Transition: MCHE Prepares for Jean Zeldin’s Retirement

By year-end 2019, Jean Zeldin will hang up the many hats she has worn for the past 26 years as MCHE’s founding executive director. Initially hired for her expertise as a classroom educator for 24 years in the Shawnee Mission School District, she spent her first year coordinating “Witnesses to the Holocaust,” MCHE’s oral testimony project that resulted in the recording of nearly 50 narratives from survivors, resisters and liberators. These survivor testimonies are now available on the Center’s website.

Over the years, Zeldin’s role expanded to include program supervision, coordinating special events and projects, developing connections with community partners, public speaking, and networking with other Holocaust centers worldwide as well as administrative tasks including fundraising, budgeting, board development and staffing. During her tenure, she served as a member of the Kansas Holocaust Commission and treasurer of the Association of Holocaust Organizations, an international alliance for the advancement of Holocaust education, remembrance and research.

Expanding Roles

In preparation for this transition, the board of directors hired consultants from iBossWell, Inc. to conduct an organizational assessment and help determine staffing needs for its 2020 vision and beyond. Additionally, the board promoted Jessica Rockhold, MCHE’s director of education, to the position of associate executive director. Rockhold, who also will continue to manage school programs and teacher education during this transition period, has been with the organization since 2003.

Honors Planned

As for Zeldin’s personal vision for 2020 and beyond, she has compiled a long list of “to-dos,” many of which have been sitting on the back burner for 26 years. She intends to make herself available to the new executive director as needed, pledging to assist without interfering.

According to board president Karl Zobrist, MCHE will hold an event in Zeldin’s honor early in 2020, at which time she plans to establish an education fund to which others may contribute if they wish. The board also will host a “meet and greet” reception for MCHE’s program and foundation partners to introduce them to the new executive director.

As the board continues its journey to find Jean’s successor and chart the future and focus of MCHE, you are invited to reflect upon how we are doing, and what you see for the organization moving forward. Please share your thoughts by emailing info@mchekc.org or mailing them anonymously to the MCHE office.

Since 1993 MCHE has worked with the following nonprofit community partners:

- American Jazz Museum
- Avila University
- Beth Torah Congregation
- Bruce Watkins Cultural Heritage Center
- Center for Practical Bioethics
- Community of Christ Temple
- Congregation Beth Shalom
- Congregation Beth Torah
- Congregation Chev Sholom
- Consulate of the Czech Republic
- The Coterie Theatre
- Eisenhower Presidential Museum and Library
- First Baptist Church of Raytown
- Friends of Chamber Music
- Goethe Pop Up Kansas City
- Guadaloupe Center
- Irena Sendler Project
- Italian Cultural Center
- Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City
- Jewish Community Relations Bureau/American Jewish Committee
- Jewish Family Services of Greater Kansas City
- Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City
- Kansas City Public Library
- Kansas City Public Television
- Kehilath Israel Synagogue
- The Learning Exchange
- Lyric Opera
- Missouri Repertory Theater
- National Archives at Kansas City
- National Conference for Community and Justice
- National World War I Museum and Memorial
- Negro Leagues Baseball Museum
- Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
- Northland Symphony Orchestra
- Park University
- Quality Hill Playhouse
- RLDS World Church Headquarters
- Rockhurst University
- Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church
- The Temple, Congregation B’nai Jehudah
- Truman Presidential Museum and Library
- Union Station at Kansas City
- University of Kansas
- University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music
- University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law
- Wyandotte County Historical Museum
Witness, Conscience and the Role of MCHE

A Role for the Second Quarter Century

Witness and Conscience—what better roles can those of us at the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education play?

• To bear WITNESS to the Holocaust
• To be the CONSCIENCE of our community and beyond as we fight for human dignity and tolerance as the winds of autocracy, fear and prejudice continue to blow across the world

Throughout world history, there have been other genocides and atrocities. However, no such tragedy has ever been so well planned and so thoroughly documented as the Holocaust, which resulted in the murder of nearly six million Jews, as well as other innocents who were victims of Nazi persecution. It is the defining tragedy of modern civilization.

