



### **A Word from the Chair- Rabbi Mark Schifftan**

I am proud of the dedication the **Tennessee Holocaust Commission** has demonstrated in interreligious dialogue and programming. We have developed an Interfaith Webinar Series, supported **Belmont University** in their Holocaust programming this Fall and have been inducted as the newest member of the **Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations (CCJR)**.



*Photos: (Above) At the USHMM exhibit at Belmont L to R: Jon Roebuck, Commissioner Adam Exelbierd, Ken Gluck, Alyssa Trachtman, Maureen Germain, Chair Rabbi Mark Schifftan, & Commissioner Dr. Lewis Reich (Below) Teacher Fellow, David Smith, presenting [Paper Clips](#) documentary at Belmont.*



I am honored to be the first rabbi to serve on the campus of Belmont University, a leading Christian University, which gained national prominence by hosting two of the more recent Presidential debates. Belmont has also made a commitment towards strengthening its relationship with the Jewish community, through interfaith dialogue, course offerings, public lectures and other activities.

As part of this, the Office of Jewish Dialogue and Discovery, where I serve, has sent more than one hundred Jewish and Christian clergy and lay leaders on learning missions to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. over the past few years. As a result, the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** has formed a unique and innovative partnership with Belmont University.

Belmont is the first university in the nation to house a traveling exhibit from the Museum. The theme of the exhibit is *Some Were Neighbors*. It asks the difficult questions as to how we might respond to assist of neighbors in need of safely and refuge: Would we be courageous? Complicit? Or Complacent? Those are the same questions each of us must wrestle with today.

I am so proud of bringing this exhibit about the Jews of Europe and their gentile neighbors, to a Christian University. It demonstrates the hope and inspiration of building bridges of understanding among our different faiths and communities. The exhibit has been visited by thousands, including church and synagogue groups, public and private and religious school classes, university students and faculty, parents and alumni.



## Holocaust Survivor Mark Schonwetter, East TN Tour

From October 20–24, the Commission proudly hosted Holocaust survivor **Mark Schonwetter** and his daughter, **Isabella Fiske**, for a week-long tour of schools and communities across East Tennessee. The tour began with a campus event at Maryville College, followed by programs at Carson-Newman University and the King Family Library.

During his visit, Mark shared his story with more than 400 students, educators, and community members. The Commission was also able to host a dinner and Q&A session where our Teacher Fellows were invited to have time with Mark and Isabella in a small group setting. We extend our deepest gratitude to Mark and Isabella for their visit, and to our partners who helped make these events possible: **Jamie Webster** and **Dan Klingensmith** (Maryville College); **Kara Stooksbury** (Carson-Newman University); and **Lisa Christian** (King Family Library, Sevierville).



*Photo: (above) Mark Schonwetter greeting students at Carson-Newman University, (below) Dr. Dan Klingensmith & Dr. Jamie Webster from Maryville College, with Survivor Mark Schonwetter and daughter, Isabella Fiske.*



*Photo: (above) Teacher Fellow Dinner and Q&A with Mark Schonwetter, (L to R) Sandy Roberts, Andrew Fultz, Noelle Smith, Alison Vick, Wendy VanDyke, Tracy Rees, Julie Mitchell, Ken Gluck, Opal Lovitt, David Smith, Deb Stout, John Brown, Cindy Monroe, Julie Kinder McMillan, Lynn Heinz, Kim Kenneson, Isabella Fiske. (front) Alyssa Trachtman, Survivor Mark Schonwetter, Maureen Germain*



**Mark Schonwetter Holocaust  
Education Foundation**



Photos: (above) Participants for the Clergy Panel at Sevier County Library, Rebbetzin Dale Rosenberg, Pastor Chris Edmonds, Rabbi Raina Siroty, Staff Alison Vick, Father. Pete Iorio, Rabbi Yossi Wilhelm. (below) USHMM Curator Dr. Dan Greene with Sevier County librarians at the opening of the "Americans and The Holocaust" Exhibit.



