Dynamics through diversity
HMC to honor human rights advocate, psychologist

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FARMINGTON HILLS/WEST BLOOMFIELD — They’ve done a lot in their lifetime.

That is why the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus will honor U.S. District Court Judge Bernard Friedman and his wife, Rozie, both of West Bloomfield, for their work during a dinner celebrating the center’s 32nd anniversary at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 30 at the center, 28123 Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills.

Bernard said he was surprised when he received the call that he and Rozie were being honored.

“We’ve always felt very strongly about its mission. Its mission is to not only remember the Holocaust, but to teach tolerance and things of that nature,” Bernard said.

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The annual dinner brings a cross-section of new and old HMC denizens to educate and donate, Cheryl Guyer, the Holocaust Memorial Center’s interim executive director, said recently.

“They’ve been making dinners for a very long time,” she said. “It is a major source of income to support the work of the Holocaust Memorial Center. That is why the dinner is so very important. It is bringing together survivors and family members and members of the community of all ages and backgrounds that care so deeply that our community continues to learn about the Holocaust.”

This year, about 1,300 people are expected to attend the dinner, which Guyer said has been a community gathering place for the past 32 years.

“It supports the important work of the center,” she said of the dinner fundraiser’s impact on the HMC’s operating expenses and educational programs.

Bernard, 73, was appointed to the U.S. District Court by President Ronald Reagan in 1988. Prior to that, he served as a state judge at the 48th District Court.

“One of the things (the Holocaust Memorial Center) indicated in their literature is I decided the marriage equality case, the same-sex marriage case. And so that was one that they thought was very important, and of course I do too. It’s an important case for all of us,” Bernard said about why he is being honored. He also indicated that Rozie is being honored for her work as a psychologist.

Rozie, 69, went to high school in West Virginia and college in Ohio. She later moved to Washington, D.C., and she said that is when she “got to know Bernie.” The two had a long-distance relationship, and in 1970, Rozie moved to Michigan.

“I taught school in Detroit, and then we had two children. ... When they started elementary school, I was the first teacher at Temple Israel Nursery School,” Rozie explained.

Rozie then earned her master’s degree in psychology, and she has been a psychologist/therapist ever since, she said.

“I’ve never been honored for anything, really, and it’s very exciting, and it’s also something that is close to my heart. The Holocaust Memorial Center and people remembering what happened and people getting the truth about what happened is very important to me,” Rozie said.

The Friedmans have six grandchildren ranging in age from 1 to 14, and Rozie said it’s important that they learn about the Holocaust and why people should respect one another.

“I think the Holocaust Memorial Center gives you that. We’re very lucky,” she said.

Guyer said the honoree selection process is about finding an individual or family dedicated to the work of the center.

“It has to be a person who has made a strong contribution here,” she said, adding that it does not even have to be a monetary contribution. “They care deeply about the work of the center; they actively support it.”

Guyer mentioned that past honorees include the architect who created the center, a philanthropic family and more.

Guyer said the Friedmans are committed to helping others through social justice and their work.

“He (Bernie Friedman) brings groups here every year from the courts to ... use it as an educational venue,” Guyer said. “He believes in the teaching and the work.”

Guyer said that every year, honorees bring a new crop of people who are inspired through education and make donations.
"Having honorees of diverse backgrounds gives us an opportunity to teach more people," she said. "The whole diversity is what makes the museum dynamic."

Keynote speaker Deborah E. Lipstadt will discuss Holocaust denial, a topic she is familiar with as the author of "History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier."


Guyer said that Lipstadt is a professor at Emory University in Atlanta.

"That is why we need a museum such as ours: (to) teach the truth and teach lessons," she said.

For more information on the dinner and ticket prices, go to www.holocaustcenter.org/dinner or call Ruth Stern at (248) 536-9601.