

Jewish Historical Society Honors National History Day Winners

By Joan Kranz



Left to right: Sofia Dodaro, Julia Abbazia and Rebecca Ronai

At first it may not seem that the three girls have much in common. Rebecca Ronai, is a seventh grader at Weston Middle School, who studies dance six days a week. Sofia Dodaro is a tenth grader at Greenwich High School, who has been playing soccer since the age of five and currently plays for a premier soccer club. Julia Abbazia, also a tenth grader at Greenwich High, plays two junior varsity sports, lacrosse and soccer, and enjoys honors arts classes. All three students, however, were the recipients of the Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County's 2016 National History Day Awards for entries that incorporated Jewish history and heritage into National History Day's theme, Exploration, Encounter and Exchange.

The students received their certificates and prizes on May 22, 2016 at The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County Program held at the Stamford Jewish Community Center. In addition to their parents, the teachers who aided and encouraged the recipients with their entries, Peggy Jorgensen of Weston Middle School and Courtney Hawes and Michael Belanger of Greenwich High School, were also acknowledged. Attendees were able to view Sofia and Julia's prize winning Senior Division, Group Exhibit *FDR: Through the Eyes of Survivors* and Rebecca's Individual Documentary: *Miracle of the Holocaust: Exploration of Survival*. After seeing the film, *Woman in Gold*, Rebecca decided to make her own movie. Rebecca's documentary features her grandfather Fred who escaped Austria at a very young age and attended the award ceremony as well.

Rebecca joined about 3000 students this week at the University of Maryland in College Park for the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Competition. The National Competition is the culmination of a year-long academic programs, involving over half a million middle-and high-school students from the United States and around the world.

Joan Kranz is The Jewish Historical Society's Chair for National History Day. Elissa Kaplan, President, echoed everyone's thoughts when she said, "The appreciation and study of history is alive and well in the next generation. We hope to award even more prizes next year!"

The Jewish Historical Society will continue sponsoring prizes in conjunction with the yearly theme of National History Day. As one of this year's recipients wrote, "Uncovering history that has not been heard about before is what historians do. The atmosphere at the competition was so exciting and fun; not only that, but creating a piece of work that you are proud of is like no other feeling."

Fairfield County teachers of public, private and religious schools are welcome to encourage their students to use resources available in The Jewish Historical society's archives and library. Complete details will also be available on the Jewish Historical Society website.