

Tennessee Holocaust Commission Developing Fully Virtual Holocaust Museum



The Commission is excited and proud to announce that this year we have the opportunity to develop a fully virtual Holocaust museum. Led by Curator Alison Vick, the project is designed to bring a fully immersive and meticulously researched and designed museum to audiences and classrooms across the state. The museum tells the history of the Shoah by exploring prewar, World War II and Holocaust, and postwar topics. Throughout there are strong connections to Tennessee stories, people, and events. This project is supported widely within the greater Holocaust education field and will also feature user manuals for educators, students, congregations, and the general community. The project will debut publicly on the Commission website in Spring 2027.

Educators across Tennessee Gather for Vise Family Holocaust Education Summit

On May 31-June 1, sixty teachers from across Tennessee gathered at the Temple in Nashville for the Commission's educator conference, **"Investigating the Mosaic of Victims: The Holocaust Through the Arts and Literature."**

The conference explored the diversity of victims of the Holocaust while also focusing on the arts and literature as teaching tools. Featured presentations included presentations from **Alexandra Zapruder** (Defiant Requiem Foundation) **Michaael Simonson** (Leo Baeck Institute), **Dr. Ashley Valanzola** (MTSU/Clark University), **Amy Hudnall** (Appalachian State University), and staff historian **Alison Vick**. Afternoon sessions featured presentations from Chattanooga artist, **Jen Lewis**, who shared her "Stars of David Project." Teacher Fellows, **Katie Sumner** and **Shelby Bowman** also led an interactive dialogue with educators focused on pedagogical practices in the classroom.

Newbery Winner, Lois Lowry Enchants 400 in Nashville

Internationally acclaimed young adult author and Newberry Winner, **Lois Lowry** presented to over 400 attendees at a community event at the Temple on May 31. Ms. Lowry's presentation focused on the beloved historical novel, *Number the Stars*. While discussing the work's impact, Ms. Lowry emphasized the critical importance of continuing to stand up to antisemitism and remember the Holocaust. Following the event, Ms. Lowry enchanted attendees with a book signing—an opportunity cherished by



Photos: (above) Teacher Fellow, Dr. Jonathan Jones, engaging with the materials presented by Dr. Ashley Valanzola; (right) Teacher Fellow Mason Lake, meeting Lois Lowry and having a book signed; (below) Conference attendees preparing to hear the keynote by Lois Lowry.



The Year In Numbers

10: Exhibit Displays

12: Virtual Webinar Events

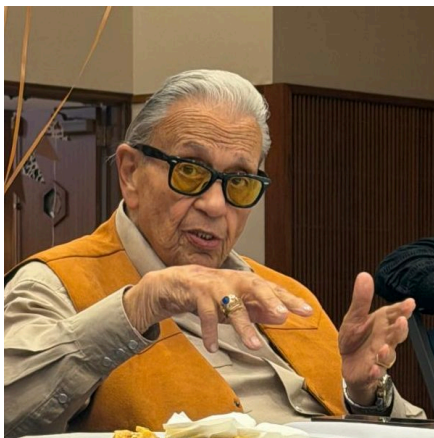
49: Cities in Tennessee Received In-Person Programming

51: Speaking Events to Students Across Tennessee

60: Educators Attended Vise Family Holocaust Education Summit

1800: Hours of Professional Training Provided

12000: Students reached with Holocaust Education



Survivor George Rishfeld Visits Middle Tennessee

In April we had the pleasure of bringing Survivor **George Rishfeld** to schools and communities across Middle Tennessee. His visit included a special appearance at the Gordon Jewish Community Center, where he was honored as a candlelighter during their Yom HaShoah commemoration. Throughout his time in Nashville, George shared his testimony with hundreds of students, including those at Kehilla Upper School and Hume Fogg Academic Magnet High School. He also served as the keynote speaker for Middle Tennessee State University's inaugural Yom HaShoah commemoration in Murfreesboro. George concluded his visit by sharing his story with **Senior Rabbi Michael Danziger** and attendees of the Temple Congregation Ohabai Sholom's "Lunch with the Rabbi," leaving audiences inspired to carry his message forward.

Photo: (above) George Rishfeld sharing his story with audiences in Middle TN; (below) MTSU students lining up to meet George after his presentation in Murfreesboro



Memphis to Greenville: Spring Commemorations Across the



Mark Schonwetter in Memphis

This year we had the honor of partnering with Shelby County Schools to bring a Survivor Speaker to students across the county. **Mark Schonwetter** and his daughter **Isabella Fiske** braved the ice storm to join us in January at Memphis University School for a community and student body event coordinated with Teacher Fellow **Jonathan Jones**. Mark and Isabella also spoke at University High School and at Temple Israel during their January visit. School closures inhibited transportation to Temple Israel for many students, but the local community rallied together to bring in as many attendees as possible, including Teacher Fellow **Laura Wilons**, whose students were the first to directly present a survivor with butterflies from our Wings of Hope initiative. A rescheduled visit during warmer weather brought Mark and Isabella back to Memphis in May, where over 400 students from 17 schools visited Temple Israel to bear witness to Mark's incredible story of survival.



