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## Holocaust becomes learning tool

ing hatred can be," Levinson said. "And the kids understand." Levinson's talk was only the beginning for St. Francis de Sales.

as a young teenager, how as a Jew she posed as a Catholic and good people risked their lives to hide her, was nothing like reading a book or the Internet.

len Levinson tell about how she survived the Holocaus

That was the assessment of Anthony Valerio and his St. Francis de Sales/St. Stephen's classmates, who were among 150 to 200 students who listened to Levinson speak May 19 in St. Stephen's Church, Geneva.

When Levinson finished her story, many of the students from Geneva, Seneca Falls and Waterloo Catholic schools flocked around her with questions.

Could she ever forgive the Nazis? Had she continued to believe in God? Was the concentration camp like that in the movie "Schindler's List"? "Some ask just fabulous questions," Levinson commented that week in her Brighton home. She hadn't even told her own two children about her wartime experiences and daring escape until they were teenagers, she said.

"I was afraid it would bring about hatred," Levinson, 69, said. "I didn't want them to feel animosity to people who didn't do anything to us."

Holocaust survivors such as Levinson, in collaboration with teachers and the Center for Holocaust Awareness and Information, located in the Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester building on Rochester's East Avenue, are seeing that children learn about the Holocaust. But, she explained, they present it gradually, in an age appropriate way.

"I always say to kids the reason I talk is I want you to know how damag-

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Stephen students.

"At this age level (sixth to eighth grades), it's hard to fathom numbers and dates," said Dan Hennessy, the teacher spearheading the program. "So everybody's objective was to let them learn what they learn at this stage from Helen."

Several other Catholic schools, including Northeast Junior High and Aquinas Institute, have brought in Holocaust survivors to speak or sent teachers to Holocaust center training. But the Geneva program included its own in-service for teachers and principals, in April. And later teachers talked about the Holocaust with students before Levinson's presentation.

"We had never done a teacher training specifically geared to Catholic educators," said Barbara Appelbaum, director of the Center for Holocaust Awareness and Information.

"It is very difficult for teachers because they have to know where they themselves stand. They have to be confronting their own personal baggage about this and a lot of people don't know how they feel."

One problem is that people categorize Jews as the victims and Christians as the perpetrators, she said, and it isn't that black and white. In the Holocaust, six million European Jews were systematically executed by the German Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945. The Nazis also killed millions of others, including Gypsies, disabled persons and prisoners of war.

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