

FINAL DRAFT

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Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center To Open April 19, 2009

*Holocaust survivors, IHMEC leadership announce grand opening date
and activities; tour facility*

SKOKIE, IL - More than sixty years after World War II ended, local survivors of the Holocaust joined together in front of the new Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center (IHMEC) along with the organization's leadership to announce the building's opening date of April 19, 2009.

The world-class, 65,000 square foot facility, designed by award-winning architect Stanley Tigerman, 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. The Center will also likely be the last major Holocaust museum built in collaboration with survivors.

"After many years of dedication and perseverance, I am thrilled to say that the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center is near completion. This building is a testament to Holocaust survivors who settled in Illinois and their understanding that we must teach future generations the lessons of the Holocaust," said J.B. Pritzker, campaign chair for IHMEC and managing partner, The Pritzker Group. "We look forward to opening our doors on April 19."

The grand opening weekend will begin with an Interfaith Prayer Breakfast on Friday, April 17 and will culminate with a public ceremony on Sunday, April 19 to officially dedicate the IHMEC. Following the ceremony, guests will be given timed-ticket tours through the Museum. To showcase its thoughtful, provocative education center, the IHMEC will host a symposium entitled, *The Role and Responsibility of Media in Covering Genocide* on Monday, April 20. On Tuesday, April 21, an event will be held at the Center in commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Looking beyond the atrocities that took place in Nazi Germany during World War II, the IHMEC takes a global perspective and explores genocide throughout the world and throughout history. Through its series of programs and traveling exhibits, the Museum will use the lessons of the Holocaust to raise awareness and inspire action around the many other human rights atrocities that have occurred or are ongoing throughout the world. Issues related to Darfur and other modern genocides will be carefully integrated into IHMEC curricula for both teachers and their students. International human rights figures will be brought to Illinois via the Center's *Voices of Conscience* lecture series. And, IHMEC's *Legacy of Absence Gallery* will be home to a permanent collection of visual artwork by distinguished contemporary artists from around the world that reflect on historical violence.

“The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center will be unlike any other Holocaust memorial,” said Richard Hirschhaut, project and executive director for IHMEC. “It will be the first institution in the world to house a permanent Holocaust exhibition, art gallery, youth education center, classrooms, auditorium and temporary exhibition space, all in one freestanding building. Even more exceptional is that these unique elements will be dedicated to supporting education and action around issues of genocide and human rights.”

IHMEC interior and exhibit co-designer, Michael Berenbaum, a renowned Holocaust teacher, lecturer and author, as well as former project director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and former CEO of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, led attendees on a tour of the Museum to describe the gallery space, films and exhibitions that will be showcased in the new building.

Ground floor functions will include a special exhibitions gallery, a Youth Exhibition, classrooms and special events hall. The main floor features an auditorium, the permanent exhibition and library and resource center. Second floor spaces include the *Book of Remembrance Hall*, which is a memorial to those who were murdered in the Holocaust, the *Legacy of Absence Gallery* and trustees’ boardroom. The third floor is devoted to staff offices.

The IHMEC is dedicated to fighting prejudice by teaching the next generation. It will expand the teaching of the history and universal lessons of the Holocaust throughout the Midwest and empower people to become activists in the fight against unchallenged bigotry.

Beyond a museum, the IHMEC will also serve as an educational center that will teach school children not only about the history of the Holocaust, but equally important, the dangers of overt prejudice and hate. Expected to host 250,000 students each year, the new Museum will reach school children throughout Illinois and across the Midwest. By law, students in Illinois are required to learn about the Holocaust and other genocides; the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center will help fulfill this mandate.

“As a survivor of the Holocaust, I know how critical it is to impart my story and lessons of the past to future generations so we can emphatically and collectively say, ‘Never again,’ said IHMEC Board President Sam Harris. “I am inspired and awed by the determination and hard work that so many have dedicated to make this museum and education center a reality.”

The Museum will house extraordinary artifacts, including Simon Wiesenthal’s desk and eyeglasses, the original volume of the Nuremberg Trial transcripts, Kindertransport lists and artwork made in the concentration camps. An award-winning collection of 250 letters, postcards, postal documents, leaflets and other materials documenting the Nazis’ annihilation of those they deemed “undesirable” will be on display at the Museum. Nearly 2,000 testimonies of Midwest Holocaust survivors recorded by the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, founded by Steven Spielberg, will be accessible in the Museum’s interactive resource center. And, an early 20th Century German rail car of the type used by the Nazis during the Holocaust to transport millions to concentration camps and ultimately, their deaths, will be on permanent exhibit.

To date, the IHMEC has raised \$36.5 million of its \$45 million fundraising goal. Significant contributions have been made by individuals, government, foundations and corporations, including: gifts of \$1 million or more from the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, Zev and

Shifra Karkomi, the Larry and Lillian Goodman Foundation, the Brill Family Foundation, and others. Major contributions under \$1 million have been received from Lifeway Foods and the Smolyansky Family Foundation, the Irving Harris Foundation, the Alvin H. Baum Family Fund and Mr. and Mrs. Joel M. Friedman, Glenview State Bank, Lawrence and Brenda Feis, Michael and Jacqueline Ferro, Bruce and Elizabeth White, and others. The Museum has also received grants from the State of Illinois exceeding \$6 million.

“The outpouring of support we have received from so many has been a testament to the importance of the project,” said Pritzker. “We are tremendously grateful to all who have made this project possible.”

The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center is ideally situated in Skokie because of the Village’s connection to the Holocaust. After the War, Skokie became an enclave for many survivors and was the location of an attempt by neo-Nazis to march through the community in the late 1970s. A permit was first requested by the Nationalist Socialist Party of America to march in Skokie's Birch Park in Skokie in October 1977 and ultimately led to a hearing before the U.S. Supreme Court.

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.ilholocaustmuseum.org.

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