity and ongoing commitment of the Brenda and Fred Friedman Family Foundation, the BHEC provided scholarship funding for the following teachers.

### 2016-17 Friedman Scholars

#### *Appalachian State University*

#### *Martin & Doris Rosen Symposium*

Megan Bolton, Lupton Junior High School, Nauvoo

Gail Yeilding, Chelsea High School, Chelsea

#### *The Bremen Museum / Summer Institute on Teaching the Holocaust*

Jennifer Rossuck, Randolph School, Huntsville

#### *Facing History & Ourselves*

#### *Holocaust & Human Behavior*

Rachel Hartsell, St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, Birmingham

Lisa Lawrence, Trinity Presbyterian School, Montgomery

#### *Jan Karski Institute*

Kendall Tankersley, Sardis High School, Boaz

#### *Jewish Foundation for the Righteous*

#### *Summer Institute & Advanced Seminar*

Steve Benton, Thompson Middle School, Birmingham

Jane Haithcock, Liberty Middle School, Huntsville

Lucy Thrasher, Trinity Presbyterian School, Montgomery

Mike Gadilhe, John Carroll Catholic High School, Birmingham

Amy McDonald, Shades Valley High School, Birmingham

#### *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

#### *Belfer Conference*

Kate Gholston, Opelika Middle School, Opelika

# Birmingham Commemorates Yom HaShoah

by Ann Mollengarden

On May 1, the Birmingham community came together at Temple Emanu-El to honor those who survived the Holocaust and to remember those we lost.

We are all impacted by the events of the Holocaust and can learn much from the stories of those who lived through this terrible time. For the second year, this program featured Stories Remembered & Retold, the stories of deceased Holocaust survivors as told by their local descendants. Speakers included Joan Becker, Joe Preston, James Sedlis, and Brian Wiatrak.

Joan Becker remembered her husband's cousin, Mira Kwasowicer Becker, who was deported from the Bialystock Ghetto to Treblinka. Mira survived by jumping from the train and hiding with family friends. Few in our community were aware that Joe Preston was born Yakob Przedborski.

His family fled their home of Kalisz, Poland when the Germans invaded, and were welcomed by the Soviet Union. James Sedlis fulfilled a promise to his "Tata" (father) to tell his story. Gabriel Sedlis fought with the partisans from the Vilna Ghetto and was present for the ultimate liberation of the city. Inspired by old photographs in his family's home, Brian Wiatrak investigated the lives of the Fischer family of Sarisap, Hungary – family members he knew little about. Brian's relatives suffered great losses during the Holocaust. Brian carries not only his great-grandfather's name, but the family stories which he has recorded for posterity.



*Lighting candles of remembrance at Temple Emanu-El on Yom HaShoah*

Each story was unique, each story was inspiring, and each story is a part of the fabric of who we are. If you have a family story you would like to share in the future, please contact the BHEC.

Special thanks to Rabbi Jonathan Miller and Cantor Jessica Roskin for their leadership and development of this program, as well as all of the community members who made this beautiful program possible:

Rabbi Laila Haas  
Cantor Michael Horwitz  
Rabbi Randall Konigsburg  
Michelle Konigsburg  
Rabbi Joseph Robinson  
Lester Seigel

Rabbi Eytan Yammer

Temple Emanu-El Quartet: Cantor Jessica Roskin, soprano, Jackie Feldman, alto, Greg Odrezin, tenor, Eli Pinhas, bass



*Joan Becker relating Mira Becker's story*

This program was a collaboration of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center, Birmingham Jewish Federation, Temple Beth-El, Temple Emanu-El, Knesseth Israel Congregation, and Levite Jewish Community Center. It was partially underwritten by a contribution from the Birmingham Jewish Federation.

*This program was videotaped by Temple Emanu-El and can be viewed via a link on the BHEC website.*



**Thank you to our May Partner: Arc Stories!**  
**We appreciate your support during your**  
**May event at the Avon Theatre!**



# History Lesson: The First Letter

As soon as they were able after the war, many survivors wrote to relatives abroad. These letters, often referred to as "First Letters", are a glimpse into life immediately after liberation and the end of World War II. As Iael Nidam-Orvieto, the Director of Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research told *Tablet Magazine's* Yardena Schwartz: "These letters bring us their first personal voice. They give us an intense glance at the way survivors felt and thought about themselves, their situation, and their future exactly at the time of liberation. We've never had that before."

