

The Holocaust Stamps Project:

Millions of Postage Stamps Delivering More than Just Mail

Charlotte Sheer, Founder, Holocaust Stamps Project
Retired educator, Foxborough Regional Charter School, Foxboro, MA

Since 2009, students at Foxborough Regional Charter School (FRCS) in Massachusetts have been collecting, trimming, counting, and sorting postage stamps donated to the Holocaust Stamps Project. What began as a history-related enrichment activity in a fifth grade classroom has become a component of the Community Service Learning program at this kindergarten to grade 12 public school-of-choice. The Project serves as a springboard to countless lessons not only about history, but also about tolerance, the importance of accepting others and having respect for differences among individuals and groups.

WIDE SUPPORT

In the 2015-2016 school session, the Holocaust Stamps Project entered its seventh year. As of December 22, students and community volunteers had counted 6,711,596 stamps, **each one honoring a man, woman or child whose life was tragically ended due to intolerance and inhumane cruelties by the Nazis.**

6,834,594
STAMPS COLLECTED
60% OF
GOAL
11,000,000

Donations have come from individuals and groups, preschool children and senior citizens, businesses, organizations, synagogues, churches, and stamp clubs (including members of the Society of Israel Philatelists), representing 37 United States states, Israel, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

LETTERS

Personal letters often accompany the stamps. Some of the most meaningful notes have come from people with personal ties to what happened during the Holocaust – survivors themselves or family members who choose to participate in the Project as a special way to remember their loved ones.

Collecting canceled postage stamps, which would otherwise be discarded by most people after their mail has



been delivered, has become a metaphor for retrieving items of value destined to be tossed out as worthless trash, as the Nazis did with 11,000,000 precious lives.

The stamps not only provide the students with windows into the world's diverse cultures, but they also serve as an art medium for creating unique stamps collage artworks.

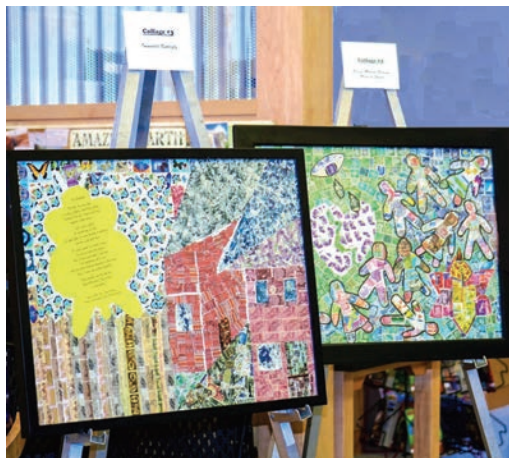
STUDENT VIEW POINT

In 2011, work began on the first in a series of 18 one-of-a-kind collages, each depicting the students' evolving knowledge about the events and effects of the Holocaust. The original idea of making pictures with the stamps was inspired by the extraordinary philatelic art creations of Rhode Island brothers Joseph and Harry Jagolinzer who worked in the medium more than a half century ago. <http://www.brownalumnimagazine.com/content/view/2769/40/> and http://stamps.org/userfiles/file/AP/bonus/2012_Dec_PostageCollageArt.pdf.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

To extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom and into the community-at-large, the Holocaust Stamps Project will sponsor its second annual Open House on Sunday, May 1, 2016. The event is scheduled to coincide with observance of Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) which occurs this year on May 4, 2016. Each of the completed stamps collages, as well as those on which work is underway, will be on display. Guests may have an opportunity to meet some of the student artists.

The theme for the event will be “Honoring the Righteous Gentiles”. A new collage bearing the same title is being designed and the work-in-progress will be on exhibit.



A special guest has been invited to share the remarkable

story of his grandparents’ involvement in the rescue of hundreds who were impacted by Nazi terror. In 2005, Yad Vashem presented the family with documentation recognizing their late relative with the title Righteous Among Nations, a designation reserved for those who put themselves at risk to save Jewish lives. The event will be open to the public, **but registration will be requested for planning purposes.**

At the first Holocaust Stamps Project Open House in April, 2015, Lisa Einstein, a board member of Boston 3G (a third generation Holocaust survivors’ organization), shared the story of how her Hungarian grandmother, Eva Reisner, survived the horrors of Auschwitz. This custom-designed pendant necklace was given to Ms. Einstein as a thank you gift. It was created from stamps donated to the Holocaust Stamps Project, including a Hungarian stamp with a Budapest postmark and an Israeli stamp symbolizing the family’s eventual aliyah to the Holy Land.



CELEBRATING OUR DIVERSITY!

One of the new artworks, “Different People, One World Community – Celebrating Our Diversity!” will be assembled by the youngest children in the school, kindergarten students, whose connection to the Project begins when they use thousands of the donated stamps to learn and practice counting by 5’s, 10’s, and 100’s.

At the opposite end of the participation spectrum, one high school student recently based his college application essay on the personal impact of having been involved with the Holocaust Stamps Project at FRCS.



