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See Mardi Gras fun on parade today J2

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Holocaust exhibit is hands-on experience

Remnants and artifacts from the Holocaust will go on display in Leesburg, The Villages and Ocala.

"The Nazi Scourge: Postal and Monetary Evidence of the Holocaust — A Breakdown in Humanity, is being brought to Florida for the first time by Maurice and Libby Buring and Sandy and Rae Jean Lichterman in memory of their friend and Holocaust survivor Simon Waksberg.

It's free, so anyone can experience it, Sandy Lichterman said. High-school students in Leesburg and Ocala will see the exhibit prior to public viewing.

Unlike most exhibits, visitors to the Nazi Scourge program will be able to pick up and closely examine the multitude of items.

The exhibit will be available for public viewing and exam at the following locations and dates.

- Noon to 4:30 p.m. Sunday at Temple B'nai Darom, 49 Banyan Course, Ocala.
- 6 to 9 p.m. Monday at Leesburg High School, 1401 W. Meadows Drive.
- 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday at Top of the World Cultural Center, 8395 SW 80th St., Ocala.
- 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday at the Savannah Center, 1575 Buena Vista Blvd., The Villages.

■ Exhibit shows details of Nazi horror. J6

Student: Gay club will avert bullying

ERICA RODRIGUEZ
Staff Writer

LEESBURG — Eighth-grader Bayli Silberstein, 14, hopes her proposed Gay-Straight Alliance student club will help support students who might be bullied at Carver Middle School and worries that such mistreatment will continue without it.

The School Board has yet to make a final decision on rules for extracurricular student clubs, but discussions this week have centered on banning the clubs in middle and possibly high schools.

"I just think it's disappointing," Bayli said. "I guess I don't understand why they felt the need to cancel all clubs instead of allowing just this one."

She contends that without the gay-straight club, students will continue to face more bullying — like the shoving and name-calling other students wrote about in her club application. If it comes to it, however, she still hopes to form an off-campus group.

"A lot of my friends are saying if we can't [form on campus] — at least start a group outside of school," she said.

Two draft rules are slated to go before the School Board at an upcoming workshop, one of which would ban extracurricular clubs in middle schools and a second that would ban the clubs in both middle and high schools. Elementary principals would be allowed to determine which groups could come onto campus.

Bayli's club application was denied last spring, and after she reapplied in the fall she never received an answer from the school principal. The American Civil Liberties Union then backed Bayli, saying the district has a legal obligation to allow the club.

The federal Equal Access Act holds if a school allows a group that's not directly tied to school curriculum to meet on campus then it can't deny other groups access because of the proposed content of their discussions. Carver Middle has a cup-stacking club as well as a Fellowship of Christian Athletes Club.

"It is wrong of the School Board to deny the GSA [Gay-Straight Alliance] the right to form, but that doesn't mean it would be to right to shut down all student organizations," said Baylor Johnson, an ACLU attorney. Johnson said the group is watching closely what the board does next.

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Leesburg resident saw WWII up close



TOM BENITEZ/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

World War II and Korean War veteran James Hall, who celebrated his 90th birthday in January, stays busy and says he is "looking forward to 100." The Leesburg resident well on his way by exercising and shooting pool 5 days a week and staying involved in the community.

BY LORI CARTER
Correspondent

LEESBURG — James Hall had some stories to tell at his birthday celebration — war stories.

Hall, turned 90 on Jan. 16 and gathered with his two children, as well as a slew of grandchildren, great-grandchildren and friends to celebrate a few days later at the Hawthorne at Leesburg clubhouse.

"It's great to be all together," he said. "A good friend came from England."

Hall saw action in World War II while in Navy from 1942 to 1945 and was on the USS Kidd, a Fletcher-class destroyer, and then was called up for the Korean War from 1952 to 1953 and was on the USS Shangri-La, an Essex-class aircraft carrier. He was a water-tender third class.

While on the USS Kidd, also known as "The Pirate of the Pacific," he was involved in eight engagements in the Pacific, including the Philippines and Marshall Islands. The biggest came when "we were sent to pick up a pilot in Japan waters," he said of

the common occurrence.

Hall said they were 90 miles east of Okinawa on April 11, 1945, when a kamikaze crashed into the forward boiler room, killing 38 and wounding 55.

"We got hit," he said. "It picked the ship right out of the water, straight in the air."

The bomb carried by the kamikaze went through the ship and detonated moments later.

"I knew something happened," he said. There was no time to be frightened.

"We had so much to do," he said. "We had to get the steam and bury the dead at sea."

Hall said the kamikaze pilot and plane couldn't be removed until the ship made it to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The pilot was buried on the beach. Eventually, the USS Kidd went to Merritt Island for repairs. Hall eventually went to Boston, where he was discharged.

