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**EIGHT ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HONORED BY
ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM & EDUCATION CENTER**

***Finalists in Gershanov Family Memorial Holocaust Essay Contest Address
What Their Generation Can Do to Make “Never Again” a Reality***

CHICAGO – Illinois State Representative Elaine Nekritz (D-57), Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen, educators and school administrators from across Illinois joined the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center as it announced the 2008 winners of the Gershanov Family Memorial Holocaust Essay Contest in an awards ceremony at the Skokie Public Library. Eight students from five Illinois high schools were selected out of more than 200 for their essays addressing what their generation can do to make “Never Again” a reality.

“We were deeply moved by the essay submissions we received,” said Richard Hirschhaut, Project and Executive Director, Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center. “They showed a tremendous understanding of the role we all need to play in fighting intolerance and bigotry in this world. Choosing finalists was a difficult task and we are truly proud of not only our winners, but all the students who participated.”

Holocaust survivors Leo and Antonia Gershanov settled in Chicago following World War II and devoted their time and resources to the fight against discrimination and prejudice. Now their family carries on their legacy. The biennial essay contest offers high school students in Illinois an opportunity to reflect on the contemporaneous nature of the Holocaust in their lives.

This year’s submissions were reviewed by a panel of judges that included local retired educators, as well as contest co-sponsor Ann Gershanov and Susan Van Dusen, author and wife of Skokie mayor George Van Dusen. The winners will receive a scholarship award, an autographed copy of *Not on Our Watch*, written by Don Cheadle and John Prendergast, and a collection of Holocaust and genocide reference books for their high school library.

“Judging this year’s essays demonstrated to me how strongly students feel the presence of genocide today,” said Ann Gershanov. “Many of the students made the connection between the Holocaust and the genocides in Darfur and Cambodia. The student essayists showed a great awareness that fighting hatred and intolerance is an ongoing battle.”

MORE

The 2008 winners of the Gershanov Family Memorial Holocaust Essay Contest are:

First Place

- Rosa Alessandra Macrito, Ridgewood High School
- Mariah Rettenmeier, Rosary High School
- Aaron Rosenson, Evanston Township High School

Second Place

- Jacob Cedarbaum, Evanston Township High School
- Brian Daniel Freese, Ridgewood High School

Third Place

- Justin Forneris, Herscher High School
- Nora Heaton, Palatine High School

Honorable Mention

- Chelsea Uselding, Evanston Township High School

Scheduled to open within the year, the new 65,000 square-foot Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center will be the largest center in the Midwest dedicated to preserving the memories of those lost in the Holocaust and teaching current generations about their role in combating intolerance and genocide in today's world. Expected to host more than 250,000 visitors each year, the new Museum will reach students throughout Illinois and across the Midwest, educating them about the Holocaust and other genocides and teaching them about the dangers of unchallenged bigotry, as required by Illinois law. The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center will help fulfill this mandate.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center is a project of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. Founded by Holocaust survivors more than 25 years ago, the organization is dedicated to teaching about the Holocaust and the dangers of unchallenged hate. The organization has taught school and community groups through a small storefront museum and speakers' bureau since 1981. To learn more visit www.hmfi.org.

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