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Remembrance Westlake

WESTLAKE ACADEMY HONORS UN'S INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY -



Students at Westlake Academy participated in several activities this week to honor Holocaust victims and pay tribute to International Holocaust Remembrance Day, held Jan. 27 to mark the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi German Concentration and Extermination Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau by the Soviet troops in 1945.

The event kicked off Monday with a presentation during the opening flag. Highlights this week included video footage shown of Holocaust survivors, an art display created by 9th grade students, daily facts provided by the History Club, and a student-made guided tour that showed WWII historic scenes and allowed students to learn about real people affected by the Holocaust. Due to the nature of the topic, the activities were limited to grades six through 12.

To honor victims, students wore badges that had the names, nationality and how each one died. Students wrote thoughts and reflections on back of the badges, which were collected for a special memorial wall to be displayed tomorrow during a lunch & learn movie in the performance hall. Tomorrow morning during the announcements, a teacher will share a story about his grandfather who was one of the U.S. soldiers who liberated the concentration camps.

Earlier in the week, two Westlake Academy students shared personal stories about family members who survived. Senior Ana Radan spoke about her 96-year-old great-grandfather, Gheorgiu Guana. When World War II began, he, along with every male over age 18 in Romania, was forced to join the army and fight on the side of the Germans. Because he was opposed and spoke out against the system, he was imprisoned in a concentration camp. Guana was released when the war ended and today makes his living as a farmer in Romania.

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Senior student Eli Harter shared a story about his grandmother, Libby Millerkofsky, who managed a small coffee shop in Poland while she was in high school. Years later, she was among a group of girls kidnapped by a band of German soldiers for prostitution or experimentation. Amazingly, one of the soldiers happened to be a customer during the coffee shop days that had fallen in love with her, secretly told her how to escape. Eli said all of Millerkofsky's family members, except an aunt and second cousin, were killed at Auschwitz.

Holocaust Remembrance Week is the second in a series of monthly awareness campaigns at Westlake Academy that brings more international awareness to the school. Future campaigns, which correlate with the UN calendar, will include International Mother Language Day, World Water Day and World Day for Cultural Diversity and Dialogue Day.



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