

Margaret and Lou Schwartz Butterfly Garden Dedicated on Yom HaShoah

Over 500 people from the Charlotte community gathered outdoors at Shalom Park on Sunday, May 1 for the Yom HaShoah service and to dedicate the Children's Holocaust Memorial Sculpture. The sculpture is located in the Margaret and Lou Schwartz Butterfly Garden, named for Holocaust survivors and the parents of Levine JCC Board President, Larry Schwartz.

As part of the Yom Ha'Shoah service, twelve survivors and their families were present to light candles in memory of the brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and cousins who perished in the Holocaust.

The sculpture by Paul Rouso, renowned Charlotte artist, incorporates over 2,800 hand-painted ceramic butterflies, each one crafted in memory of a specific child who died in the Holocaust. The sculpture was the result of The Butterfly Project, which was brought to the Levine Jewish Community Center from the San Diego Day School by three very dedicated and talented Levine JCC volunteers, Wilma Asrael, Gwen Orland, and Barbara Ziegler.

Over three years, these women led more than 60 Holocaust education workshops with area school children, as well as with faith and community groups. During the workshops, ceramic butterflies were painted and lessons on intolerance, diversity and acceptance were taught as part of the Project's



Judy August, past president of the Levine JCC, shares, "The interactive workshops - the education against bigotry and against indifference - will remain at the heart of the project."

ongoing commitment to education.

Judy August, past Levine JCC Board President, and Jill Newman, current Levine JCC Board Member, spearheaded the fundraising effort to bring the sculpture and garden to Shalom Park. Patty and Bill Gorelick, Sandra and Leon Levine, and Larry Schwartz were prime donors to the project. Thanks to the planning, persistence, and generous contributions of many volunteers and community leaders, what started as "a small dream for making a few butterflies to adorn the Levine Jewish Community Center" became "like a butterfly



Barbara Ziegler and Gwen Orland passing the flame, pictured with Hanna and Howard Adler of Statesville, NC and other Holocaust survivors.

... spreading its wings and becoming something very special."

Now the sculpture's arching expanse and colorful mosaic instantly draw the eye as one enters the Park. However, the dedication of this magnificent sculpture is not an end, but a beginning.

The Levine Jewish Community Center and the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library are collaborating to provide educational workshops throughout the Charlotte community on the Holocaust, religious tolerance, diversity and acceptance. This initiative will include the recruitment and training of volunteers to lead these workshops and fielding inquiries and requests from area schools, churches, and other community groups and agencies.

It is hoped that additional financial and volunteer support will sustain these educational workshops in perpetuity as The Butterfly Project enters this new phase of its development. The Margaret and Lou Schwartz

Butterfly Garden, the site for the workshops going forward, will be appreciated not only for its beauty and artistic merit, but also as a haven for reflection and discussion.

Dr. Racelle Weiman, Director of The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education at Temple University, shared in her lecture following the ceremony the shocking fact that only 7-8% of Jewish children survived Nazi-occupied territory. Only 33% of Jewish adults survived. Thousands of non-Jewish persons who were sympathizers, disabled, homosexual, or otherwise deemed undesirable were also eliminated.

But out of our collective memory of this tragic and horrible past, the seeds of hope and peace can germinate.

One wonderful surprise that came about through preparation for this year's Yom HaShoah observance was a play created by local teens, named "Who Will Tell Their Story? Passing on the Legacy." It recounts the early lives of Holocaust survivors Suly Chenkin and Irving Bienstock. The play's executive producer, Wilma Asrael, said the process of creating the play was moving and she greatly respected the "amazing teens who have all shown continuing commitment to the work, understanding and a joy of life seldom seen."

During this year's Yom HaShoah service, Rabbi Judy



Suly Chenkin pictured with the two young ladies who perform as older Suly (Margo Smith) and younger Suly (Maya Goldsmith) in the play about her harrowing childhood experiences.

Schindler reflected, "As Jews, we are called to continually move forward: from despair to embracing life, from fear to faith, from ashes to hope."

Rabbi Yossi Groner of Congregation Ohr Ha Torah stated, "Today we look at this memorial as a beacon of hope and we resolve to raise our children in a better world where evil no longer has a place. We educate our children to be living Torah scrolls where the words of God are written in their minds and hearts."

Live butterflies were released at the close of the service. As the butterflies tested their wings and broke free of their paper "chrysalises," the sun broke through the cloudy skies.

If you are interested in making a donation, volunteering, or would like to get more information about the educational workshops, please visit The Butterfly Project at www.charlottejcc.org or email ButterflyProject@charlottejcc.org. ✪

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