The destroyer was decommissioned June 19, 1964, and became a museum in Baton Rouge, La. The doors were opened in 1983. Hall said he has been back many times

to see his shipmates and commemorate the dead.

The last time he visited the USS Kidd was in 2004.

"There's hardly any of us left," he said. "

Hall, born and raised in Riverside, R.I., said he always thought he'd be in the military because his brothers served. He said he broke his leg playing football in high school and had to be out of school for a year.

"I dropped out of high school and joined the Navy," he said.

When he got out of the military the first time, he took a job with Mobil Oil from 1946 to '52. His job was waiting when he got back and was transferred to Michigan, where the plant ended up closing. He worked for Mobil Oil for 24 years. Next he took a job with Coca-Cola and retired after 18 years.

That's when he came to Leesburg. He exercises and shoots pool five days a week, is the Hawthorne honor-guard drummer, belongs to the Shriners and Masons, plays a little golf and goes to church.

"I keep busy," he said. "I'm looking forward to 100."

2 Clermont grocery stores close doors a week early

CLERMONT — Two Sweetbay Supermarket stores in Clermont closed their doors for the last time this week, shutting down a week earlier than expected, according to company spokeswoman Nicole LeBeau.

The stores, at 1718 E. State Road 50 and 1714 U.S. Highway 27, were among 33 described as "underperforming" last month.

Sweetbay originally planned to close the stores by Feb. 13, but depleted inventory levels led all 33 stores to shut down by Wednesday, LeBeau said. The closings include six in Tampa and three each in Naples and St. Petersburg.

Statewide, the closings have left about 2,000 employees out of work. About 50 to 60 employees at each Clermont store were affected, LeBeau said.

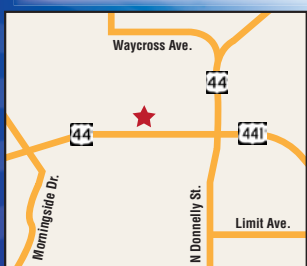
With the closings complete, Sweetbay still has 72 stores, all in Florida.

Michael Scott Davidson

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Holocaust horrors revealed in postal, monetary details

By ROSEMARIE DOWELL
Correspondent

Daniel Spungen was at a Pennsylvania stamp show in June 2007 when something he saw changed his life forever.

Ken Lawrence, a fellow stamp collector and avid postal-history buff seated at a nearby table, was holding a piece of Torah that a World War II German corporal had used to wrap a parcel he sent from Russia to his wife in Vienna.

The torn swath of ancient animal skin, graced with sacred Hebrew text that detailed the story of David and Goliath and tainted with Nazi insignias and postage cancellations on it, left Spungen, a Jew, feeling like divine intervention was taking hold.

The encounter is a back story to "The Nazi Scourge: Postal and Monetary Evidence of the Holocaust — A Breakdown in Humanity," a free exhibit through Wednesday in Leesburg, Ocala and The Villages. (Details, J1)

"I had never seen anything like it," said Spungen, who had gone to the show with the intent of spending several hundred thousand dollars on the purchase of an "Inverted Jenny," a famous and rare American stamp featuring an inverted airplane.

"I couldn't believe such pieces existed. But immediately something went off in my head, and I knew his collection was for me."

Daniel Spungen

"And I had really never thought about the Holocaust that much until that day," he said. "We just didn't talk about it in my family."

But within an hour or so, the Illinois native and married father of two had agreed to purchase the desecrated Torah's remnant and more than 200 other pieces of mail, documents, postcards and World War II postal artifacts amassed with great zeal over 30 years by Lawrence in an effort to prove the Holocaust's existence to deniers and naysayers.

"I couldn't believe such pieces existed," said Spungen, whose family received national attention in 2008 when they sold the Waukegan, Ill.-based Peer Bearing Company and gave \$6.6 million in bonuses to 230 employees. "But immediately something went off in my head and I knew his collection was for me."

Spungen promised Lawrence, a long-

time civil-rights activist and writer, that he'd travel the world with the collection and educate people about World War II and the Holocaust. He is the exhibit's curator on behalf of his family's foundation named after his parents, The Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation.

"It was a total breakdown in humanity and the exhibit is proof," said Spungen, who has expanded the exhibit to 350 pieces, including money, Nazi party membership cards, personal correspondence between inmates and their loved ones and concentration camp guards and their families.

Spungen, who travels with the exhibit and gives a short PowerPoint presentation on what it contains, said the exhibit is unique "because you can actually touch them and see them up close. You can physically connect with them."

A Holocaust survivor will be at each

program, detailing the atrocities they endured under Hitler's regime and speaking out against those who deny the Holocaust ever happened.

Anita Gray, 86, was a 12-year-old Catholic living in Prague with her parents when they were picked up and sent to labor camps in 1939 because of her father's underground political beliefs, which had been reported.