Below is a typed copy of a First Letter written by Shmuel Manevitch and sent to his family in the US.



Berlin, Thursday, Sept. 6, 1945

My dear uncle's, aunts, and kin folks:

I am alive! Even now I can't get peace and can't believe it so cruel were the last 4 years -- 4 thousand years of graves, murder and dead which Hitler and the barbarians had brought over us. Too great is the loss! The best and dearest to my heart, our unforgettable parents, brothers, sisters and relatives were taken away by those barbarians 4 years ago. I have no moment of peace and my wounded and sick heart burns when I remember the hopeless and bloody day.

A wave of terror and terrible destruction had come over us with the arrival of the nazi in Riga July 1, 1941. My 3 brothers, Isaac, Saja and Henen have fallen as sacrifice in that gruesome terror. After they build the "Ghetto" Aaron Fiserow, his wife and 2 children and also Basheva Meilach with Scolnik's 2 children were murdered with our unforgettable dear parents and 2 sisters, Lula and Frida in the terrible pogrom in the "Ghetto" on the 30th and 31st New Year 1941 -- 1st Kislev -- together with other 30,000 of our brethren. I was in Riga prison at that time and did not know what was going on. Later on I met Leo Meilach and his son in the "little ghetto" and had the possibility to help them with clothes and money. But I did not have any news from them for 1 1/2 years now.

During all that time while I was in prison and concentration camps and all what I had to live through, I thought my heart simply would stand still and death would free me from my unending misery. But my heart did not stand still. After months and year long terror, hunger and destruction even the strongest of us were blown out like candle lights. The last 6 months in Germany, in the camp Stuthof near Danzig, were especially terrible. We got only 100 grams bread once in 6 days and still death did not come, but the long awaited liberation from our gruesome hell to new life. We were saved by the Red Army on the 11th of March this year.

A regular skeleton, misshaped limbs that was left of me was sick for the last 4 months and I am now living in Berlin in an English camp for foreigners and stateless people. I am supposed to go to Hannover in the near future, and my goal is to go to Palestine from there to my only beloved brother Palet.

Yes, my dear folks, I am a human being again after 4 years of terror. I am free but broken and with nothing left, not even with a photo of my dear and unforgettable parents and children and relatives. But I do not care for money and riches.

I shall write to you as soon as I shall have a permanent address. I wish you good luck for the new year, and hope everything is alright with you. I greet all my living relatives, my grandmother, uncles, aunts and cousins and all the family.

Yours always true and destitute

Letter from Shmuel Manevitch

*Shmuel Manevitch was a cousin of BHEC President Phyllis Weinstein, who provided us with copies of this important document for our archives. If you have similar items from family members, please let us know!*

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Donations received after June 30 will appear in the Winter/Spring 2017 issue, to be published in February 2017.

*Thank you for supporting the BHEC!*

Opposite Page (clockwise from top left): Church Street Coffee & Books display Holocaust books in May; Riva Hirsch with members of Gardendale Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church; Employees listening to Bob May during a lunch and learn at Protective Life Corporation; Partners banner at TEDxBirmingham; Drew Tombrello and Daniel Siegel perform *For a Look or a Touch* at the Lyric Theatre; Students gathered to hear Eva Kor and "A Lesson in Forgiveness"



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### **L'Chaim 2016**

August 21

### **The Holocaust in Film**

January 30

February 5

### **Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War**

September 11

### **Yom HaShoah / Holocaust Remembrance Programs**

Birmingham

April 23

State of Alabama, Montgomery

April 25

### **BHEC Teacher Cadre**

September 20

November 3

January 24

March 16

### **Alabama Holocaust Commission**

Montgomery

October 30

### **Book Club**

November 9

### **2016-17 Teacher Workshops**

Huntsville

November 17

Birmingham

November 18

### **The Holocaust in Film**

January 22

January 26

### **BHEC Holidays (Office Closed)**

Labor Day

September 5

Rosh Hashanah

October 3-4

Yom Kippur

October 12

Thanksgiving

November 24-25

Christmas

December 23-26

New Year's Eve (1/2 Day)

December 30

New Year's Day

January 2

### **2016 Board Meetings**

September

September 13

November

November 7

Annual Meeting

December 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.