

SCHUYLERVILLE

# TELLING HIS STORY

Schuylerville Public Library hosts Zoom discussion with Holocaust survivor



The Schuylerville Library hosted a Zoom discussion with holocaust survivor Ivan Vamos who shared his experience as a child in the holocaust and answered questions from the community. EMMA RALLS — MEDIANEWS GROUP

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SCHUYLERVILLE, N.Y. >> In honor of the recent International Holocaust Remembrance Day, commemorated on Jan. 27, the Schuylerville Public Library hosted a Zoom discussion with Holocaust survivor Ivan Vamos who shared his story of being a child during one of the darkest times in world history and answered questions from the community members who tuned in about his first-hand experiences.

“With Holocaust Remembrance Day just happening, we thought it would be good timing to host Mr. Vamos to speak,” shared Caitlin Johnson, the Director of the Schuylerville Public Library, on Monday. “We’re lucky to have him. It’s good to remember these things because history sort of repeats itself at times, and it is important to keep this in mind.”

With the choice of either being able to come in person and view the discussion in the library or via a shared Zoom link, many joined as Vamos shared his personal experience growing up in the holocaust, as well as pictures and his own illustrations of certain moments.

Born in March 1938 in Budapest, Hungary around the same time German soldiers marched into neighboring Austria, Vamos was thrust directly into the Holocaust from the moment he took his first breath. He even shared a story his mother told him in which upon his birth the doctor started to cry because a child was being brought into such a cruel world.

Vamos shared stories of his father being killed after being forced into the military to become a forced laborer, of his Uncle Bob who made it to America, and other, his grandfather who was deposited on his doorstep in a comatose state and revived by his grandmother. Most of his memories though had to do with his mother, a professional photographer, and him as they tried to escape the Nazi regime and survive in devastating conditions.

From forging fake papers that allowed them both to escape to the countryside; knowing when to flee back to Budapest and take refuge in a foreign, most likely Swedish, crowded apartment that operated as a “protected house;” masterminding an escape from the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party police called “Nyilas” as they rounded up Jewish people along the Danube Bank; and their survival in bombed-out apartment houses in Budapest living among the rubble until liberation came in 1945 — the stories reflected his mothers and his strength and perseverance during a truly tragic time.

Following his stories students and community members were able to ask questions of Vamos things like what were some of the hardest things he had to see/endure or his experience meeting/reuniting with other people who had survived the holocaust. A teacher shared it would be her first time teaching the Holocaust and asked if Vamos had any advice, which he shared that the only way to properly do so is to tell the stories of those who went through it.

“My only way of dealing with it is to tell my story, and to ask those listening to ask questions,” Vamos explained. “Just telling the history doesn’t work as well because there’s too much missing in their (students) world history and geography to try to get all the information. You must tell the stories, even the stories that are written up in books do it quite well.

“The stories are genuine, including the ones of bravery and rescue. So that is a reasonable way of dealing with it, and also I think that there’s a quote that I like that says numbers are a statistic, but when you hear of a person getting killed or potentially getting killed, that’s a tragedy”

Along with Vamos’s talk, the library also took part in an exhibit called “Messages From Survivors” which was showcased throughout the month of January. Assemblymember Carrie Woerner (D-Round Lake) and the New York State Assembly partnered and found the exhibit and decided they wanted to bring it to local libraries, including those within the Southern Adirondack Library System which the Schuylerville Public Library belongs to.

Produced by the memory project, the exhibit includes testimonials and stories from six individuals who survived the holocaust and includes videos as well as informational panels that “connect the experiences of one Jewish family to the immense scale of the Holocaust.” Those who view it can also take home a card with a QR code to hear the experiences later as well.

The “Messages From Survivors” will be moving to Clifton Park for the month of February and will continue to move around the county visiting other public libraries in Argyle and Saratoga Springs.