## Sevier County Public Library System Hosts "Americans and the Holocaust"

From September 29 through November 5, the **King Family Library** in Sevier County hosted the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's traveling exhibition, *Americans and the Holocaust*. The Tennessee Holocaust Commission was honored to partner with the library's education coordinator, **Lisa Christian**, for multiple public programs, as well as a six-week display of the *Living On* traveling exhibit. On October 16, the Commission hosted an interfaith clergy roundtable featuring **Dale Rosenberg** (Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge), **Pastor Chris Edmonds** (Oakwood Baptist Church, Knoxville), **Rabbi Raina Siroty** (Temple Beth El, Knoxville), **Father Pete Iorio** (Our Lady of Fatima, Alcoa), and **Rabbi Yossi Wilhelm** (Chabad of Knoxville). Panelists reflected on the question, "Where was God during the Holocaust?" followed by a thoughtful Q&A session with the audience.

The following week, the library welcomed Holocaust survivor **Mark Schonwetter** for a community program where he shared his story with adults and students. In the concluding event of the exhibition, **Alison Vick** led an interactive program titled *Beyond Night: Journeying into the World and Works of Elie Wiesel*.

### Educator Professional Development Around the State

This year the Commission is updating and expanding the professional development programs we provide educators to ensure we meet the needs of teachers in ELA, Social Studies, and the arts. Over the summer and fall, we conducted PD trainings with school systems in **Shelby County, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Sevier County, Knox County, and Roane County**.

If you know of an educator or county that would like to engage with our sessions, please reach out to staff directly or email [tnholcom@tnholcom.org](mailto:tnholcom@tnholcom.org).

### Survivor Testimony Heard by 3,000 Students Across TN

### Commissioner Spotlight



This quarter, we are pleased to recognize **Dr. Katie High** for her dedication to the work of the Tennessee Holocaust Commission. Through her insight and leadership, the Commission is looking ahead to hosting a community event in Knoxville that will connect Holocaust history to local history and lived experience.

### Jewish Musicians Travel To Whitwell



In December, the Commission piloted a new statewide program—a webinar featuring a Holocaust survivor for students and teachers from Mountain City to Memphis. On December 10, the Commission partnered with the **Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation** (Skokie, IL) to host a webinar with ninety-two-year-old Holocaust survivor **Agnes Schwartz**.

In an extraordinary outpouring of interest, more than 3,000 students and teachers logged in to hear Agnes recount her survival under a false identity in Budapest and her father's rescue by Raoul Wallenberg. Use the link below to see the a recording of the webinar.

[Recording: Agnes Schwartz](#)

## Second Interfaith Webinar Series Connects Clergy

From late October through mid-November, the Commission hosted its 2nd Annual Interfaith Webinar Series. The series opened with a powerful testimony of survival and faith from **Rabbi Philip Lazowski** (Hartford, CT), who also reflected on his close friendship with Holocaust survivor **Teddy Winestone**, formerly of Memphis. The Commission extends sincere thanks to **Marshall Soltz and Emanuel Synagogue in Hartford** for their partnership in bringing Rabbi Lazowski to this series. The second webinar featured Jewish and Christian clergy from across Tennessee, including **Rabbi Craig Lewis** (Mitzpah Congregation, Chattanooga); **Cantor Tracy Fishbein** (The Temple, Nashville); **Pastor Andrew Abraham** (Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Hermitage); **Pastor Ray Chandler**

A new group for Jewish music industry professionals in Nashville has formed under the leadership of Neal Spielberg and Brooke Wasserman. With support from the Tennessee Holocaust Commission, the group traveled to Whitwell, Tennessee to visit the **Children's Holocaust Memorial**. Staff member, **Ken Gluck** accompanied the group and introduced them to Teacher Fellow, **David Smith**, who gave guests a VIP tour of the Memorial.



*Photo: (Above) Teacher Fellow David Smith leading a tour at the Memorial.*

[Link to Memorial Website](#)

## Staff and Teachers Participate in Appalachian State University's Holocaust Education Symposium

In July, the Tennessee Holocaust Commission was invited to participate in the 23rd Annual Martin and Doris Rosen Holocaust Education Symposium at Appalachian State University. Teacher Fellows **Brandon Eldridge** and **Darrell Schwartz** presented as part of a roundtable discussion alongside North Carolina educators.

Commission historian and program coordinator, **Alison Vick**, also participated in a roundtable discussion and led a workshop for teachers examining the impact of generative-AI on Holocaust education and memory. Throughout the conference, educators had the opportunity to view a display of *Living On* portraits, further enriching the symposium experience.

(First United Methodist Church, Brownsville); and **Reverend Dorothy White** (St. George's Episcopal Church, Germantown).

