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## Murals of the Holocaust to be on display at ECTC

Jan 27, 2019

The Never Again: Murals of the Holocaust exhibit will be on display from Feb. 25 to April 5 at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College's Morrison Gallery.

An exhibit of Holocaust murals coming to the area will help spread a powerful message of embracing diversity, compassion and kindness in the region, according to a Central Kentucky Community Foundation news release.

A new initiative coming to Elizabethtown through CKCF's Marvin and Joyce Benjamin Fund is Never Again: Murals of the Holocaust, a project of Western Kentucky University's Center for Gifted Studies. The presentation and educational components also are made possible by The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts and the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence.

The exhibit is on display from Feb. 25 to April 5 at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College's Morrison Gallery in the James S. Owen Building. It is free and open to the public. The community program, A Night of Remembrance and Understanding, which features a Holocaust survivor sharing his story, is at 6 p.m. March 25 in room 112 of the JSO Building on campus.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is today, a time to remember the 6 million Jews and thousands of others that perished in the Holocaust.

Much like the exhibit, the foundation's Benjamin Fund exists to foster kindness, understanding and inclusiveness amongst the diverse people that call the community home. The fund has an emphasis on anti-Semitism, which makes this exhibit and community event especially relevant, according to the release.

"Without the generosity of Marvin and Joyce Benjamin, this opportunity would not be available to our area and our students," said Davette Swiney, CKCF president and CEO. "Tolerance and understanding others are traits of a civil society and traits we want to embody as a community.

Helping our students connect the lessons of the Holocaust to today and learning to have open, respectful dialogue is a true lifelong gift from the Benjamins.”

The 9-foot-wide by 7-foot-tall murals were designed by students in the Nazi Germany and the Holocaust class of WKU’s Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth over the course of more than 20 years. The class focuses on the rise and fall of Nazi Germany and the danger of remaining a spectator during similar events.

Since 1992, the course has been taught by 2017 Teacher of the Year Ron Skillern during WKU’s Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth and the culminates in students collectively producing a mural. But with the intensity of the subject matter, he found he needed a hands-on outlet for the students to process what they were discovering, so the idea of the murals was born, according to the release. They now total 21.

“There’s all kinds of issues that studying the Holocaust presents, but when it comes down to it, we have to always come back to answer the question, ‘What does it mean to be human?’” he said. “That is a big question that we try to answer, because we must see other human beings as human beings. If we don’t, we then we devalue them, we sub-humanize them and then it becomes OK to do bad things to them. That is what this exhibit is about.”

This past summer, local teachers at partner high schools were trained in strategies and models for teaching about the Holocaust and the murals. By bringing the murals to Elizabethtown through the Benjamin Fund, it allows students to experience the murals at no cost to them or their schools. The murals are intended to help students internalize the lessons from that period in history and apply them to issues and injustices today.

“Our idea isn’t to make an army of historians,” Skillern said of the exhibit. “Our idea is to make a collection of students throughout the commonwealth who have incredibly good hearts and understand that courage is compassion and power means mercy and kindness.”

Swiney said she believes students who complete the course work and view the murals will leave with a greater understanding of each other and how to engage civilly with people of differing beliefs and backgrounds.

“We hope from these lessons and through this exhibit will emerge students who at their core understand we are all people and strive to extend compassion and advocate for everyone,” she said. “That is the overall goal of the Benjamin Fund and we are pleased to bring a project that is so well-aligned with its mission.”

For more information about the exhibit, go to [ckcf4people.org](http://ckcf4people.org).

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