BERNARD ZELL
ANSHE EMET DAY SCHOOL



There are moments in Middle School whereas educators we notice the impact of teaching and the appropriate sensitivity students hold to content learned. Often student voice and action evoke emotion within us. Yesterday as our 5th-7th-grade students entered and took their seats in the sanctuary silently, with little prompting, it was clear that students understood the gravity and importance of remembering those who perished in the Holocaust as well as the heroism of the survivors. In a student-led ceremony, students shared 6-word poems written by 7th and 8th graders, lit yartzeit candles to honor those killed, and read a special Kaddish interspersing the names of concentration camps. Students wonderfully performed Readers' Theater adaptation of the book, *Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat* by Nancy Patz. As students wore a variety of hats, their questions and conversation led us all to wonder about the woman who wore the hat and lost her life.

Across the globe, after touching down in Israel, our 8th graders gathered together for a meaningful Yom HaShoah ceremony. Together they each read different quotes or poems from Survivors to raise their understanding of different perspectives and stories of how the Holocaust impacted each individual involved.

Leading up to Pesach, members of our 8th grade class prepared and led a seder for over 100 Holocaust Survivors at the Illinois Holocaust Museum. Students wove memories of Holocaust Survivors into their seder, drawing connections to the exodus in

which the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. By commemorating the loss of lives acknowledging the tremendous heroism of the survivors, students built positive new memories while instilling new Jewish realities for all those in attendance.

Our Middle School students not only come together to remember but also spend time to explore their role in our school community, Jewish Community and the world at large. Learning experiences like the Jewish Court of All Times, Study of the Civil Rights Movement and Great Migration, World Issues, and an exploration of topics like resistance, we support students in learning how to be an upstander. At the end of our seder at the Holocaust Museum, a survivor stated it best - *seeing Bernard Zell students lead is the light of the Jewish Community living on today - and in our future!*