The series concluded with a deeply moving message from **Father Patrick Desbois**, founder and president of **Yahad-In Unum**. Special thanks to **Dr. Ewa Schaller**, our partner at Yahad-In Unum, for her invaluable assistance in arranging Father Desbois' webinar. Follow the links below to see recordings of the webinars.

[Rabbi Lazowski Webinar Link](#)

[TN Clergy Webinar Link](#)

[Father Desbois Webinar Link](#)

---

## Two Tennessee Heroes

On Saturday, September 27, the stories of two Tennessee heroes intersected at the Jamestown courthouse. The Commission partnered with **Debbie York**, the great-granddaughter of World War I hero, Alvin C. York, to host **Pastor Chris Edmonds** for a community event at the Jamestown Courthouse.

During the program, Chris shared the story of his father, Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds, a Knoxville native. To date, Roddie Edmonds remains the only American GI to have received the distinguished honor of "Righteous Among the Nations" for saving his Jewish comrades during World War II.



*Photo: (above) Darrell Schwartz (standing) speaking with other educators at App State Holocaust Education Symposium, (below) Teacher Fellows Darrell Schwartz and Brandon Eldridge at App State Holocaust Education Symposium*



---

## Armin's Story and Survivor Testimony Shared Throughout Greater Nashville

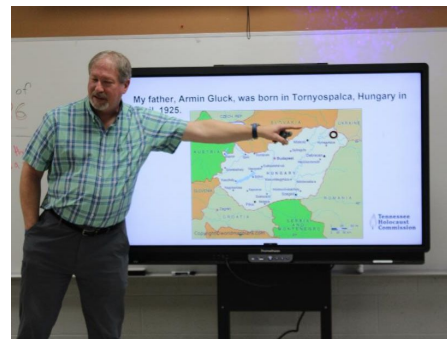
The recent months have been busy with students hearing from Holocaust Survivors and children of Survivors. Education Coordinator, **Ken Gluck**, has reached over 2,000 students in 18 schools already this school year. He recounted his father's family's experience and struggle as Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust and spoke candidly about the growing presence of antisemitism, encouraging students to choose empathy over hate. Schools included: Meigs Middle School, Head Middle School, Providence Christian High School, and Amqui Middle School, among many others.

Survivor **Kassi Bateman** has also shared her story, as a hidden child during the Holocaust, at Wilson Central High School, Legacy Middle School and Grassland Middle School in the greater Nashville area.

Photo: (above) Pastor Chris Edmonds with a guest after his presentation about his father, Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds, (below) Pastor Edmonds presenting in Jamestown.



Photo: (above) Survivor, Kassi Bateman with educator Allison McSwain at Legacy MS in Franklin, TN (photo credit: Allison McSwain) (below) Staff member, Ken Gluck sharing "Armin's Story" in a middle school classroom.



## Remembering World War II Event in Linden

On September 26-27, staff attended *Remembering World War II*, a hands-on living history event that is held in the small town of Linden, Tennessee. *Remembering World War II* has grown exponentially since it began in 2012, and this year the Commission had the opportunity to contribute to two of the event's "firsts." The 2025 event included the addition of an Education Day, as well as the event's expansion to include the Holocaust in its narrative.

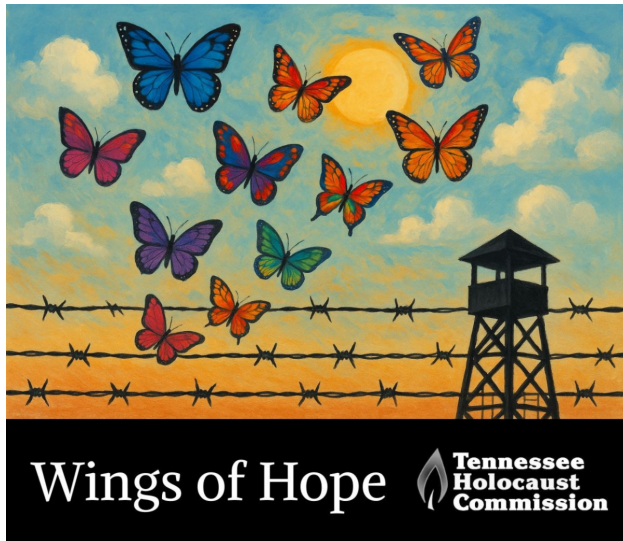
On Friday's Education Day, Staff members, **Ken Gluck** and **Opal Lovitt** each presented to approximately 180 middle schoolers as the students rotated through different learning experiences. Ken shared *Armin's Story*, and Opal taught part of the Upstanders Program featuring Tennessean, **Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds**.

