

Mt. Vernon hosts Holocaust Memorial Program



Holocaust survivors Arthur Citrin (l) and Esther Elstein lit three of six candles representing the six million who perished in the Holocaust



Holocaust survivors Minnie Osher (l) and Dora Zyndorf (r) lit the remaining three candles

Monday night, May 9, was a night of reparation, and memories of the darkest era in modern history echoed through Mount Vernon's City Hall.

Mount Vernon Mayor Richard Thomas and City Council members joined eleven Holocaust survivors, their families, Jewish clergy and community members in paying tribute to the resilience of those who lived through the horror of the systematic genocide the Nazis called the Final Solution.

After welcoming remarks by Louise Challop of the Jewish Community Council of Mount Vernon, a visibly moved Mayor Thomas said he was truly humbled to be in the presence of those who are such clear examples of "endurance and perseverance."

The Mayor went on to draw a connection between the lessons learned from the Holocaust and present day Mount Vernon. Pointing out that when the Nazis rose to power, few voices were raised against them, the Mayor promised "Mount Vernon is a voice that will always speak up ... to take the right stand on the right issues."

All the survivors in attendance at the ceremony had been children during the Holocaust. Their heart-wrenching stories of survival were brought to life in the vivid telling by Tania Weiss and Halina Rosenkranz, both from Westchester Jewish Community Services.

Rabbi Morris Barzilai from Sinai Free Synagogue and Rabbi Gedalyah Berger of Fleetwood Synagogue spoke about the triumph of the human spirit.

Also sharing experiences was Ira Korner, a son of survivors.

The survivors lit six candles representing the six million Jewish men, women and children who perished in the Holocaust.

Violist Lydia Leizman underscored the evening's theme of loss, remembrance

and resilience.

The survivors in attendance were: Ellen and Jerry Kaidanow, Hyman Mendelowitz, Danuta Rottman, Rose Winterfeldt, Esther Elstein, Hannelore Hecht, Helen Levenson, Minnie Osher, Arthur Citrin and Dora

Zyndorf.

The Jewish Community Council of Mount Vernon and the Mayor's office sponsored the evening, with assistance from Westchester Jewish Community Services.

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Holocaust survivor Helen Levenson



This adult band was terrific and received a rousing applause

strives to spread the transformative power of music by providing the highest quality music education and experiences to all in the community who seek them."

The recitalists spanned generations with performers as young as five years old sharing the bill with adults, featuring performers demonstrating their skills on the piano, guitar, and an assortment of other instruments. Others entertained the audience by singing.

The recital also included an adult trio of guitarists who received a rousing ovation at the end of their performance. The audience was also treated to two adults – one who performed excellently using a trombone and the other one on the drums. They were both extremely talented and entertaining.

The guest performer was Mount Vernon City Councilman Andre Wallace, who played several pieces on the piano.

Although learning under crowded conditions at the Doles Center, members of the Board continue to seek a new and larger location for the school. The City Council recently approved the sale of a promising building to the school on the city's foreclosure list, but Mayor Richard Thomas voted down the purchase of the building. "You have individuals that formerly worked for the City of Mount Vernon sitting on the school's Board and that presents a conflict of interest," said Mayor Thomas.

Readers interested in learning more about the Mount Vernon School of Music can call 914-667-2360.



Holocaust survivor Dora Zyndorf



Holocaust survivor Hyman Mendelowitz