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isn't effective
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Westmount High hosts Holocaust survivors' exhibition



WHS vice-principal Matthew Shapiro and grade eight student Eliane Goldstein are seen in the school lobby on March 18 between two of the travelling Holocaust exhibition's information stations, with additional photos of Holocaust survivors in the glass case behind them.

By MARTIN C. BARRY

The Westmount High School lobby will be more than a busy thoroughfare for students in the coming weeks, since it is serving until the end of March as a venue for a travelling exhibition focusing on Holocaust survivors and their stories.

Until March 31, WHS students and staff will be able to visit the exhibit, sponsored by the Montreal Holocaust Museum, while teachers will also be scheduling class visits on school days.

The English Montreal School Board says the exhibit builds upon prior lessons on the Holocaust taught to students at the school. Holocaust education is a mandatory component of the board's curriculum, and spiritual and community animators provide age-appropriate Holocaust education throughout the year.

The students regularly receive in-person or virtual visits from Holocaust survivors, attend field trips to the Montreal Holocaust Museum, and various other lessons through books, movies and digital platforms.

Timing no coincidence

The exhibition is taking place around six weeks after Westmount High students were the targets of notes scrawled with Nazi swastikas that were left in a locker as well as on a classroom desk.

In an interview with the *Independent*,

WHS vice-principal Matthew Shapiro acknowledged that hosting the Holocaust exhibit was partly in response to the swastika incidents.

He said a spiritual animator at the school, Samantha Smith, thought it would be appropriate under the circumstances to invite the Holocaust Museum to place Westmount High on its list of stops for the travelling exhibit.

"Especially with the younger grades, some of the students didn't know the story of the Holocaust," said Shapiro.

"They hadn't fully had that education yet, they didn't know what a swastika was, they didn't understand the meaning of certain pieces of iconography, imagery and even gestures. And so we saw there was a gap there that we wanted to address."

At least one student, 14-year-old Eliane Goldstein, already had extensive knowledge of the Holocaust and its wide-ranging impact, because she was working on a podcast project with a Holocaust theme around this time last year.

Her project won an EMSB Student of the Month Award. The award is given once a month throughout the year to students who've made efforts to improve the world and make a difference.

While it was initially planned as six or seven episodes, she created more than 20, which are available in audio format through Spotify, Apple, Google and other podcast platforms.