

Extra

A13 STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE SILIVE.COM THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2018

GRYMES HILL

Film documents incredible stories of Holocaust survivors

More than 100 gather for premiere of Advance staffer's work, called a 'remarkable example of remembrance'

Erik Bascome tbascome@siadvance.com

On the eve of Yom Ha'Shoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, over a hundred viewers packed Foundation Hall on the Wagner College campus for the premiere of "Where Life Leads You."

The 30-minute film, by Advance/SILive.com Multimedia Specialist Shira Stoll, documents the incredible stories of Jewish Staten Islanders who survived the Holocaust.

"Tonight's event is a remarkable example of Holocaust remembrance. These efforts to document and honor the over 6 million who died in Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps inspires us, as does the courage of the survivors," said Dr. Victor Avis, chairman of the Chai Society, Wagner College.

The gripping film features testimonies from 10 Holocaust survivors, spanning their painful memories of the past to the vibrant lives and families they have since formed here on Staten Island.

'WE SHINE A LIGHT ON THINGS'

"What makes it so special for our newspaper is that this is what we do. We shine a light on things," said Brian J. Laline, executive editor of the Staten Island Advance.



Auschwitz survivor Shirley Gottesman lights the first of six candles representing the six million Jews who died during the Holocaust as survivors Brenda Perelman and Arthur Spielman look on during Yom Ha'Shoah (Holocaust Remembrance and Heroism Day). The remembrance included the screening of Advance/SILive.com Multimedia Specialist Shira Stoll's film, "Where Life Leads You," at Wagner College's Foundation Hall on Tuesday. It was held in conjunction with the opening of the exhibit, "Gregory Perillo: A WWII Veteran Paints the Holocaust," in the Hormann Library's Spotlight Gallery. Bill Lyons, Staten Island Advance

"And the testimonies that you see today, these are your neighbors. These are Staten Islanders who call this place home," he

added.

The film's videographer, editor and director, Stoll was inspired to pursue the docu-

mentary by her childhood hero, Helen Freibrun, who she affectionately referred to as her "third grandma."

"When I was 8, she told me her Holocaust survivor story for the first time and I still have every detail memorized to this day," said Stoll.

"She wanted to make sure that I understood, and I think she always hoped that I would continue to tell her story. I think that's why she really opened up to be about it."

Following the film's screening, Laline moderated a Q&A session with Stoll and Auschwitz survivor Shirley Gottesman.

'THEY WANTED TO LIVE'

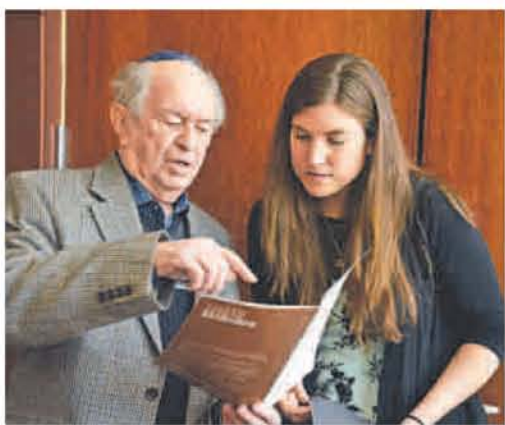
"I'm just so moved by every single one of the survivors I've talked to ... They each found a way to live. They wanted to live. They've had this hope in them from the beginning, and I feel like I have that hope now," said Stoll.

During the Q&A session Tuesday night, the discussion centered around the importance of educating future generations, so that atrocities such as the Holocaust never occur again.

Some members of the audience expressed that this was the first time they had learned the horrific details of the Holocaust, a notion that shocked Stoll, who attended Solomon Schechter Day School, a Jewish school in Commack, N.Y.

"Half of my day was in English and half of my day was in Hebrew. Holocaust studies were just part of the curriculum, you didn't really think about it," said Stoll.

SEE FILM, A16



From left: 1) Advance/SILive.com Multimedia Specialist Shira Stoll speaks with Holocaust survivor Arthur Spielman before the screening of her film, "Where Life Leads You," at Wagner College. The screening was held in honor of Yom Ha'Shoah or Holocaust Remembrance and Heroism Day. 2) Brenda Perelman watches the screening. 3) Auschwitz survivor Shirley Gottesman lights the first of six candles representing the six million Jews who died during the Holocaust. 4) Stoll gets a hug from Sara Cohen after the screening. Bill Lyons, Staten Island Advance photos



An audience of more than 100 listens to opening remarks before the screening of Advance Multimedia Specialist Shira Stoll's film, "Where Life Leads You."



Shira Stoll with her family as they light candles during the remembrance. From left, Shira's brother Jason, her mother Gail and father Sandy. The six candles represent the six million Jews who died during the Holocaust.



Guests take photos of the exhibit, "Gregory Perillo: A WWII Veteran Paints the Holocaust," in Wagner College's Hormann Library Spotlight Gallery.



From left: 1) Advance Executive Editor Brian Laline conducts a Q&A with Holocaust survivor Shirley Gottesman and Shira Stoll. 2) Molly Smith watches the film. 3) Dr. Victor Avis, chairman of the Chai Society, welcomes the audience. 4) Gail Lubin, Advance content director; Brian Laline, Advance executive editor; Dr. Gracelyn Santos, Advance columnist, and Advance Publisher Caroline Diamond Harrison watch the screening.

FILM

FROM A13

EDUCATING FUTURE GENERATIONS

The videographer's film will be adapted and utilized in public, private and Catholic school curriculums throughout Staten Island to educate future generations

about the effects of the Holocaust — using members of their own communities.

"I think films like this are important because they give the survivors a voice, and if they're playing them in schools then these kids are going to know what happened," said Stoll.

She said the experience has opened her eyes to view

her faith in an entirely new light.

"I learned that I care a lot about my religion throughout doing this. Which honestly, I didn't think that I did as much as I do. I think it's an important thing to have. I think culture is an important thing to have," added Stoll.

Q&A SESSION, OPENING OF ART EXHIBIT

Following the Q&A session, attendees were invited to Wagner College's Hormann Library for the opening of an art exhibit titled, "A World War II Veteran Paints the Holocaust," by 91-year-old Staten Islander Gregory Perillo. The artist is known for his moving work honor-

ing vulnerable, mistreated groups, such as the Native Americans, Vietnam veterans and Holocaust survivors.

"I wish I could say, 'enjoy the art' — but instead, 'remember the art.' Because I think that's what this art is meant for, to remember," said his son, Stephen Perillo.

The event was sponsored by the Staten Island

Advance, the Staten Island Jewish Community Center and the Wagner College Holocaust Center, which has connected local Holocaust survivors with over 2,000 students on Staten Island and throughout the tri-state area.

See Stoll's film, "Where Life Leads You," on SILive.com.