

# Cattle Car Exhibit Left an Impact on the Westfield Community



**Thank you to the Rose Kfar Rose Holocaust Education Legacy Fund for allowing us the opportunity to bring this experience to our community.**



In late 2020, I saw an announcement on the Internet that said, "If you are the child of a Holocaust survivor who worked in a ghetto in Poland, you may be entitled to a one-time payment." Although I was wary that it might be a scam, I followed up with the contact, which turned out to be an Israeli company handling applications under a new provision of the law regarding German Pension Funds.

My mother, Roza Kwar, who later became Rose K. Rose, was born in 1927 in Lwow, Poland. Being in Eastern Poland, they did not come under Nazi control until mid-1941. They were forced to live in a ghetto and worked without compensation for a timber company (i.e., slave labor). As conditions worsened, with more frequent roundups and deportations, people kept telling the teen aged Roza's parents "She looks good, you have to do something." That was code for "She can pass for Polish". Arrangements were made for her to have a false identity and to "hide in plain sight", living with a teacher near Krakow. We'll save the details of that story and how Roza survived the War for another day.

In the 1990's, through the efforts of the Claims Conference, Germany began paying former slave laborers, such as Rose, a "pension". The payments stopped when she died in 2007, but according to the announcement, there was still money left for a possible one-time payment to heirs. Last May, after several exchanges of forms and documents, I received the payment, much more than I'd expected. I felt uncomfortable accepting the money as I did not consider this to be "my money", so I looked for a way to donate it in a way that would honor my

mother's legacy. After brainstorming with Rabbi Prosnit and Jason Silberfein, the idea of this Cattle Car Exhibit was proposed. I immediately responded that this was right on target and plans were made.

On December 6 and 7 of 2022 the Cattle Car Exhibit visited both Westfield High School, where it was viewed by about 300 students and educators, and our Temple, where it was viewed by 400 members of our school, our community and even our mayor. Those who viewed the exhibit were moved, not just by the content, but also the immersive experience of standing inside a replica of a cattle car used to transport deportees to the concentration camps. I still remember being shocked by the closely spaced shoe prints on the floor and the startled feeling as the door slammed shut. Mayor Brindle encouraged all of Westfield to "recommit to standing in solidarity with our Jewish friends and neighbors against hate speech and anti-semitism in all forms, every day." Liam Carno, a Westfield HS senior said, "ShadowLight allowed us to experience the stressful lives of victims during their time in cattle cars." Carrie Tananbaum, another Westfield senior reported, "Seeing the pictures and videos and hearing the stories of actual survivors resonated with me, and I hope with others."

The irony of using money from the German Pension System to further Holocaust Education in New Jersey was not lost on me. Seeing the impact this Exhibit has had in Westfield makes me proud and would make my mother proud as well.

- Esther Rose