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Powerful Documentary Teenage Witness: The Fanya Heller Story

To be Screened and Discussed

at the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

New York, NY—On **Wednesday, October 20 at 7 p.m.**, Holocaust survivor Fanya Heller will screen and discuss the powerful documentary about her life, ***Teenage Witness: The Fanya Heller Story***, at the **Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust**. The film, which is narrated by Richard Gere and directed by Ed Wiseman, was part of WNET’s 2010 Holocaust programming.

Tickets are free with suggested donation and are available online at www.mjhnyc.org or by calling the Museum box office at 646.437.4202.

In this raw and emotional look at survival, Holocaust survivor Fanya Heller shares her unique story with inner city teenagers at the Pacific High School in Brooklyn. Sharing a bond of harsh life experiences such as hunger, fear, and poverty, these young people relate to the choices that Heller was forced to make and are moved by the unexpected love she found in the midst of horror and chaos. They are inspired by her encouragement that they, too, can survive even the worst of circumstances and remain a positive person, like Fanya.

Only through the kindness of a Polish peasant did Fanya and her parents and brother survive – hidden beneath a chicken coop for two and a half years. The film explores Fanya’s relationship with a Ukrainian soldier, a Nazi collaborator, who also helped to save her family from certain death. And how, in the end, this relationship leaves Fanya with questions she continues to struggle with to this day.

“What is most important to me about making this film,” says Fanya, “is that this is another medium of reaching people – particularly the younger generations – who must be exposed to lessons in courage and tolerance, as well as to the dangers of prejudice and baseless hatred.”

Fanya Gottesfeld Heller was born in Ukraine in 1924 and, despite starvation, disease, and constant danger of arrest and execution by the Nazis, survived the Holocaust along with her family. A Trustee of the Museum, she relates her experiences through her book and as a lecturer in the Museum’s Speakers Bureau. Her book, *Love in a World of Sorrow*, now in its third printing, has become an important teaching resource and has been placed on the curriculum of courses at Princeton University, Yale University, and at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. For the past 11 years, she has been the benefactress of an important annual Holocaust symposium for teachers at the Museum. Mrs. Heller is the recipient of the

Louis E. Yavner Citizen Award, presented annually by the New York Board of Regents in recognition of outstanding contributions to teaching about the Holocaust and other violations of human rights. Mrs. Heller obtained a B.A. and an M.A. in psychology from the New School for Social Research and honorary degrees from Yeshiva University and Bar-Ilan University.

About the Museum of Jewish Heritage

The Museum's three-floor Core Exhibition educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century—before, during, and after the Holocaust. Special exhibitions include *The Morgenthau: A Legacy of Service*, extended through September 5, 2011; *Project Mah Jongg*, on view through January 2011; and *Fire in My Heart: The Story of Hannah Senesh*, opening October 13. It is also home to the award-winning *Keeping History Center*, an interactive visitor experience, and Andy Goldsworthy's memorial *Garden of Stones*. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall and receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

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