State

This spring the Tennessee Holocaust Commission was privileged to host and support many Yom HaShoah events and commemorations across the state. Staff joined over 600 in Memphis for a presentation from author **Judy Batalion**. In Nashville, staff and Commission chair joined the community for a commemoration featuring author **Cathy Lewis** who shared work about the ill-fated journey of the *M.S. St. Louis*. In East Tennessee, Staff worked with the Knoxville Jewish Alliance to bring Holocaust survivor, **Judy Kolb**, to Knoxville (and subsequently Tusculum University in Greenville), and joined the Chattanooga community for an interactive commemoration. The Commission also worked with MTSU in Murfreesboro to bring Survivor **George Rishfeld** to their inaugural Yom HaShoah event. And as part of an annual tradition, the Commission partnered with Roane State CC and Pellissippi State CC to host a webinar with Holocaust survivor, **Rodi Glass**. It was attended by over 200 college students and educators

Video Recording: Rodi Glass

Photo: (above-top) Survivor Mark Schonwetter with daughter, Isabella Fiske, presenting at Temple Israel; (above) with Shelby County School District Admins, Sonya Porter and Terri Stephens; (below) with Teacher Fellow Laura Wilons



Generations Living On

Community Group for 2G/3G relatives of Holocaust Survivors has begun in Nashville. **Generations Living On** has had two meetups so far with about 20 people participating. If you are interested in joining or beginning a group in your part of the state, contact Ken Gluck at ken.gluck@tnholcom.org.

Dr. Marlene Yahalom, Daughter and Granddaughter of Holocaust Survivors, in Jackson

Dr. **Marlene Yahalom** visited Jackson and Lexington TN to speak to students and community about family history and how important it is for inspiring our futures. Marlene is the daughter and granddaughter of Holocaust Survivors who all experienced life differently during the Holocaust. She has a PhD in Sociology, being inspired to study collective memory by her family's Holocaust story. Dr. Yahalom spoke at **Jackson Christian School** and **Lexington High School**. Thank you to our Teacher Fellows, **Fran Baker** and **Shelby Bowman** for hosting Dr. Yahalom for your students.



Teacher Fellows Around The Globe



Photos: (above) Teacher Fellow **Jennifer Underwood** (front right, red dress) at the Centropa Summer Teacher Seminar (Vienna, Prague and Terezin). Group was made up of teachers from the USA, Europe and Israel. (photo courtesy of Jennifer Underwood)



Photo: (above) Teacher Fellow **Kristin Fitzgerald** looking through photos in the archive at Yad Vashem (Israel), one part the Echoes and Reflections Advanced Learning Seminar (photo courtesy of Kristin Fitzgerald)



Photos: (above) Teacher Fellow **Debbie Silvers** with WWII Navy Veteran Edward Tavernier at WWII Museum in New Orleans, LA (photo courtesy of Debbie Silvers); (right) Teacher Fellow **Shelby Bowman** in Poland with Yahad-In Unum Trainers, Ewa Schaller and Todd



Photo: (above) Teacher Fellows **Fran Baker** (middle right) and **Darrell Schwartz** (front left) attending The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust and Human Rights (TOLI) Educator Training in Berea, KY. (photo courtesy of Darrell Schwartz)

Hennessy, during a "Holocaust by Bullets" field training program (photo courtesy of Shelby Bowman)



Teacher Fellows Shine in Their Commitment to Teaching the Holocaust

We are proud to announce that many members of our Teacher Fellow program have been busy attending educational conferences around the world and receiving honors that showcase their commitment to enhancing Holocaust Education in Tennessee. Compliments to all our Fellows who attended the Vise Family Holocaust Education Summit, with special congratulations to:

Shelby Bowman: Attended the Tennessee Civics Academy in Knoxville, the Midway Institute for Teachers in San Diego, and a field study of the Holocaust by Bullets in Poland via invitation from Yahad In-Unum

Kristin Fitzgerald: Attended the Echoes and Reflections Advanced Learning Seminar at Yad Vashem in Israel

Jonathan Jones: Awarded the Memphis University School's Distinguished Teaching Award

Brandon Mosley: Selected as a Teacher Fellow for the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum

Deborah Puckett: Attended the Tennessee Civics Academy in Nashville and Memphis, the TOLI seminar in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the Founding Forward Seminar in Pennsylvania

Tracy Rees: Awarded "Employee of the Quarter for Advancement" from Pellissippi State University for her work with an adaptation of Wings of Hope

Debbie Silvers: Admitted into the National World War II Museum Summer Teacher Program in New Orleans. There she focused her educational study on "Liberation and Legacy" and collaborated with over 200 teachers from across the country. Also represented the Commission on an educator panel at the 24th Annual Rosen Holocaust Symposium at Appalachian State University

Jennifer Underwood: Chosen to attend the Centropa Teacher Seminar in Vienna and Prague/Terezin

[Teacher Fellow Application](#)