MCHE exists so that the stories of the Holocaust are never forgotten and its lessons are always on our minds. I look forward to helping to lead our continuing efforts and to working with all of you as we seek new and innovative ways to expand our mission in the second quarter century.

Karl Zobrist is a partner in the Kansas City law office of Dentons US LLP, where he specializes in energy law and corporate governance issues. He is also vice chairman of the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission and a member of the board of trustees of Augustana College. He is president of the Truman Good Neighbor Award Foundation, his father, Dr. Benedict Zobrist having served as director of the Harry S. Truman Library from 1971 until 1994. He is also a former Chairman of the Missouri Public Service Commission (1996-97) and chaired the Missouri Energy Policy Task Force in 2001-02.

The Hope of Anne Frank

Hiding with her family in the “secret annex” of her father’s business in Amsterdam, Anne Frank wrote a long entry in her diary on Tuesday, June 6, 1944, a portion of which stated:

“… the best part of the invasion is that I have the feeling that friends are approaching. We have been oppressed by those terrible Germans for so long; they have had their knives so at our throats, that the thought of friends and delivery fills us with confidence!”

Anne said that her sister Margot thought that they might even return to school in the fall. Unfortunately, the hope of “friends approaching” did not last. They were betrayed two months later in August by a Dutch informant. The Franks and the others in hiding, along with two non-Jewish supporters, were arrested by the Gestapo. In early 1945 Anne and Margot perished in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp as the Allied armies closed in on Germany.

However, the hope Anne Frank expressed 75 years ago should inspire us to continue our commitment to MCHE as it carries on its mission:

• To teach the history of the Holocaust.
• To counter indifference, intolerance and genocide by applying the lessons of the Holocaust.

Itzhak Stern and Oskar Schindler

Last year we celebrated the 25th anniversary of MCHE. It was also the 25th anniversary of Schindler’s List, which in 1993 won Oscars for Best Picture and Best Director, among other honors. That anniversary was celebrated as part of the Tribeca Film Festival in New York.

After the film was shown, the audience was treated to a fascinating panel discussion that featured director Steven Spielberg, Liam Neeson (who played Oskar Schindler), Ben Kingsley (who played Itzhak Stern, the accountant who ran Schindler’s operations), and other members of the cast.

Spielberg recalled that during the production of the movie he asked Kingsley: “What was the relationship of Itzhak Stern to Oskar Schindler?”

Steven Spielberg suggested: Witness

Ben Kingsley replied: Conscience

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Karl Zobrist

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Witnes.
I could not ignore the knot in my stomach as I publicly announced my upcoming retirement at MCHE’s annual meeting in June. It was now real. There it was for all to hear. There was no turning back now on my carefully considered decision to close out a rewarding 26-year career that has afforded me extraordinary learning opportunities and the privilege of working with Holocaust survivors, scholars, historians, educators, nonprofit partners and civic leaders, as well as an exceptional professional staff.

What I thought was the worst kept secret in the community came as a surprise to many. I had told my board of directors of my intention some months prior, and apparently there was no leak! With only one more board meeting in my future, I have come to realize that I will truly miss these supportive and passionate lay leaders being part of my life. I have heard that not all executive directors would feel the same way. I have been fortunate to earn their trust and respect, but I don't want to “stay too long at the party.”

**Unique Opportunities**

As MCHE’s executive director since its founding in 1993, I also have benefited from unique travel opportunities. Through the Association of Holocaust Organizations, I attended summer conferences hosted by other centers, including those in Skokie, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Houston, New York, Toronto, Montreal and Paris, and I have visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum at least a dozen times.

This past July, with partial underwriting provided by MCHE, I traveled with the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous to Munich, Nuremberg, Prague, Vienna and Budapest. This educational study tour included emotional visits to Dachau, Flossenberg, Terezin and Mauthausen concentration camps. My appreciation for stately Viennese architecture was tainted by the knowledge that most of the stone used in these buildings came from Mauthausen, where Jewish slave laborers were forced to extract it from the quarry there and carry these heavy loads up 186 steps.

