

Hillel teaches high school students about the Holocaust

by Rachel Southmayd, April 6, 2010

In the 2000 Census, Alamance County did not have a single Jewish resident. Elon University's Hillel is the only Jewish life organization in the county. Some members of the organization said there isn't enough education about the Holocaust in the county.

Members of Hillel are working with Southern Alamance High School to change this.

As part of Holocaust Remembrance Week, which will take place April 12 to 16, several Hillel members will visit Southern Alamance High School, located about 15 miles south of Elon's campus, and present lessons about the Holocaust to sophomore language arts classes.

Chrissy Stein's high school students inspired the project last spring. Stein is the wife of Jeff Stein, the associate dean of students at Elon and teaches World Literature at Southern Alamance.

She invited her students and their parents to hear Shelly Weiner speak at Elon last spring. Weiner is a Holocaust survivor. One student attended with her mother, and Stein says they were in contact for weeks with further questions.

Nancy Luberoff, Elon's Hillel director, said it was apparent they were deeply affected.

"It was clear they'd never been presented with the Holocaust as a human tragedy," Luberoff said.

Stein said the Elie Wiesel memoir "Night" is part of her current curriculum, and in the class, the students discuss both the Holocaust and other genocides, but many of her students wanted to learn more.

Student organizer Zach Jordan said he wants the students to experience a modern-day approach to studying the Holocaust, because he said it is still a very relevant topic, and genocide is still an issue worldwide.

"It's kind of ironic that we keep opening these memorials," Jordan said, "It's important to remember the victims of the Holocaust, but also to remember the 'Never Again.'"

Hillel wants the students to remember the Holocaust didn't just affect Europe's Jewish population.

"It transcends religion and any social constraints," Jordan said.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum reports the Nazi forces killed 12 million people during the Holocaust from the late 1930's through the early 1940's. Approximately six million of Jewish people.

"We want to go through a brief history and why we should all know what happened in the Holocaust," said Rachel Stanley, Hillel's Social Justice Chair.