

Holocaust Workshop Provides Resources for Area Teachers

By Michael Solender

Over 60 years have passed since the end of the Second World War and the atrocities of the Holocaust, yet questions linger that seemingly can never be answered, the greatest of all perhaps being: How could this happen? These terror filled pages of history must be studied and taught to subsequent generations in order to honor and commemorate those who perished and to apply the lessons learned in order to never allow such an occurrence again.

On Friday, February 27, Union County Public schools hosted almost 100 area teachers who participated in full day workshop, Teaching about the Holocaust at the Professional Development Center in Monroe. The program was developed, presented and sponsored by the North Carolina Council on the Holocaust and is designed to augment established Holocaust curriculum being taught in middle and high schools throughout North Carolina.

Established by the Governor's Office in 1981, the Council is a state agency currently organized under the Department of Public Instruction. Through its education and annual commemoration programs, the Council strives to prevent atrocities similar to the systematic program of mass murder by the Nazis of six million Jews and others including Gypsies (Roma), homosexuals, handicapped persons, and religious and political dissidents.

The Council holds between seven and nine similar workshops throughout the school year at sites across the state. Over 8500 teachers and administrators have attended these programs since the inception of the teacher workshops in 1990. Michael Abramson, Chair of the Council, said the interest and enthusiasm for the program is particularly acute in and around Charlotte and the surrounding metro area. "We are particularly grateful to the Charlotte Federation for their extremely generous support of the Council and this workshop," said Abramson. "With Federation's

support, teachers who otherwise could not attend due to substitute costs are able to experience the program and take this information back into their classrooms."

The workshop featured Karl Schleunes, Professor of History at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Schleunes provided the historic context on the economic, political and religious situation of post WWI Germany that led to Hitler's rise to power and circumstances that allowed the Holocaust to take place. Gizella Abramson, a survivor from the Majdanek a German death camp in occupied Poland, lent a personal face to the workshop with her harrowing tale of her experience at the hands of the Nazis.

Linda Scher of Raleigh is the Director of Education for the Council. "Our work today is as important as it has ever been," stated Scher. "I get tremendous feedback from teachers who are able to incorporate the context and background they receive in our workshop directly back into instruction for their students. One need only look at events in Darfur or the former Yugoslavia to recognize that the lessons from the Holocaust are timeless and require study and understanding."

Stacy Moore is the High School Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator for Union County Public Schools. "Kids today get glimpses of the Holocaust whether from the media or in Hollywood movies," said Moore. "Providing them with historically accurate content is meaningful and helps shape their perspective on the subject. This program has gained a strong reputation over the years and I am not at all surprised to see such a large turnout."

Workshop participants were provided with a comprehensive teaching resource guide that included ten separate lesson plans appropriate for both middle and high school students. Many parallels are drawn to periods in American history where citizens have been treated unfairly, and the guidebook provides teachers with connections to North Carolina events and individuals that help

show students that the impact of these events touched their state and their neighbors.

Many additional resources were identified for teachers including travelling exhibits on the Kindertransport, the rescue of over 10,000 children from Nazi controlled countries between 1938 and 1940. Additional information on this program and the NC Council on the Holocaust can be found at: www.ncpublicschools.org/holocaustcouncil. ☆

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