Most troubling to me were Hartheim Castle outside Linz, Austria, where the German government carried out its T-4 “euthanasia” project that resulted in the murder of more than 200,000 individuals deemed mentally ill or physically handicapped, and the Shoes on the Danube Promenade along the Danube in Budapest, created to memorialize Hungarian Jews shot and drowned by members of the fascist and violently antisemitic Hungarian Arrow Cross Party in 1944 and 1945.

More inspiring moments included a visit to the home of a German rescuer, honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, and a stop at the University of Munich, home of the White Rose movement, students who spoke out against the totalitarian Nazi regime and for whom MCHE’s annual essay contest and membership level are named. Street signs and markers throughout Germany honor the memory of Sophie Scholl and her fellow protesters, who were executed for their actions.

**Planned Spontaneity**

As I compose this, my final newsletter message, I do not yet know who my successor will be. I am confident, however, that she or he will be someone who is deeply committed to MCHE’s mission and who will maintain our reputation for both financial integrity and historical accuracy.

I hold no illusions that my transition to retirement will be easy. Having worked for the past 50 years, including 24 years as a classroom teacher, I will need to set new goals, create my own structure and measure the value of my days differently, whether I am purging closets, exercising, lunching with friends, conducting genealogy research, or—best of all—enjoying quality time with (soon to be) seven grandchildren.

In a text exchange with my daughter when I listed 17 items on my “when I retire” plate, she said, “Mom, why don’t I see ‘have fun’ on your list?” to which I replied that I would add, “Be spontaneous.” “I love it,” she responded, “that you have to put ‘be spontaneous’ on a list!” Perhaps that says it all!
Kristallnacht

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2019, 7:00 P.M.
BELGER CRANE YARD STUDIOS
2011 TRACY AVENUE
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

This year’s community-wide Kristallnacht commemoration will feature a talk by Israeli-American designer, artist and researcher Rae Stern, who will describe her ceramic creations that incorporate artifacts provided by families of local Holocaust survivors.

Complimentary reservations are available by calling 913-327-8196 or emailing rsvp@mchekc.org.

Kristallnacht (commonly translated as “Night of Broken Glass”), refers to a series of violent, state-sponsored, anti-Jewish pogroms devised by Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s minister of public enlightenment and propaganda.

Designed to appear as spontaneous, these events of November 9 and 10, 1938, ended the illusion that normal Jewish life under the Nazis was still possible. It also marked a turning point in Nazi anti-Jewish policy that would culminate in the Holocaust—the systematic, state-sponsored mass murder of the European Jews.

In all, 267 synagogues were burned or destroyed, 7,500 Jewish businesses were vandalized or looted, at least 91 Jewish people were murdered, and approximately 30,000 Jewish men were imprisoned in concentration camps. Rioters also damaged Jewish cemeteries, hospitals and schools while police and fire brigades stood aside, under orders to intervene only if the fires threatened non-Jewish property.

Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America’s Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2019, 7:00 P.M.
WHITE THEATRE AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS
5801 WEST 115TH STREET, OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS

MCHE, in partnership with the Truman Presidential Library and Museum, presents Rebecca Erbelding, author of Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America’s Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe, which won the JDC-Herbert Katzki National Jewish Book Award in 2018.

Her work has been featured in the New York Times, the The Washington Post, the The New Yorker, and on the History Channel and National Geographic, largely concerning her 2007 discovery of the personal photo album of Karl Hoecker, the adjutant to the final commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Her talk will focus on the War Refugee Board, established by President Roosevelt in 1944—one of the few actions taken by the United States to allow Jewish refugees to enter America.

Dr. Erbelding holds a Ph.D. in American history from George Mason University. She worked as an archivist and curator at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum from 2003-2015, and since then has been a historian for the Museum’s current exhibition, Americans and the Holocaust.

Complimentary reservations are available by calling 913-327-8196 or emailing rsvp@mchekc.org.

This program is made possible by a generous gift from Peter and Deborah Frye Stern, in honor of his parents, Herbert and Catherine Stern.

As it became increasingly clear to American citizens that Germany and the other Axis powers were murdering European Jews, in January 1944, Treasury Department staff, led by Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt to establish the War Refugee Board.

