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## Federation's CARMA Initiative Brings Holocaust Cattle Car To Monmouth County Schools

By Harry Glazer

In the realm of Holocaust education for the general public, few things can compare to the visceral experience of sitting in an unlit cattle car as the doors close.

For an estimated 1,000+ public school students in the Marlboro Township Middle School and the Freehold Regional Law and Public Service magnet program at Colts Neck High School, and for nearly 200 county faith leaders, government officials, law enforcement and education professionals, the experience of sitting in a cattle car and watching an immersive 360-degree video of two Holocaust survivors recount the terror of riding for three days and nights in stifling cattle cars is now a vivid memory they too can draw on to better understand the perils of prejudice.

The Center to Combat Antisemitism and Reinforce Multicultural Acceptance (CARMA), an initiative of Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey, worked with Hate Ends Now (based in Boca Raton) to bring their Mobile Holocaust Exhibit and Original Artifacts Collection to the two schools in Monmouth County from April 1-4. Along with the cattle car, visitors got to view artifacts from the Nazi era that convey reli-



A view of the Hate Ends Now cattle car.

gious and racial hatred, such as a concentration camp uniform, a yellow Jewish star patch, a book for young readers extolling Hitler, propaganda posters and postcards with antisemitic and anti-Black caricatures, and other items.

CARMA's director, Dr. Stacy Gallin, worked closely with Mi-

chael Ballone, superintendent of schools in the Marlboro Public Schools, a co-sponsor of the project, and Nicole Hazel, superintendent of the Freehold Regional High School District, to bring the exhibit and collection to their schools. Additional support was provided by the Marlboro Jewish Center, another sponsor of the program.

In an event for faith leaders and government officials on Thursday, April 3 at the Marlboro Middle School, both area education leaders shared their enthusiasm for this immersive learning experience.

Speaking during a brief set of presentations, Ballone stated: "This is not just a display,



Jewish Federation Community Relations Council Director Dan Rozett (left) with Assemblyman Gerry Scharfenberger, Ph.D. (N.J. 13th District).

but a doorway into history." He added that the exhibit "serves as a call to action for all of us." Hazel said, "This experience brings the Holocaust to life in a way that a textbook can not." Hazel's observation was echoed by others involved in arranging this exhibit.

Jori Reiken, lead educator for Hate Ends Now, said, "Students getting to step inside the cattle car and hear stories from survivors' perspectives, makes a much deeper impression than reading something in a textbook."

Gallin told The Jewish Link: "I have always been a believer in immersive educational experiences because I think that they create strong impressions



Students in the Hate Ends Now cattle car.

on the kids and lasting memories. In addition, I think they encourage them to ask questions and explore difficult emotions surrounding sensitive topics.

"Yesterday I had the opportunity to go through the exhibit with the students from Colts Neck High School and their emotion was palpable," Gallin continued. "There was not a sound while they were in the cattle car and their questions afterwards reflected the deep impact that the experience had on them. We have programs geared toward law enforcement, community leaders and educators, and the response we've gotten, particularly from educators who are interested in learning more about how they can bring this program to their school, has been incredible."

"The exhibit drove home the point of how fear can turn even good people to hatred and evil acts," said Phil Froehlich, a founding member of the security task force of the Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey. "The artifacts were a haunting reminder of how easily a nation can descend into dehumanizing a whole people. Its impact on our youth was evident as one eighth grader said



Participants in the April 3 program view the artifacts.

of the Holocaust after experiencing the exhibit, 'All I could think of is how it could be prevented.'"



Nazi era antisemitic postcards on display during the exhibit.

Rosalia Gerardo, an eighth grade student at Marlboro Middle School, visited the exhibit earlier in the week and spoke



Rosalia Gerardo, an eighth grade student at Marlboro Middle School (right), with her mother, Jean Marie Louria of Marlboro (center), and grandmother Cynthia Louria of Lakewood.

to the gathering on April 3. She said, "The artifacts taught us how the lessons of the Holocaust can apply to current so-

ciety," and added, "I'm standing before you because of how touching I found this experience."

"Hearing the stories we heard today truly resonated with me. They struck me as vital in that they powerfully emphasized how important it is that we accurately document and share our history so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past," Monmouth County Prosecutor Raymond S. Santiago said. "The lessons learned are needed now more than ever, as statisti-

cally it appears we are witnessing a troubling rise of bigotry, division and bias. The impact of this solemn experience will stay with me as a reminder that hate has no place in Monmouth County — or anywhere else in the world."

Susan Antman, executive director of the Jewish Federation, told the group that she is "the proud daughter of two Holocaust survivors" and it is her hope that the cattle car exhibit "will be the catalyst for renewed efforts to combat hate."

Harry Glazer is the Middlesex County Editor of The Jewish Link. He welcomes reader feedback and can be reached at [harryglazer615@gmail.com](mailto:harryglazer615@gmail.com). Harry is also keenly interested in stories about the vibrancy of Jewish life in Monmouth County.

