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Local Synagogue Inaugurates Tolerance Education Program

ALPHARETTA, GA (DATE) – Congregation Gesher L'Torah presented its Tolerance Education Program to Ivy Preparatory Academy in the first of its kind educational program for area students. More than 120 sixth-grade students attended the program and tour that featured the newly dedicated Holocaust Memorial Wall and Irena Sendler Monument to the Righteous Gentiles.

“Our congregation feels it is important to bridge the past with our future. Educating students on the atrocities of the Holocaust and other 20th century genocides in Darfur, Rwanda, and Bosnia makes that possible for us,” said Steve Sutton, congregation board member and founder of the Tolerance Education Program. “Prejudice, hatred, and Intolerance are still present in the world today, so it’s important that history is not forgotten. Our program will foster tolerance, good citizenship and character development by teaching respect and personal responsibility.”

Each of the nine interconnected monuments that comprise the Holocaust Memorial Wall consists of 667 bricks, each engraved with the name of a Holocaust victim. Once the wall is complete, a total of 6,000 names will be recognized, the equivalent of one name for each 1000 Jewish lives lost during this time in history.

The inaugural event featured guest speaker Eugen Schoenfeld, an Auschwitz survivor and founder of the PhD sociology program at Georgia State University. He shared vivid memories of his days in the camp, as well as the day of his liberation.

“I feel the need to share my experiences with you because you are the future,” Schoenfeld told the students. “Even in 1944, ‘I thought how is it possible that man is so

inhuman to each other when we have made such great advances,' and this question is still important for you today.”

In addition to a question-and-answer exchange with Schoenfeld, the students viewed artwork created by middle and high school students and provided by the Georgia Commission on the Holocaust. A video based on the life of Anne Frank was also part of the educational program.

The Tolerance Education Program is open to students and other groups requesting a tour. Information on the Tolerance Education Program and scheduling can be found at www.embracingtolerance.com.

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About the Holocaust Memorial Wall and the Monuments to the Righteous Gentiles:

Located at the new Gesher L'Torah synagogue in Alpharetta, Ga., the Holocaust Memorial Wall honors the six million Jews who lost their lives during the Holocaust with a focus on the one and half million child victims. The Monument to the Righteous Gentiles recognizes Irena Sendler (a Christian social worker) for her role in saving more than 2500 children's lives in the Warsaw Ghetto. These are the only such memorials in the north Atlanta suburbs, filling a void in the metropolitan area and providing opportunities for people of all faiths and backgrounds to confront hatred, bigotry and intolerance.

Photo cutline:

Dr. Eugen Schoenfeld, center, points out names of holocaust victims to Ivy Preparatory Academy students, from left, Olivia Cantrell, Uma Kaladi, Devan Brown and Phyllis Smith during their recent tour of the Holocaust Memorial Wall at Congregation Gesher L'Torah.