The War Refugee Board staff worked with Jewish organizations, diplomats from neutral countries, and resistance groups in Europe to rescue Jews from occupied territories and provide relief to Jews in hiding and in concentration camps. They organized a psychological warfare campaign to deter potential perpetrators, opened a refugee camp in upstate New York, and released the first details of mass murder at Auschwitz to the American people. Although these efforts began very late in the war, they did play a crucial role in the rescue of tens of thousands of Jews.
Fall Lunch and Learn: Propaganda

MCHE historian, Dr. Shelly Cline, will offer a new five-week course focused on propaganda of the Nazi period. Beginning on October 23, 2019, sessions will be held on consecutive Wednesdays from noon until 1:15 p.m. at the Jewish Community Campus in the Multi-Activity Center. The cost for this course is $50.

Enrollment is limited to 30, with only a few spots remaining. Participants are encouraged to bring a dairy or vegetarian lunch. Drinks and dessert will be provided. For more details or to register, visit http://mchekc.org/lunchandlearn or contact Dr. Cline at 913-327-8194 or shellyc@mchekc.org

OCTOBER 23 – MAKING A LEADER

Intense public desire for charismatic leaders offers fertile ground for the use of propaganda. Through a carefully orchestrated public image of Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler, the Nazis exploited this yearning to consolidate power and foster national unity. Nazi propaganda facilitated the rapid rise of the Nazi Party to political prominence. Election campaign materials from the 1920s and early 1930s, compelling visual materials and controlled public appearances coalesced to create a “cult of the Führer.” This session will focus on these early years.

Instead, a succession of chancellors governed by presidential decree through Article 48 of the Weimar constitution, established to preserve democracy in times of unrest.

OCTOBER 30 – RALLYING THE NATION

Nazi propagandists appealed to popular desires for order by advertising the party as a protest movement against the instability and ineffectiveness of the “Weimar system.” Indeed, from 1919 through the worldwide Great Depression that began in 1929, no single German political party was able to establish a parliamentary majority. Disagreements over economic policies, as well as the growing opposition between political parties, prevented a workable coalition.

Instead, a succession of chancellors governed by presidential decree through Article 48 of the Weimar constitution, established to preserve democracy in times of unrest.

NOVEMBER 6 – DEFINING THE ENEMY: THE EXCLUDED

One crucial factor in creating a cohesive group is to define those excluded from membership. Nazi propagandists contributed to the regime’s policies by publicly identifying groups for exclusion, justifying their outsider status, and inciting hatred or cultivating indifference. Nazi propaganda was crucial in selling the myth of the “national community” to Germans who longed for unity, national pride and greatness, and a break from the rigid social stratification of the past. But a second, more sinister aspect of the Nazi myth was that not all Germans were welcome in the new community. This session will focus on the propaganda that helped to define those who would be excluded from the new society and justified measures against these “outiders.”

NOVEMBER 13 – SHAPING THE FUTURE: INDOCTRINATING YOUTH

Beginning early in the 1920s, the Nazi Party targeted German youth as a special audience for its propaganda messages. These messages emphasized that the Party was a movement of youth: dynamic, resilient, forward-looking and hopeful. Millions of German young people were won over to Nazism in the classroom and through extracurricular activities. This session will look at propaganda that targeted youth.

NOVEMBER 20 – WRITING THE NEWS AND DECEIVING THE PUBLIC

Propaganda served as an important tool in winning over the majority of the German public who had not supported Hitler and in pushing forward the Nazis’ radical program, which required the acquiescence, support or participation of broad sectors of the population. Combined with the use of terror to intimidate those who did not comply, a new state propaganda apparatus headed by Joseph Goebbels sought to manipulate and deceive the German population and the outside world. This session will look at how that propagandists preached an appealing message of national unity and a utopian future that resonated with millions of Germans and, simultaneously, waged campaigns that facilitated the persecution of Jews and others excluded from the Nazi vision of the “National Community.”

Far left: Nazi Party poster for the German Reichstag elections 1932. Political campaign poster for Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Party translates literally as: “We women choose List 2 National-Socialists.”

