

Anne Frank exhibit offers remembrance and hope for Jewish community

Steven Schwarzman came face to face with the portrait of Anne Frank, the Jewish teenager whose diary has become a literary classic. In her eyes he saw both the innocence of childhood and the horrors of the Holocaust.

“The reason Anne Frank and her diary continue to speak to people around the world is because through that one person we’re able to understand in some small way the suffering of the holocaust and the magnitude of it,” said Schwarzman, the rabbi of Beth Shalom Synagogue in Edmonton.



Rabbi Steven Schwarzman

“This was a real little girl who had her life taken from her. There’s no way we can possibly understand how six million could be murdered, but we can understand one person.”

Rabbi Schwarzman was among the special guests from Edmonton’s Jewish community who came to view the [Anne Frank House](#) exhibit which runs until Oct. 18 at [Louis St. Laurent School](#). It is open to the public on Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoon.

The travelling exhibit, from the Anne Frank House museum in Amsterdam, tells the personal story of the Dutch teenager who hid in an attic with her family before she was captured by the Nazis. Frank died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945. She was 15.

The exhibit features more than 20 panels that detail Hitler’s rise to power, the holocaust, the life of Anne Frank and eventual publication of her diary. It is the first time the exhibit has been brought to Edmonton. All proceeds will be donated to the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and Catholic Social Services. Schwarzman sees the ecumenical event as a deeply symbolic gesture.

“The fact that the Catholic Schools are extending their hands like this makes a powerful statement,” Schwarzman said. “It’s important for people of faith to

work together and show what God desires from all people of this world.”



Michelle Dupuis

Michelle Dupuis, the principal of Louis St. Laurent School, agrees.

“Part of who we are is being open to understand each other’s faith and live in harmony,” Dupuis, who spent a year working with her school’s social studies department to bring the exhibit to Edmonton.

“Together, it doesn’t matter what faith background you come from, we are hopefully all aspiring for the same future for our young.”

Nineteen student volunteers offer guided tours through the Anne Frank exhibit’s panels. They researched and prepared for nearly 30 hours, including reading the diary itself.



Zoya Bootwala

“It’s a book that I really value,” said Grade 12 student Zoya Bootwala, 17, who was so moved by the life of Anne Frank that she read her diary twice. “Not only because of its historical significance, but having such a widely read youthful voice is very inspiring. One of the things she wrote about is how she felt like she had a double personality – when she was at school she was quick to challenge and a chatterbox. When she was on her own she was much more deep and contemplative.

“She often had these observations that I would never think of but were really eye opening to me.”

Rev. Glenn McDonald, the chaplain of Louis St. Laurent School, hopes the students learn more than the difficult and traumatic history of the Holocaust. He believes the exhibit can have a spiritual impact in showing them the importance of treating others with dignity and respect.

“I don’t think you can look at the Holocaust without thinking of the tragic reality of evil. That evil exists but we are called to follow God, to turn from evil and instead choose what is right, true and just,” McDonald said.

“This has a tremendous capacity to inspire young people in their vocations. As the voice of the future they can remind us of what we want the world to be like.”



Colleen Paull attended the Anne Frank House exhibit with her father. With many rarely seen family photos, she felt the event offered an in-depth look into the life of Anne Frank. Kyle Greenham, Grandin Media

Eight Catholic and public schools will be given a private tour of Anne Frank House, and Louis St. Laurent expects to have around 30 tours in total. The Edmonton Public School Division also plans to host the Anne Frank exhibit at their Archives and Museum building from Nov. 4 to Jan. 31.

“Hopefully students at numerous schools can get this exposure to see this heinous crime and heinous part of our history, so we can make sure history doesn’t repeat itself,” said Steven Shafir, president of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

“It’s a calming and warm feeling among the Jewish community that this is

happening. It shows the growing relationship between Judaism and Catholicism around the world. We have a lot we can learn from each other and our past.”