

# Yom Hashoah Commemorated at HAFTR High School

*by Dena Gershkovich, Renee Frenkel, Jamie Klahr, and Daniella Seelenfreund*



It was a dark and somber environment as Hebrew Academy of Five Towns and Rockaway (HAFTR) High School students commemorated Yom Hashoah on April 28. Rabbi Oppen opened the assembly, attended by faculty members and students in grade nine through twelve, by introducing the purpose of the assembly and talking about his recent trip to Poland with a select group of seniors along with faculty members Rabbi Hubner and Ms. Shira Oppen. The seniors who attended the Poland trip were Max Borgen, Sara Cherson, Corey Friedman, Sarah Fuchs, Joseph Greenstein, Riana Harari, Amanda Kanefsky, Jenna Kaufman, Eli Kleinworm, Daniel Margareten, Jes-

ences was more meaningful than hearing facts stated about the Holocaust,” said junior Daniella Seelenfreund. “We also heard about current Jewish life in Poland and how it is growing, which is encouraging.” Dena Gershkovich said, “It was nice to hear from the seniors who were there only a few weeks ago and their personal accounts were inspiring.” Renee Frenkel and Jamie Klahr thought, “This Yom Hashoah presentation was more relatable because the HAFTR delegation actually went there and talked about seeing concentration camps and other sights with their own eyes and from their hearts.” We heard individual stories that were truly meaningful, especially one about a man who

se Margareten, Stacie Michael, Lauren Pianko, Gabriella Shimon, and Jaimee Schwartz. HAFTR High School's first annual Abraham Scharf ז"ל HAFTR Poland Mission took place in late March, and the trip was sponsored by the Scharf family.

The students attending the assembly were mesmerized as some of the seniors and Rabbi Oppen related their personal accounts of their experiences during this momentous trip. Rabbi Oppen spoke about a memorial depicting trees whose branches were cut off, symbolizing the lives of the six million Jews were cut short. Some of the seniors gave a PowerPoint presentation showing poignant photos from the trip. They also related examples of anti-Semitism they experienced or heard about that are still occurring today in Poland. "Listening to our fellow students talk about their experi-

left his *tefillin* on a cattle car, escaped, went back for his *tefillin*, and then he was killed. He could have been saved, but it was so important for him to retrieve his *tefillin* that he sacrificed his life; years later, his family donated a set of *tefillin* in his memory. Seniors talked about their unforgettable experiences and lit candles in memory of resistance fighters.

The last generation of Holocaust survivors is aging, and it is a legacy to our young people that we all understand and remember the atrocities that occurred during the Holocaust. The mission to Poland was a life-changing experience for each and every person who attended, and to share it with the entire student body was a deeply personal and meaningful way to commemorate Yom Hashaoah.