Left: “Germany’s Victory, Europe’s Freedom.” 1941 poster depicts German soldier using two lightning bolts to vanquish a red dragon.
Exhibit of Local Survivors

To mark the 80th anniversary of the beginning of World War II, MCHE is displaying portraits of local Polish survivors from our Honoring the Past exhibit. Located in the lobby gallery of the Jewish Community Campus, the exhibit runs through Sunday, December 1, 2019. To listen to testimonies by these and other local survivors, visit mchekc.org/survivors.

From the Heart features the profiles of 52 Kansas City Holocaust survivors and war refugees who began their lives in homelands far away, who saw their lives forever changed by the Holocaust, and who rebuilt their lives in America. The book is available at the MCHE office and at mchekc.org for $25.00 plus tax. Shipping charges apply to online orders.

Statistics of the Holocaust

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<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>INITIAL JEWISH POPULATION</th>
<th>ESTIMATED PERCENT MURDERED</th>
<th>ESTIMATED MURDERED</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SURVIVORS</th>
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TOTAL 9,508,340 63% 5,962,129 3,546,211

Source: The History Place
Faced with overwhelming obstacles, Jews and others in occupied Europe sought to resist Nazi policy in various ways. Some took up arms in uprisings in ghettos and camps. Others performed more social acts to preserve community and create a record of their experiences. This year’s series explores these different paths of resistance.

JANUARY 22 | GHETTO UPRISING: THE UNTOLD STORY | KANSAS CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY PLAZA BRANCH
On the eve of Passover, April 19, 1943, heavily equipped German forces entered the Warsaw ghetto. Against them stood an army of a few hundred young Jewish men and women, armed with pistols and Molotov cocktails. Who were these Jewish fighters who dared oppose the armed might of the SS troops?
The Warsaw ghetto uprising has become a symbol of heroism throughout the world. Despite that, the generally accepted account of the uprising is incomplete. The truth is that among the fighters was a group that was not granted commemoration. The story of those fighters disappeared from history books and their place in the myth of heroism during the Holocaust was omitted. How did it happen? Were political and ideological reasons behind this disappearance?
(Running time: 61 minutes, Hebrew and English with English subtitles, 2017)

FEBRUARY 19 | ESCAPE FROM SOBIBOR | WHITE THEATRE AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS
During the height of World War II, members of a resistance movement within the Sobibór killing center attempt a daring uprising and escape. As the underground group devises a plan, they must contend with Nazi officers, Ukrainian guards and the realization that anyone apprehended will be murdered. Initially plotting for a few people to escape, they eventually decide that all 600 prisoners must break out.
(Running time: 121 minutes, English, 1987)

MARCH 18 | SOPHIE SCHOLL: THE FINAL DAYS | WHITE THEATRE AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS
In 1943, as Hitler continues to wage war across Europe, a group of university students mounts an underground resistance movement in Munich. They call themselves the White Rose. One of its few female members, Sophie Scholl, is captured during a dangerous mission to distribute pamphlets on the campus of the University of Munich along with her brother Hans. Unwavering in her convictions and loyalty to the White Rose, her cross-examination by the Gestapo quickly escalates into a searing test of wills as Sophie delivers a passionate call to freedom and personal responsibility that is both haunting and timeless.
(Running time: 117 minutes, German with English subtitles, 2005)

APRIL 29 | DARING TO RESIST: THREE WOMEN FACE THE HOLOCAUST | KANSAS CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY PLAZA BRANCH
Why would a young person choose resistance during Hitler’s reign of terror while her world was collapsing around her? In this gripping documentary, three Jewish women answer this question by recalling their lives as teenagers in occupied Holland, Hungary and Poland. Defying her family’s wishes, each woman finds an unexpected way of fighting back—as a ballet dancer shuttling Jews to safe houses and distributing resistance newspapers, as a leader in an underground Zionist group smuggling Jews across the border, and as a photographer and partisan (Faye Schulman) waging guerrilla war against the Germans.
(Running time: 59 minutes, English, 1999)

Sponsor the Series or a Single Film!
To help defray costs associated with licensing, refreshments and publicity, MCHE invites sponsorships of $150 for individual films and full series sponsorships of $500 (Supporter) or $1,000 (Patron).
Those interested may make their commitments online, by mail or by calling MCHE Executive Director Jean Zeldin at 913-327-8191.

