

The Detroit News
JANUARY 19, 2017 | SECTION M

GO!

YOUR WEEKEND GUIDE

FLIPPING THE ZIP

Winter Blast taps allure
of Detroit auto show. 6M



DOWNTOWN DETROIT, MICHIGAN
JANUARY 9 - FEBRUARY 18, 2017

LuminoCityDET.com

FABRICATED FOR
DISCOVERY

Relevant



The "Anne Frank: A History for Today" will be at the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills until Feb. 4.

Anne Frank exhibit carries a strong message for our times

BY GREG TASKER
Special to The Detroit News

Every student is familiar with "The Diary of Anne Frank."

The story of Anne Frank's family's hiding in the Secret Annex during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands during World War II has become ubiquitous in the decades since its publication, just a few years after Anne's death in a concentration camp. But for many, the book often serves as their only introduction to the Holocaust and her story is often seen as that of a typical victim of the genocide.

An exhibit opening Friday at the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills seeks to tell the story of Anne Frank and her family in a broader context, against world events happening before, during and after the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany.

"Anne Frank: A History for Today" is told in a timeline format. Split panels show Holocaust history on one side and what was happening with the Franks on the other. There are photographs of the Franks as well as the other occupants of the Secret Annex. The exhibit documents how millions of people, such as Jews, Slavs, gypsies and the disabled, were persecuted by political decisions and the actions of individuals.

"What is so special about this exhibit is that it helps visitors truly grapple with what was happening in Europe through the lens of a young girl," says Robin Axelrod, director of education at the Holocaust Memorial Center. "At a time when acceptance of others is at such a low point, the lessons that 'Anne Frank: A History for Today' teaches are more important now than ever."

In conjunction with the exhibit's opening, Rolf Wolfswinkel, an Anne Frank, World War II and Holocaust scholar, will give a keynote presentation at 7 p.m. Friday. Wolfswinkel



Photos by AFF Basel / AFS Amsterdam

The exhibit is told in a timeline format with split panels showing the Holocaust history as the other shows the Franks.

'Anne Frank: A History for Today'

Fri. through June 4
Holocaust Memorial Center
28123 Orchard Lake,
Farmington Hills
Admission: Adults, \$8;
senior citizens, \$6; students,
\$5-\$6
(248) 553-2400
holocaustcenter.org

will explore the question, "Was Anne Frank a typical Holocaust victim?"

What makes the Anne Frank exhibit even more special for Michigan residents is the addition of artifacts from Holocaust survivors who now live in Metro Detroit, including those who had similar experiences as the Franks: Leaving persecution in Germany for the safety of the tolerant Netherlands and then going into hiding during the

Nazi occupation of that country.

The artifacts include photographs and a tablecloth from a survivor. The woman has shared photographs of her family's home while hiding in the Netherlands, as well as a tablecloth the family used in both places.

"I don't know how the tablecloth or photos survived, but the survivor wanted to share them with us," Axelrod says.

Axelrod also is sharing something special, an autographed copy of a book by Miep Gies, a Dutch woman who helped the Franks during their two years of hiding. Her book, "Anne Frank Remembered: The Story of the Woman Who Helped Hide the Frank Family," was published in 1987. Axelrod met Gies when she came to Ann Arbor in 1993 to accept the Wallenberg Medal from the University of Michigan.

"It's one of my prized possessions," says Axelrod, who began

studying Anne Frank as a young girl, was tapped to accompany Gies to a reception at UM. "It was an honor and privilege to spend time with her. It's one of the most impactful things I've ever done. I felt like a rock star — I reached out and touched history."

Developed by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, the traveling exhibit will be on display in Farmington Hills through June 4. The exhibit has been shown throughout the United States and Canada; the Oakland County museum is the only stop in Michigan.

"What an extraordinary opportunity to share the message of Anne's life and diary to empower students, families and communities to work together to build a world based on mutual respect," says Steven Goldstein, executive director of the Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect, which is sponsoring the North American tour.

Having the exhibit in Michigan is especially meaningful because of the "preeminence of the Holocaust Memorial Center, which he described as one of the world's leading Holocaust-related institutions."

Axelrod's hope is that visitors walk away from the exhibit with a commitment to take action against issues as relevant today as they were then.

"We as a human race have not figured out how to stop hating each other," she says. "I challenge people to walk out of our doors and think what they can do as individuals. It's not enough to be a passive learner. What is the action you can take to make the world a better place? We don't have the luxury of being bystanders. We have to stand up to intolerance. We have to stand up to discrimination. We have to stand up to cruelty."

Greg Tasker is a Michigan-based freelance writer.