



KIDSBRIDGE ANNUAL YOUTH HOLOCAUST / GENOCIDE AWARENESS AWARD WINNERS -- 2019

Meet the winners and hear their stories; group photo at end

Stephen Mohr – 1st Place

Nominated by: Alexia Zygiel and Dena Dias

Stephen Mohr became keenly interested in Holocaust and World War II studies after reading the novel *The Island on Bird Street* in class. When his fifth-grade unit on the Holocaust ended, the journey did not end for Stephen. He invited his teachers to continue exploring the topic with him and created a shared Google document to facilitate these discussions. Stephen's study of the Holocaust coupled with his compassion for victims has infused his mind with insights. These insights have translated into action and improved his entire school, Brookside Elementary in Westwood, New Jersey. His credo, "If you see something, do something" sprang into action when Stephen noticed a shy first-grader being harassed on the playground. Stephen started playing with the boy that day, and every day, during recess. When asked why he plays with a first-grader instead of students his own age, Stephen simply replied, "*He's a great kid; now everyone knows it!*" According to Stephen's teachers, this kind of behavior is rippling through the entire student body.

Fiorella Del Orbe – 2nd Place

Nominated by: Diana Lockner

Sixth-grader **Fiorella Del Orbe** tries to help others, both in school and in the larger Paterson community. She volunteers in Eva's kitchen and CUMAC, facilities that provide food and services to Paterson's poorest populations. Fiorella appreciates what she has and understands how much the poor need her help. At school, Fiorella eagerly participates in various activities, including the Sixth Grade Book Club, which has read *Daniel's Story*, *Number the Stars*, *The Book Thief*, and *Left to Tell*. Fiorella was shocked by the hatred and inhumanity portrayed in these books. Her awakening to the horrors of the Holocaust has fueled a desire to make everyone to understand the importance of peace, love, and tolerance.

Toward that end, Fiorella has written a series of kids' books about animals engaged in conflict and how they peacefully resolved their differences. She reads her books to students in kindergarten through 2nd grade and then leads short discussions to make sure the youngsters absorbed her message. "*Now that I know about the Holocaust, I want everyone to understand how important it is to be kind,*" she says. "*I thought that writing books of my own would be a way to help the younger kids learn the need for love.*" She further expressed this sentiment in a poem that she entered in the citywide Paterson Poetry Contest. Fiorella won first place, and her poem will be published in an anthology. She will soon read it to a much larger audience at Passaic County Community College. From there, there's no limit on how far she will travel the path of caring she is carving for herself and others.

Jayson Goldner – 3rd Place

Nominated by: Diana Wisniewski

Jayson Goldner has no close family members who were caught up in the Holocaust. Yet, ever since learning about the genocide from his dad, Jayson has felt compelled to learn as much as he can and share that knowledge with his peers. Why? Because, as his father told him, if we are not taught about this dark time of human history, history will repeat itself, and Jayson *“definitely did not want that to happen in the world again.”*

His self-assigned mission to educate his peers began in elementary school and continues to this day at Randolph Middle School. For one project, he co-taught a lesson to seventh-graders, telling them that it is never OK to fear or hate anybody just because they’re of a different ethnicity than you. For his bar mitzvah project, he “twinned” with a Holocaust survivor named Olga Menczer. Over the course of two months, Jayson curated Olga’s harrowing story and has been sharing it ever since. And he does not preach. Rather, he shares his belief system in discussions with teachers and peers inside and outside the classroom. Always with respect, he questions ideas and offers possible solutions to grave injustices that he sees in the world.

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Kidsbridge Annual Youth Holocaust/Genocide Awareness Award -- 2019
Left to right: Lynne Azarchi, Executive Director, Kidsbridge; Fiorella Del Orbe, 2nd place winner; Stephen Mohr, 1st place winner; Jayson Goldner, 3rd Place winner; Maud Dahme, Holocaust survivor and Lawrence Glaser, Director of N.J.'s Commission for Holocaust Education.