For additional information, visit mchekc.org/filmseries2020, or call Shelly Cline at 913-327-8194.
International Holocaust Remembrance Day

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2020, 7:00 P.M.
KU EDWARDS CAMPUS, REGNIER HALL AUDITORIUM
12600 QUIVIRA ROAD, OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS

In honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Dr. David Shneer will speak about the experience of Soviet liberators and the photography they produced. In the West, Auschwitz became the symbol of genocide, but in Soviet territory, the Holocaust was more mundane and integrated into daily life under Nazi occupation.

Because of this, Dr. Shneer argues, the absence documented in Soviet Holocaust liberation photography better reflects the experience of genocide than the human drama of survival captured in American and British photography. In these haunting and sublime images, Soviet photographers have unwittingly captured the story of genocide—ghostly landscapes haunted by the dead, not the living.

Dr. Shneer is the Louis P. Singer Endowed Chair in Jewish History, Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, and Professor of History, Religious Studies and Jewish Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Complimentary reservations are available by calling 913-327-8196 or emailing rsvp@mchekc.org. This program is presented in partnership with KU Jewish Studies and supported by donations to MCHE’s 25th Anniversary Fund the Future Campaign.

In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly designated January 27—the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945—as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In conjunction with this special remembrance, the UN urges every member state to honor the victims of the Nazi era and to develop educational programs to help prevent future genocides.

Pictures of Resistance: The Wartime Photography of Jewish Partisan Faye Schulman

APRIL 13 – JUNE 16, 2020
KANSAS CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY
CENTRAL BRANCH
14 WEST 10TH STREET
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

During World War II, approximately 30,000 Jews escaped ghettos and work camps and formed organized armed resistance groups known as partisans. Despite the odds, women were able to join the partisans. Their work ranged from domestic duties such as cleaning, cooking and nursing to reconnaissance and weapons transport, as well as armed combat. Women made up approximately 10% of the partisans.

Faye Schulman was one such partisan. Born in Poland in 1924, Schulman received her first camera from her brother when she was 13. That camera ultimately saved her life and allowed her to later document Jewish partisan activity. She is one of the only known Jewish partisan photographers.

Schulman’s rare collection of images captures the camaraderie, horror and loss, bravery and triumph of the rag-tag, tough partisan—some Jewish, some not—who fought the Germans and their collaborators.

Pictures of Resistance: The Wartime Photography of Jewish Partisan Faye Schulman is a traveling exhibition produced by the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation. It poses probing questions about this incredible woman and the people whose images she documented. The exhibit will be on display from April 13, 2019, to June 16, 2020 at the Kansas City Public Library Central Branch.

Funding for this project is provided by the Oppenstein Brothers Foundation. For more information, visit mchekc.org/Faye-Schulman.
Between the Nazi rise to power in 1933 and the invasion of Poland in 1939, Nazi policy toward the Jews encouraged their social and economic isolation from non-Jews. With the ultimate aim of pressuring Jews to emigrate from the country, the Nazis utilized increasingly restrictive laws to force this separation—eventually progressing to organized violence.

By the spring of 1938, these policies were in force against German, Austrian and Czech Jews from the Sudetenland, as the Reich expanded through territorial acquisition. Despite this pressure to leave the country, many Jews had little interest in leaving their homes, especially as they faced restrictive immigration quotas and obstacles to their successful entry into another country. The situation reached a breaking point in November 1938 following Kristallnacht when Jews in the Reich perceived an immediate threat to their safety, prompting an international refugee crisis that demanded the attention of world leaders.

Last year’s 24th annual contest asked students to analyze the conditions experienced by Jews living within the Reich during the 1930s and to explore what choices were open to them as potential emigrants.

A total of 104 students from regional schools submitted entries. From the ten finalists in each division, identified by volunteers through blind judging, a panel of Blue Ribbon judges then chose the winners, who were announced at a ceremony attended by the students, teachers, families and MCHE members.

