Illinois Holocaust Museum adds audio tour

Speakers include
North Shore Holocaust survivors

HILARY ANDERSON
Freelance Reporter

Their stories are true.
They really happened.
They are the stories of survivors, liberators and rescuers of the Holocaust, one of the darkest moments in history.

Visitors can hear some of the survivors talk about their gripping, personal experiences in their own voices at the Illinois Holocaust Museum’s recent unveiling of a captivating audio tour.

Some of those stories are about 16 people who are in the Chicago area. A few now live on the North Shore.

“The audio tour through the Karkomi Holocaust Exhibition provides an unmatched opportunity to hear from those who lived through history’s darkest days,” said Amanda Friedeman, the manager of the Audio Guide Project and the Harvey L. Miller Family Youth Educator. “A narrator seamlessly weaves together stories of local survivors, from the years preceding the Holocaust through liberation and immigration. The tour guides visitors to 38 distinct artifacts.”

The audio tour lasts approximately one hour but the person using it can stop and start the audio tour whenever wanted — perhaps to pause and examine artifacts or photos more closely according to Friedeman.

“Headphone logos clearly denote each designated stop on the tour,” she said.

Visitors obtain the free-of-charge headphones for the audio tour when they enter the museum’s lobby.

“The public also can take advantage of the audio tour through a mobile app on their cell phones,” Friedeman said. “The last stop on the audio tour includes a short video that shows the visitor then and now photos of the stories you have just heard. It is almost as though you know them.”

The exhibits feature information and authentic photos and artifacts. There even is an authentic German rail car that was used to bring people to concentration camps.

“During the audio stop there, visitors hear Museum President Fritzie Fritzshall describing her rail car journey to Auschwitz concentration camp in devastating detail,” Friedeman said. “You need to imagine the hunger and the thirst on this compartment.”

Fritzshall said, “You need to imagine — because of the heat and the closeness — people dying, people fainting.”

One of the people on the museum’s audio tour is Northbrook’s Ralph Rehbock who credits then Highland Park’s Max Schrayer with taking care of his parents and him — providing the wherewithal to escape and ultimately make it possible for them to reach America.

“There is a letter on the exhibit wall from Max Schrayer welcoming my father into his company, that he no longer is an intern,” Rehbock said. “The Nazis knew that my father was working with Schrayer because of his export business. They left our family alone for a while. It was through his [Schrayer’s] legal team that he provided affidavits and related support.”

Rehbock attributes the help of five other people who were in the right place at the right time to help his family get out of Germany. One was a teenage girl watching the Rehbock house in their hometown who gave his father the code that it was not safe to come home. Another a Marine guard at the American embassy. The third was an American ambassador followed by a soldier — a total stranger.

“We left Germany in 1938 and only survived because we were not in a concentration camp and because of these other people who helped along the way,” Rehbock said.

Highland Park’s Rodi Glass, while not on the museums audio tour, is a member of the Illinois Holocaust Museum’s speakers bureau.

“We were Dutch Jews and very fortunate to have survived,” Glass said. “I think I survived because it is my responsibility to tell people what really happened during the Holocaust.”

Like with Rehbock, Glass talks about how the Holocaust actually started in 1933 when Adolph Hitler came into power and lasted until 1945.

“Things were getting bad in Amsterdam because of growing anti-Semitism,” Glass said. “Hitler blamed the Jews for Germany’s bad economic situations. He slowly made laws that took away Jews’ rights — from owning businesses to everything we owned. Aryan businesses could not sell to Jews. The Jewish children could not attend public schools. No one rose up in protest against these atrocities.”

The one thing she says saved them was that her mother was born in England even though other family members were born in Holland.

“My mother had an English passport with her,” Glass said. “We were very lucky because the Nazis believed the rest of the family was born in England.”

They were placed in an internment camp that took them to Vittel in France.

“The Nazis held us like hostages,” Glass said. “The Nazis figured we would be good to use as bargaining chips in the resistance they thought the U.S. and England would show. The French Marquis Underground liberated us in 1944. With the exception of one sibling out of seven, my entire father’s family was killed during the Holocaust.”

There is much more to see at the Illinois Holocaust Museum.

“We are getting older and dying out,” Rehbock said. “We want people to hear about the Holocaust and about genocide around the world. It is for real.”

The museum also currently features an exhibit about slavery, “America’s Slave Trade that will continue to Aug. 25, 2019.

There also is a survivor hologram with which a visitor can interact at the Take a Stand Center.

“We implore museum visitors to take a stand when they see something wrong happening,” Rehbock said. “Do something about it.”

“Be an upstander and not a bystander,” Gross said.

WALK
From Page 4

course, to buy some more buttons.

While Berkowitz did use her grant money to buy a banner and buttons for the walk, the Highland Park community came together and donated other items for the walk.

The Park District of Highland Park allowed her to use Sunset Woods Park for free. The City waived an application fee for a permit.

In addition to that, the Highland Park Police Department became involved in supporting the event after Berkowitz spoke about her plans at a City Council meeting.

“She just presented her idea, and [Highland Park Chief of Police Lou Jorgensen] heard her,” Mireman said. “He wanted to get behind her, and he got so many people not only from Highland Park. He got people from the Deerfield Police Department staff, and Lake Forest.

There were so many that came just to support the movement of being kind, which was so nice.”

Congressman Brad Schneider also showed up and spoke at the event, supporting Berkowitz’s message of kindness.

“We passed out buttons, and a lot of people got the buttons now,” Berkowitz said. “That’s what I wanted. I wanted people to be aware of kindness. A lot of people came and it felt so good.”

Now that her walk has finished, Berkowitz said she’s going to continue spreading her message through her buttons.

“Kids are aware of kindness, they want to be kind,” Berkowitz said. “I want to follow the button and keep wearing it and spreading the kindness.”