On Saturday, Ken shared his father's story of survival on the mainstage. Throughout the day, Opal led sessions of the *Wings of Hope* program with attendees. We extend our gratitude to our outstanding



Photo: (above) Children participating with Wings of Hope Program; (below) Staff, Ken Gluck gifts a copy of "Living On" to a WWII Veteran

partner, **Mallory Courter**, for her dedication in bringing Holocaust education to this event.



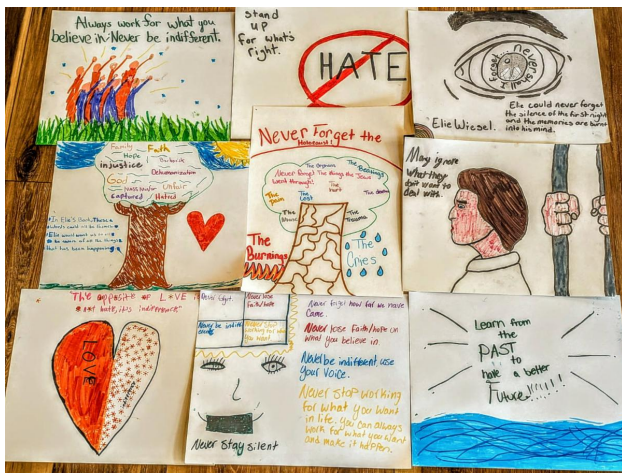
*Photos: (above) Some of the butterflies decorated in commemoration of Tennessee Holocaust Survivors. (right) Students from the Jireh Co-Op in Knoxville who participated in Wings of Hope with staff member, Alison Vick.*



## Wings of Hope Soaring

Students across the state have participated in our **Wings of Hope** initiative to remember Tennessee survivors and their families. **Wings of Hope** is an interactive project where students learn about the Holocaust and how it affected Tennesseans using the narratives and images from the Tennessee Holocaust Commission *Living On* book. Students then decorate a butterfly in commemoration of the survivor. Since launching in September, we have collected **over 400 butterflies** commemorating Tennessee survivors and liberators. The butterflies are either kept by the schools in remembrance or sent to the families of survivors. We extend our thanks to over forty schools, museums, and libraries across the state who are partnering with us to make this initiative a success.

If you are interested in connecting with us to bring this program to your school, please contact us at: [tnholcom@tnholcom.org](mailto:tnholcom@tnholcom.org). All participants will be formally recognized at the initiative's conclusion in summer 2026.



### "Beyond Night" Program Debuts

This fall, the Commission launched its newest educational offering, *Beyond Night: Journeying into the World and Works of Elie Wiesel*. This interactive program explores *Night*, Wiesel's life, and many of his other works, and is designed to adapt to a range of audiences.

The program debuted at Oneida High School and Scott High School. Following a brief presentation and group discussion, students examined key themes and quotations from Wiesel's writing and created posters reflecting the core messages of his work. We thank **Olivia Douglas** (Scott High School) and **Brandi Smith** (Oneida High School) for the opportunity to launch this program at their schools.



### 2G/3G Training Launches in Memphis

This fall, **Ken Gluck** facilitated two training workshops for children and grandchildren of survivors with **Lorraine Wolf**, Community Impact Manager for the Jewish Federation of Memphis. These workshops were designed to support participants in organizing their families' narratives and prepare them to confidently share them with others.

To get involved or learn more, reach out to Ken at [ken.gluck@tnholcom.org](mailto:ken.gluck@tnholcom.org).

### Welcome to CCJR!

Over the past eighteen months, the Commission has spearheaded programming and dialogue with Jewish and Christian clergy, communities, and congregations across Tennessee. Much of this work has been aided by scholars and resources from the **Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations** (CCJR), widely regarded as the largest and most respected non-institutionally based interfaith organization in North America.

