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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

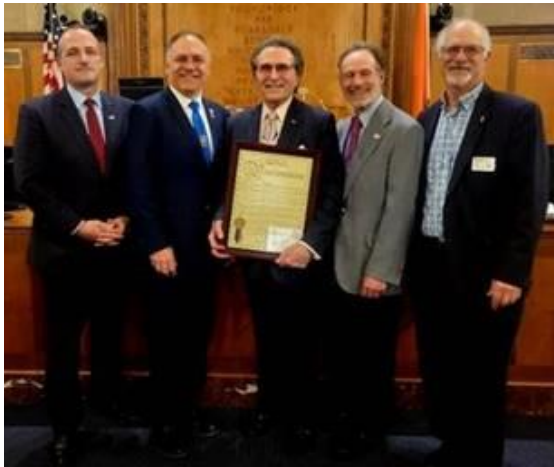
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(L- R Chair Vedat Gashi, Leg. Judah Holstein, Mitch Ostrove, Marc Klee, Michael Gorney; Leg. Erika Pierce w/ Dr. Jill Ratner)

WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS OBSERVES JEWISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Honors Jewish Educational Institution and Health Care Advocate & Humanitarian

White Plains, NY — On Monday, the Westchester County Board of Legislators observed Jewish-American Heritage Month with a hybrid in-person and virtual ceremony recognizing the critical work of the County’s **Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center (HHREC)**, and the vital, humanitarian efforts of Health Care Advocate, **Jill Ratner, M.D.**

Board Chair Vedat Gashi (D- New Castle, Ossining, Somers, Yorktown) convened the program, which began with a moving invocation by **Rabbi Sruli Deitsch** of the Chabad Jewish Center of Eastchester. The Chairman said, “Typically, we would call this a ‘celebration’ but we strike a more somber tone this year as we await the safe return of the Israeli hostages and a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza.”

“Tonight we will present two proclamations. The first proclamation is presented jointly by the Board of Legislators and the Westchester Jewish Council (WJC). WJC is an invaluable organization – working tirelessly on behalf of the County’s Jewish community, and connecting with other ethnic and faith-based

groups to promote greater understanding. We would like to give special thanks for their collaboration and guidance in identifying those in the Jewish community deserving of special recognition.”

Legislator Judah Holstein (D – Eastchester, New Rochelle, Tuckahoe) presented the first proclamation with WJC Vice President, Marc Klee, at his side. He said, “Jewish tradition emphasizes the significance of ‘Kavod HaBriyut,’ or human dignity as so vital that one may violate Jewish law to preserve it. Tonight we proudly recognize the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center, whose mission to preserve Holocaust memories and champion human dignity perfectly embodies this principle.”

“As a Jewish American, the work of the HHREC resonates deeply within me. My own grandparents were fortunate enough to escape Nazi tyranny, but left behind parents and siblings who perished in Treblinka ... Given the present and ongoing challenges faced by Jewish communities, businesses, and students, whose only 'crime' is being Jewish, the HHREC's mission is more vital than ever. The HHREC’s work is a crucial beacon against darkness, impacting not just Jews but all of humanity.”

Accepting the honor on behalf of HHREC was Board member, **Mitchell Ostrove**. He said, “We feel truly blessed to know that our work is seen and appreciated. For almost 30 years, the Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center has been steadfast in our mission to impart the crucial lessons of the Holocaust, genocide and human rights violations to educators and students. Now, more than ever, this work is necessary. We are called upon almost daily for help. We hold a High School Institute at Iona University, with over 400 students and teachers from 34 area schools. We host an Annual Human Rights Institute for Middle School student leaders. We have a speaker’s bureau with survivors of the Holocaust as well as second and third generation speakers. These second and third generation speakers will keep the tragic stories alive when there are no more survivors to tell what happened.”

The Board declared May 28, 2024 “Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center Day” in Westchester County.

Legislator Erika L. Pierce (D – Bedford, Lewisboro, Mt. Kisco, North Salem, Pound Ridge, Somers) presented the second proclamation saying, “Tonight, I have the extreme pleasure of recognizing Dr. Jill Ratner. Jill was a prominent and longtime pediatrician in our community. She is a global health care advocate and the non-profit founder of ‘Hands Up for Haiti.’ Jill is also involved in many of our community’s non-profits, and helped found Re-Set Westchester, a local organization which helps settle refugees. Jill is a true Jewish leader, serving as the President, Executive Vice President and Social Action Chair of Bet Torah, in addition to all of her other work. She truly walks a path so many of us aspire to, in dedicating her life to ‘tikkun olum’ – or repairing and improving our world.”

Dr. Ratner warmly thanked the Legislator for the award and delivered an inspiring message saying, “For me, community service and helping others reflects my Jewish values. As Jews we are taught to love thy neighbor as thy self. The world is imperfect, broken, and it is the Jewish imperative to devote our energy and lives to repairing it ... I have been fortunate to have a professional career of 34 years in Westchester that allowed me to fulfill this mission. Healing, of course, has been integral to my occupation as a physician, and to my efforts regarding global health care inequity.”

“As a member of the northern Westchester community, I come alive when I can contribute to the important social causes, and work that enhance all our lives. This by no means is a phenomenon limited to me alone - studies have shown that being in relationships with others, with community, having meaningful work, and helping others are paramount in creating a sense of well-being, of happiness. So in the truest sense, much of what I do truly fulfills my own needs.”

The Board declared June 1, 2024 “Dr. Jill Ratner Day” in Westchester County.

View video presentation [here](#).

Read the program for Monday night’s event [here](#).

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The Westchester County Board of Legislators consists of seventeen members and is the policy-making branch of County government, serving one million residents. The Board's primary responsibilities are to allocate funds, approve the budget, and impose taxes, in addition to passing local laws, acts, and resolutions. It is the longest-running elected body in New York, serving as the *Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years*. Learn more by visiting www.westchesterlegislators.com

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