

“Bad Things Happen to Good People—Even Kids”— the 2011 Educators’ Conference Monday, Aug. 1 through Wednesday, Aug. 3

by Elena Barr Baum

Targeting bullying, “Bad Things Happen to Good People—Even Kids”—the 2011 Educators’ Conference takes place next week at the Ted Constant Convocation Center on the campus of Old Dominion University.

Sponsored by the Holocaust Commission of the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater and underwritten by the Reba and Sam Sandler Family Foundation, the 10th biennial conference brings local, national, and international experts in bullying and Holocaust education to the area.

The three-day conference offers continuing education credits and professional development points to educators, guidance counselors, principals, and administrators from public and private elementary, middle, and high schools.

Ina Mirman Leiderman, chair of the 2011 Educators’ Conference, has been involved with the conference since before she joined the Holocaust Commission. “Being a teacher and having joined the commission after attending this conference in the past,” says Leiderman. “I know the speakers and workshops are wonderful. But the best part of the conference for me is learning with and from the educators who attend from all over the area. The contacts I have made from school systems large and small become a part of my teaching life long after the conference is over.”

Monday, Aug. 1 will take participants on a trip to the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond, including not only a tour of the collections and temporary exhibits, but also professional lectures from their Teacher Education Institute staff on the importance of not being a bystander, and making connections between the Holocaust and bullying behaviors.

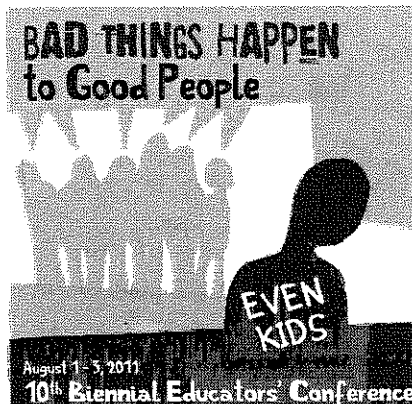
The second day opens with a presentation from the creators of *Actively Caring for People*, a program started at Virginia Tech after the tragic shooting on their campus that took the lives of 33 people, including Holocaust survivor Liviu Librescu, in 2007. By encouraging a culture that “makes caring cool,” the program inspires people to replace bullying with intentional pro-social behaviors. The program’s focus is on helping

people, resulting from actively-caring behaviors and its supportive recognition, have a ripple effect and lead to more inclusive, caring communities.

Jonathan Zur, CEO of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, will give educators a report on the latest trends to watch for in bullying, both inside the school and “cyberbullying” so prevalent outside schools. There will also be a performance of “Pushed: Explorations into Bullying,” a joint project between Zur’s VCIC and The Conciliation Project. In this 45-minute dramatic presentation, a series of skits is woven together to address a range of ways that students can feel marginalized: race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, status, body type, etc. The program helps participants consider what a bully is, who bullying hurts, and how to stop a bully. It will be followed by a facilitated conversation tailored to educators and student advocates.

The final day of the conference is traditionally devoted to Holocaust education, its importance, and how to make it relevant for current educators. This year, one of the Holocaust Commission’s former Teacher Award winners, Christina Frierman a 10th grade English teacher at First Colonial High School in Virginia Beach, will present. She will share a program to link Holocaust study and current events that she developed after her summer school students were inspired to create their own Holocaust Museum after hearing survivor David Katz speak. She combines history, literature, and currency to bring the past alive and connect that past with students’ lives today and tomorrow through reading, research, and writing.

Dr. Leon Weissberg, professor of Holocaust Studies at Lynn University, Boca Raton, Fla., as well as U.S. Southern Region director of the March of the Living, will then address the conference on “Energizing Tomorrow’s Holocaust Educators.” Born in a Displaced Persons’ Camp in Germany, the Holocaust is of personal, as well as



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a Master Teacher with a great deal of experience providing workshops, seminars, and courses on a myriad of Judaic and pedagogical topics.

At Yom Hashoah on May 1, the community was introduced briefly to the Holocaust Commission’s new program, *What We Carry*, which will

supplement and ultimately succeed the Speakers’ Bureau. After screening the eight-minute “trailer,” the more than 600 people in attendance that night all wanted to see more, and Aug. 3 will be their chance, when the video and volunteer presentations for each of the four “Speakers’ Bureau survivors” will be introduced for the first time. In addition, the story of Dame Mary Barraco, recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations for her efforts to save Jewish children during the Holocaust, will be told. She will join a forum of the Speakers’ Bureau survivors to discuss their experiences during the Holocaust.

Breakout sessions will take place each day with the presenters where educators can share ideas and best practices.

With this conference, the Holocaust Commission continues its tradition of helping teachers make the lessons of the Holocaust relevant to today’s students. Past attendees have described their participation in previous conferences as “a wonderful experience—inspiring, heartwarming, and relevant.”

Conference Co-Chair and retired elementary school teacher and ODU professor Gail Flax feels “extremely proud of the incredible work we do to promote tolerance and the anti-bullying message. Our biennial conference takes a lot of planning that includes a multitude of volunteers, renowned speakers and teaching materials that support and involve our local educators.”

The program on Aug. 3 is open to the community for a nominal fee (which covers space, fees, and meals). To attend all or a portion of the conference, contact Jan Johnson at 757-233-2322 or jjohnson@ujf.org

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