

Photographer Monni Must of Sylvan Lake, right, and her assistant, Linda Schlesinger, display a couple of portraits of living Holocaust survivors. Must's survivor portraits will be displayed at the Janice Charach Gallery in the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit this September.

Photo by Edward Osinski



Sylvan photographer snaps Holocaust survivors for exhibit

By ERIC CZARNIK
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SYLVAN LAKE — A new art exhibit at the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit in West Bloomfield will reflect upon the lives touched by the Holocaust.

Photographer Monni Must of Sylvan Lake will present her photo portraits of Holocaust survivors at the JCC's upcoming exhibit, "Triumph Over Tragedy: Faces of the Holocaust." The exhibit will debut Sept. 10.

Close to 50 prints of Must's work will appear in the exhibit — about as many as the gallery could hold, she said.

"There will be prints of survivors. There will be a

See SURVIVORS on page 11A

Survivors

from page 3A

description of the survivor, where it was photographed," she said. "You can listen on the phone, and you can hear the survivor talk, so you'll be able to hear their voice."

The exhibit's photos can also be found in Must's second photography book, "Living Witnesses 2: Faces of the Holocaust," which she has worked on for a year and a half. The book covers an estimated 300 survivors from locations such as the United States, Israel, Germany and Poland. Must said she also took photos of Auschwitz and various synagogues.

Must worked on the project with her daughter, Sabrina, who wrote the survivors' biographies. Linda Schlesinger helped conduct interviews of the survivors.

Must explained that she usually took the pictures after going to the subjects' homes and hearing their personal stories. This helped her figure out the correct approach and feel of the picture.

"The reason I did was that most people are comfortable in their home," she said. "And their homes really tell the story of what's important to them, what their personality is ... unless there is something significant about what they do, and then I will take the (photo) at a different location."

Must added that she tried to make each portrait unique while showing a side of the survivors that doesn't dwell on past pain and suffering. "I have tried to show their spirit of survival," she said.

Heidi Budaj, director of JCC programs, said her facility is familiar with Must's work.

"She is one of the most talented photographers working in our area," she said. "We knew that this work is important, and it's important to be shown in our community. For many of these people, the joys in life are etched on their faces as well as their difficult history."

The Holocaust photo exhibit will start at the JCC, and plans are in the works for it to tour elsewhere. Must hopes it will someday

visit Yad Veshem in Israel.

A "Triumph Over Tragedy" public opening gala will be held from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Sept. 10 at the Janice Charach Gallery in the JCC, 6600 W. Maple Road. To learn more about the exhibit, visit www.jccdet.org or call (248) 432-5448. To learn more about Must's work, visit www.livingwitnesses.net.

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