

ews COVER STORY

Highland Park woman debuts human rights exhibit

XAVIER WARD, Editor

Fritzie Fritzschnall remembers stepping out of the cattle car and forming lines heading into Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland.

She, along with the other captives who survived the trip, were formed into lines based on their age and put through processing. It was the last time she would see her mother.

She was the youngest in a factory of 600 women who worked as slave laborers. Those women banded together and collected small portions of their bread rations to give to her to ensure her survival so she could tell their stories and the stories of others.

And so she did.

Fritzschnall's story, along with the story of other Holocaust survivors, can be found at the Illinois Holocaust Museum's new attraction, the Take A Stand Center, which opens Sunday, Oct. 29.

"One of the early priorities under my tenure as CEO was to secure our programmatic future, and that has many different elements to it, but the most time sensitive, the most urgent, was how will we tell survivor stories for generations to come," said Susan Abrams, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center CEO.

Abrams, of Highland Park, said the new exhibit gives attendees the chance to hear the stories of Holocaust survivors and, using hologram and voice recognition technology, actually ask the survivors questions.

The hologram is projected onto a screen on the

stage of a small theater, and the audience members can ask questions, which the person will then answer.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, has one of the largest speaker's bureaus in the world, with 60 total members, Abrams said.

"We recorded all of them telling their stories to the public and to student audiences," she said.

The holograms can handle nearly any question, as different key words will trigger different answers.

Abrams said some people have even mistaken the hologram for a live speaker.

The Landmark had the opportunity to speak with Fritzschnall over the phone.

"We never walk away, those of us that went that route," she said.

Fritzschnall said there are days where she doesn't think about it much, but certain smells or touches will bring her back to what she endured.

"I have a tendency to put myself back into this," Fritzschnall said. "The nights are still difficult."

Fritzschnall was flown out to Los Angeles to record her interview for the exhibit. Speaking about it at such length required a lot of time to reflect and recover, Fritzschnall said, but upon returning to Illinois and seeing children asking questions at the museum she realized the importance of what she helped to create.

"It's a teaching tool of cruelty, of what humanity has done," she said.

This piece that her and other survivors have left behind is important be-



"Upstander" kiosks give examples of different people throughout history who have stood up for others when they witnesses injustice. PHOTOS SUBMITTED

SEE THE EXHIBIT

Where: Illinois Holocaust Museum, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie
When: from Oct. 29
Admission: \$15.

cause once they are gone, the story needs to be perpetuated so it is never forgotten, she said.

Education, she said, is the key to moving forward. That education needs to start at home at a young age.

Fritzschnall, a Buffalo Grove resident and one of the founding members, said the museum started as a Holocaust museum and it will always be that, but ultimately is a human-rights museum.

The museum was founded in response to a proposed neo-Nazi march in Skokie in 1978.

"It was kind of a natural progression to where we



Fritzie Fritzschnall, a Buffalo Grove resident, is one of the Holocaust survivor stories available through hologram technology at the new Take A Stand Center.

are today," Abrams said.

The museum is fighting for a better, fairer world by means of education.

"It's part of our work to make 'never again' a reality," Abrams said.

Following the Holocaust, there was an urgency to make sure nothing like it ever happened again, but

around the world for years to come genocides persisted. The Take A Stand Center begins with the Holocaust and stories of survivors and continues to address other world social issues such as education, economic inequality and gender inequity.

After exiting the theater,

one walks out into a gallery filled with interactive pieces encouraging people to be "upstanders" as opposed to bystanders.

"We work to inspire people to recognize the power of their voice and their choices to create positive change in the world," Abrams said.