Emma Du of Harmony Middle School earned first place in the 8-9th grade division for her research. Her sponsoring teacher was Jon Holsapple. John Lubianetsky of The Barstow School won the 10-12th grade division for the second year in a row. His sponsoring teacher was Angela Guldin. Both of the winning essays can be read at https://mchekc.org/essay.
Historical events impact individuals in unique and varied ways, framed by many factors, including experience, geography and the progression of time. The effort to personalize the history of the Holocaust seeks to counter the perception that there was one universal perspective.

Jews living in Eastern Europe (here defined as Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine and the Soviet Union) constituted the largest population of Jews in the world. Beginning with Germany’s invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, Polish Jews faced immediate persecution and acts of violence. By summer 1941, Operation Barbarossa (Germany’s surprise attack against the Soviet Union) brought total war and genocide to the Jews of eastern Poland and the Soviet Union. Those two years witnessed a radicalization of Nazi policy toward the Jews that was driven by ideology, opportunity and the conditions of war, culminating in the formulation of the Final Solution.

To help students understand the unique circumstances of the Holocaust in the East, the 2019-2020 essay contest asks them to explain the evolution of Nazi policy toward the Jews in a particular country, analyzing how it was affected by the progression of World War II. Students will then personalize this history by outlining how these policies impacted an individual Jewish person or family living in that region. Finally, in reflecting on their research, students will address how the Holocaust is memorialized in that country today.

The essay contest is open to 8th to 12th grade students in Eastern Kansas and Western Missouri. Full contest information—including the writing prompt, documents for research and contest criteria—is available at www.mchekc.orgessay. The deadline for submitting entries is March 27, 2020.

This year’s contest is made possible by a gift from Katherine DeBruce and by members of MCHE’s White Rose Society.

Professional Development for Educators

Americans and the Holocaust
OCTOBER 16, 2019
4:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.
JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS
CONFERENCE ROOM C

Join Dr. Rebecca Erbelding, historian with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), in exploring the role of Americans and the Holocaust. This workshop is open to 7th to 12th grade educators. A $10 registration fee includes light supper and all materials. Registration is available at www.mchekc.org/america.

This program is made possible by a generous gift from Peter and Deborah Frye Stern, in honor of his parents, Herbert and Catherine Stern.

Exploring the Essay
NOVEMBER 14, 2019
4:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.
JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS
CONFERENCE ROOM C

ANALYZE documents associated with this year’s White Rose Student Essay Contest theme.

EXPERIENCE hands-on practice with historical sources.

GAIN TOOLS for incorporating the essay contest into your curriculum.

Educators interested in sponsoring student essays are encouraged to attend this FREE program. All 8th-12th grade educators are welcome. Light supper is included.

Details and registration at www.mchekc.org/exploretteessay.

Resistance—The White Rose: We Defied Hitler
JANUARY 16, 2020
4:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.
JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS
CONFERENCE ROOM C

Offered in conjunction with The Coterie’s presentation of The White Rose: We Defied Hitler, this workshop for teachers of grades 7 and up will focus on Jewish resistance during the Holocaust—events that happened concurrently to those depicted in the play. A $10 registration fee includes light supper and all materials needed for the workshop, including materials from Echoes and Reflections.

Details and registration at www.mchekc.org/coterie.
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Midwest Center for Holocaust Education
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Visit mchekc.org/mche-newsletter for an online version of this newsletter.

JANUARY 21 – FEBRUARY 9, 2020
THE COTERIE THEATRE
2450 GRAND BLVD.
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
www.thecoterie.org

Based on real events, this challenging new work examines the role of ordinary people in extraordinary times. It tells the true story of Sophie Scholl, a German college student who led the only act of public resistance to the Nazis during the Second World War.

This gripping and intriguing play contains little-known facts about Sophie, her brother Hans, and the civil disobedience of the White Rose movement in Nazi Germany. Scholl’s moral strength is tested while being interrogated for her crimes, leading her to question whether to save her own life or continue her righteous crusade. The play is recommended for ages 12 through adult.

Please see page 11 for details about a teacher workshop that MCHE is offering in conjunction with The Coterie’s presentation.