

# THE DETROIT JEWISH NEWS

## Wayne-Westland School District Visits Zekelman Holocaust Center

By Gabi Burman - 05/29/2023 12:12 PM



*Dr. Adrienne Nathan. Aja Brown and her mom, Christal Howard. Courtesy of the Zekelman Holocaust Center*

## Wayne-Westland Community Schools takes part in Community Night at the Zekelman Holocaust Center.

Nearly 200 members of the Wayne-Westland Community Schools district visited the Zekelman Holocaust Center on Wednesday, May 10, for “Creating A Community of Upstanders,” an evening of learning that included museum exploration and a second-generation survivor talk.

The event highlighted the district's partnership with the Center to educate beyond the classroom. In addition to teaching students about the Holocaust, over the last year, Wayne Westland has provided trainings for teachers and non-teaching staff at all levels, and is now reaching out to parents, local law enforcement and businesses in the surrounding area.

The Center's partnership with Wayne Westland illuminates a shared holistic approach to Holocaust education.

"Kids who visit take home what they've learned to their families. We want to equip parents to have conversations with their children about this sensitive history," said Ruth Bergman, director of education at the Zekelman Holocaust Center. "The Holocaust is the preeminent case study of the dangers of unchecked hate, and the power each individual has to stand up against hatred and intolerance."

For educators, the partnership empowers students to become upstanders. "By instilling the values of compassion, courage and empathy, we can continue to encourage a generation of leaders who will create a positive change," said Dr. John Dignan, superintendent of Wayne-Westland Community Schools.

During the event, visitors moved through exhibit galleries depicting prewar European Jewish life, the rise of Nazism, the descent into war and the Final Solution.

Aja Brown, a fifth grader at P.D. Graham Elementary School in Westland, had read about Anne Frank, and although she found some aspects of the exhibit "scary," she was also delighted to see a tree grown from a sapling from the tree located outside Anne Frank's hiding place window that is described in her diary. "When I saw it, it made me think it was like her child, like something good that she left behind in the world," Aja said.

Many in attendance reflected that their introspection would be followed by action to create a more inclusive society. "That's what tonight is all about," said Dr. Adrienne Nathan, director of Community Partnerships and Outreach. "With this initiative, we are better equipped to stand up to

hate at every level. Together, we can create a world in which we want to live.”

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**Gabi Burman**

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