Building on the success of the Commission's work with interfaith programming and dialogue, the Commission applied for official membership in CCJR. On November 9–10, **Alison Vick** attended the CCJR conference at Iona University in New Rochelle, New York. The Commission's application was unanimously approved, and we were formally welcomed by **Dr. Rebecca Carter-Chand** (CCJR Vice President and Director of Programs on Ethics, Religion, and the Holocaust at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). Our membership marks



Photos: (above) CCJR Conference group, (below) CCJR President, Dr. Adam Gregerman welcomes attendees to the conference.

the first time a state commission or council has been admitted as a member of CCJR.



*Photo: Simon Waksberg (photo courtesy of his daughter, Nancy Levine.)*

### One Small Piece: The Simon and Mina Waksberg Story

The Commission is pleased to share an update from our partners at the **Children's Holocaust Memorial** in Whitwell, Tennessee, and the **Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation**. Our partners in Whitwell now house artifacts from the Spungen collection that highlight the stories of Holocaust survivors Simon and Mina Waksberg, formerly of Memphis.

In addition, the Commission has received photographs and materials from Simon and Mina's daughter, **Nancy Levine**. Commission Historian, Alison Vick is currently writing the exhibit narrative. The story will explore how Simon and Mina not only lived with Oskar Schindler, but were also connected to Gerda Weissmann Klein and her husband, Kurt. We look forward to the official opening of this exhibit in the coming year.

### Teacher Fellows Shine in their Commitment to Teaching the Holocaust

The Commission is honored and privileged to have over forty educators across the state participate in the Teacher Fellow Program. We appreciate their continued efforts to teach students, and share with their communities, the importance of the Holocaust. This quarter we want to recognize three of our Fellows:

**Brandon Eldridge** (Central Magnet School) and **Darrell Schwartz** (Roane County High School) were awarded full scholarships to attend the 23rd Annual Martin and Doris Rosen Holocaust Education Symposium at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. While at the symposium, Brandon and Darrell participated in a roundtable discussion with educators from North Carolina, where they examined both the challenges and strengths of Holocaust education in their respective states.

**Kristin Fitzgerald** is a History educator at John Overton High School in Nashville. Kristin was one of the educators who joined us in Poland last summer and has since been highlighted by Metro Nashville Public Schools for her efforts in Holocaust education (see article [here](#)). Through Kristin's efforts, the Commission will be bringing Dr. Alex Kor and Dr. Stacy Gallin to her school in February for a presentation on the Holocaust and Medical Ethics.

**Teacher Fellowship:** Join our group of 40 plus teacher fellows and receive special access to trainings and resources from the Tennessee Holocaust Commission. Help us share our events and connect to schools in your part of the state to share Holocaust Education. Applications accepted on a rolling basis.



Teacher Fellow, **Debbie Silvers** (r) with Alison Vick and Pastor Chris Edmonds, in Jamestown, TN after Pastor Edmond's presentation about his father, Roddie Edmonds.



Teacher Fellows **Julie Mitchell, Wendy VanDyke and Julie Kinder McMillan** with Survivor Mark Schonwetter (photo credit, Julie Kinder McMillan).

### Upcoming Public Events: (watch for more as the calendar fills up)

**January: 25-** 2G/3G Social Event (Nashville)  
**27-** International Holocaust Remembrance Day

**February: 3-5-** Survivor Mark Schonwetter (Memphis)  
**9-** Chris Edmonds—UT Southern (Pulaski)  
**20-** Dr. Alex Kor and Dr. Stacy Gallin "Biomedical Ethics and the Holocaust"—Vanderbilt University (Nashville)  
**21-** "Auschwitz: Legacy and Investigations" Educator Conference, Austin Peay State University (Clarksville)

**April: 13-** Yom HaShoah Nashville  
**14-** Yom HaShoah Memphis  
**16-** Yom HaShoah Chattanooga  
**19-** Yom HaShoah Knoxville  
**TBD-** Yom HaShoah Webinar: Cumberland University, Pellissippi State CC, Roane State CC

**May: TBD:** Carnegie Center for Arts and History, Exhibit and Program (Jackson)  
**12-** Survivor Speaker, Emmanuel Lutheran Church (Hermitage)  
**31-** Lois Lowry Community Presentation (Nashville)  
**May 31-June 1:** Joyce A. Vise Holocaust Education Summit (Nashville)- registration coming soon!

If you are interested in having a speaker or exhibit at your school or community group, please contact us at [tnholcom@tnholcom.org](mailto:tnholcom@tnholcom.org)