BryAnn Nicholson has the special honor of placing one of the first stamps on the newest 18 x 24 inch Holocaust Stamps Project collage, “Different People, One World Community, – Celebrating our Diversity!” The three people figures are formed of geometric shapes to reinforce the kindergarten students’ math concepts.

Each will be filled with stamps from around the world, bearing colorful and varied images of faces and people involved in different activities.



Rylan Scammon uses stamps donated to the Holocaust Stamps Project to practice counting by tens in his kindergarten class at Foxborough Regional Charter School



Kindergarten teacher, Heidi Solivan, engages some students in counting hundreds of the donated stamps. This year the youngest members of the FRCS community will begin work on their own stamps collage for the Holocaust Stamps Project, inspired by their year long study of the importance of different people working together as a Community..

MUSIC IS A DREAM

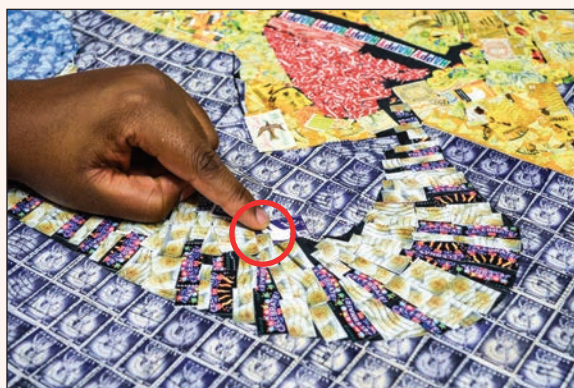


L to R) Students, Nancia Poteau, Temitope Faleye, DeeDee Haith, Marissa Durden, completed the 18 x 24 inch collage, “Music is a Dream” in October, 2015. Shortly thereafter, an anonymous donor who was one of the first to view it, donated the funds needed for the artwork to be the first of the Holocaust-themed pieces to be professionally framed under 99% UV-protected, conservation glass.

In October, 2015, a group of FRCS high school students completed the eleventh Holocaust Stamps Project postage stamp artwork. Their “Music is a Dream” collage honors the life of 110-year-old Holocaust survivor, concert pianist Alice Herz-Sommer. It was begun by a group of six high school students in 2014 while Ms. Sommer was still alive and completed in 2015 after her death.

The teens were inspired to honor the life of this remarkable woman after viewing a powerful YouTube video excerpt from the 2013 Academy Award-winning short film documentary about her, “The Lady in Number 6: Music Saved My Life”.

The design is entirely their own. The students selected purple Liberty stamps for the background to symbolize how music gave Alice Herz-Sommer the liberty and freedom to survive even as she endured the hardship of Nazi



A student positions one of two dove stamps in the “Music is a Dream” collage. Each of the 18 artworks in the collage series includes at least one postage stamp bearing a dove image as a thematic reference to the universal goal for all people of the world to co-exist in peace.

concentration camps, losing both her mother and husband. The music note, made entirely of British stamps, represents Alice’s golden years living in England where she continued playing her favorite Beethoven melodies almost every day.

The piano is partly crafted with repetition of the word “happy” taken from colorful Happy Birthday stamps, reflecting the happiness Alice radiated to those around her. Red Love stamps comprise the rest of the piano indicating her love of music, people, and life in general. Though she had good reason to hate, she chose to love instead.

The black piano keys are made from “Celebrate” stamps, as the overall collage celebrates the life of this extraordinary woman, and the white keys are formed with white Roses stamps, the symbol having been associated with spirituality and “a fresh start”, as Alice saw her life after World War II.

WE WELCOME YOUR INVOLVEMENT!

Two more Holocaust Stamps Project postage stamp collages are nearing completion, with an additional three designs awaiting the attention of FRCS artists. In the spring of 2016, an exciting new component will be added as a spin-off to the Project. A local philatelist, recently retired from a lifelong career as an educator, will be organizing an after school junior philatelist club at FRCS!

Part of the Foxborough Regional Charter School’s mission is to “promote positive ethical, moral, and civic values and prepare students to serve their respective communities as leaders and good citizens”.

More information about, and photos related to, the Holocaust Stamps Project can be found on the website:

<http://www.foxboroughrcs.org/students-families/frcs-holocaust-stamp-project/>

- Your donation of domestic or foreign stamps, in any condition and in any amount is appreciated.
- The Holocaust Stamps Project is grateful for monetary donations to help fund the cost of professionally re-framing each of the postage stamps collages, thus ensuring long-term, maximum protection from harmful UV light.
- Suggestions are being sought for a permanent public venue where the entire collection of 11,000,000 stamps, 18 collages, and related Holocaust Stamps Project materials can be permanently housed, exhibited, and professionally curated.

Holocaust Stamps Project, Foxborough Regional Charter School, 131 Central Street, Foxboro, MA 02035, USA

For questions and comments, please contact Holocaust Stamps Project facilitator, Mrs. Jamie Droste (jdroste@foxboroughrcs.org), Student Life Advisor. ■