

## Brunch initiates network for survivors' descendants



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On Dec. 4 in Lincroft more than 200 people attended what organizers called New Jersey's largest gathering of members of the second and third generations of descendants of Holocaust survivors.



They came together at Brookdale Community College for the inaugural brunch of a new initiative — The Generations: Descendants of Holocaust Survivors — launched by the college's Center for Holocaust, Human Rights and Genocide Education.

Holocaust survivors at the inaugural brunch of the Generations: Descendants of Holocaust Survivors Dec. 4 at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft. Photos by Russ DeSantis

The purpose of the event was to unite and empower descendants of survivors to ensure the legacy of their ancestors' survival carry on. Many of the descendants, who live in Monmouth and Ocean counties, pledged to get involved with the center in a variety of volunteer tasks: editing survivor videos, speaking at schools, accompanying survivors to events, forming a Yiddish club, and accompanying center-led journeys to survivors' hometowns.

"We are here today because the time is right for you to come and join us. There's so much we can do together for you, our center, and our community," center executive director Dale Daniels told participants at the lavish brunch. The event was coordinated by Nelly Segal of Tinton Falls and chaired by second-generation descendants Susan Diamond of Long Branch, Lily Levy of Manalapan, and Mimi Werbler of Morganville.

Daniels spoke about the center's expansion plans. Construction will start in March on a new center on the Brookdale campus that will include a permanent, state-of-the-art Holocaust/genocide exhibit, the only Holocaust/genocide archives in the state, a smart classroom with a videoconferencing center, and a library.

Featured speaker at the brunch was Sandy Rubenstein of Woodcliff Lake, who told the story of her father, Joseph Horn, who passed away three years after writing his memoirs, *Mark It With a Stone* (Barricade Books, 1996).

Rubenstein was 10 when she stumbled upon a journal written in her father's handwriting, which told the painful truth about the obliteration of his entire family. "I have always carried both the burden and responsibility of my legacy," she told the audience. "Growing up as a second-generation survivor greatly impacted my life."

In addition to his memoirs, Rubenstein's father left behind a three-hour recorded testimony with Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.

"When I first viewed the video, my father was so alive on the screen that I reached out to touch his face. I knew the tape did not belong on a shelf gathering dust. I wanted people to be touched by his experiences," said Rubenstein, a teacher at the Horace Mann School in New York.

Three years ago, Rubenstein began to speak to high school and middle school students about her father. "We must fight against ignorance with education and proof," she said.

### **'Spirit of tikun olam'**

Event cochair Levy told NJJN she grew up in a silent house, where her parents protected her from their story of suffering and survival. "I never heard their story," she said. "When I was asked to join the Generations initiative, I knew immediately that the time had come for me to help others give voice to things unsaid and to make a difference."

Cochair Diamond said she feels the same obligation. "The children and grandchildren of survivors have to continue the legacy of retelling the story in the spirit of tikun olam, repairing the world," she said. "The descendants of survivors have to accept the torch and run with it."

Survivors are our "master teachers," said cochair Werbler. "When they speak at schools, the students are very moved by meeting them, touching them, and hearing their stories. Unfortunately the remaining survivors are aging and unable to go out as much as they used to, so we're encouraging the next generations to take over."

Center board member Paul Fried of Manalapan, a second-generation descendant, spoke to NJJN about the importance of preserving cherished family artifacts, such as the handmade hallah covers made by his great-aunt, who was exterminated with her husband and six children. He hopes to one day donate a cover to the center.

"I know what my parents went through, and I don't want anyone to be able to say it didn't happen. By memorializing it through videotapes, artifacts, and testimony while survivors are still alive is how we tell the world it did happen," Fried said.

The audience was addressed by survivor Helena Flaum of Farmingdale, who donated to the center a faded lilac undershirt she kept for 68 years after her release from a German slave labor camp.

"As the only person from my family who survived, I don't have the words to express how it feels to see you all here," Flaum said. "Our people who perished are smiling at you today."

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