"I want to tell the world that the Holocaust did happen and what happened to me," said Gray, who was liberated from a youth labor camp by American soldiers in 1945 and converted to the Baptist faith in 1982. Gray, who'll speak Wednesday at The Savannah Center at The Villages, didn't find out her parents had survived until 1964.

"They did terrible things to me," she said. "We were all horribly mistreated."

Some of the items on display will include a never-displayed-before Raoul Wallenberg signed "Schutz-Pass," a protective passport that prevented thousands of Jews in Hungary from being deported; a card sent by an inmate at Dachau soon after it opened in 1933; and an October 1943 letter from Eduard Pys, a 21-year-old inmate at the Auschwitz concentration camp, to his parents.

RELIGION NOTES

Continued from Page J3

New service times

Congregation Sinai of Minneola has changed its service times and now will meet at 7:30 p.m. Fridays at the synagogue, 303A U.S. Highway 27 North. Details: 352-243-5353.

Breakfast meeting

The United Methodist Men of First United Methodist Church of Tavares, 600 W. Ianthe St., will have a monthly breakfast meeting at 8 a.m. Feb. 16 at the church.

Women's meeting

The Christian Women's Connection of Leesburg/Tri Cities will have its monthly luncheon meeting from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Feb. 28 at the Tavares Civic Center, 100 E. Caroline St.

A guest speaker from the Sheriff's Office will explain safety programs that are available for seniors and distribute Vial of Life kits. Ed

Doyle, former Maitland police chief, will explain why his life was spared when a robbery suspect fired at him. The luncheon is \$15. Reservations are required by Feb. 22.

Details: 352-253-0561 or 352-728-1558.

Catholics Returning Home

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 5323 County Road 462 East, Wildwood, will hold a six-week series called "Catholics Returning Home" at 6 p.m. Sundays beginning Sunday. The 90-minute sessions are for non-practicing Catholics seeking answers to questions about returning to the Catholic faith.

Details: coordinator Dan Pallo at 352-391-9338 or behappy60@embarqmail.com.

Ash Wednesday services

■ First United Methodist Church of

Mount Dora, 4396 E. Fifth Ave., will host an Ash Wednesday service at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday.

The service is open to the public. Details: 352-383-2005 or visit mtdorafumc.org.

■ Tavares First United Methodist Church, 600 W. Ianthe St., will have Ash Wednesday services at noon and 5:30 p.m. Wednesday.

The public is invited. Details: 352-343-2761.

■ St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 5323 County Road 462, Wildwood, will have Ash Wednesday masses at 6:30, 8, 9:45 and 11:30 a.m. and 1:15, 3 and 4:45 p.m. Wednesday.

Details: 352-330-00258.

Superstorm Sandy donation

Originally from Perth Amboy, N.J., Brother Knight Ken Antos of Eustis wanted to help people hard hit by superstorm Sandy, which battered New Jersey and New York. On his recommendation, Father Gerald F. Sullivan Knights of Co-

lumbus Council 8120 at St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic Church in Eustis recently donated \$100 to the K of C disaster-relief fund, with the money being earmarked for Sandy victims.

In addition, the council recently donated \$10,000 to St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic Church in recognition of the parish community and clergy's support of the council.

Game night

Fairway Christian Church, County Road 466, The Villages, will host a game night at 6:30 p.m. Friday. Signup is not required.

The public is invited. Details: 352-259-9305.

Concerts

■ A Gospel Jubilee benefitting Cornerstone Hospice & Palliative Care will take place at 6 p.m. Feb. 16 at First United Methodist Church of Tavares, 600 W. Ianthe St. The concert will feature Shirley Bradner, Matthew Benedict, Hope Street, Lovesong and the Florida Sunshine Boys

A \$5 donation will be taken at the door; an offering will be received, too. Proceeds will benefit Cornerstone.

Details: Bradner at 352-406-7516.

■ The Florida Southern College Chamber Singers, under the direction of Beth Gibbs, will perform in concert at 7:30 p.m. Monday at Morrison United Methodist Church, 1005 W. Main St., Leesburg. A reception will follow the concert and an offering will be received.

The public is invited. Details: 352-787-3786.

■ The Darts will perform in concert at 10:30 a.m. Feb. 17 at New Life Baptist Church, 10035 Poe St., Leesburg.

The public is invited. Details: 352-728-0004.

Items for Religion in Brief should be received in the Orlando Sentinel's Lake office no later than one week before the intended date of publication. Story ideas are welcome. Mail to Rosemarie Dowell, c/o Orlando Sentinel, 1898 E. Burleigh Blvd., Tavares, FL 32778-4366, or fax 352-742-5938.




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CHEVROLET	1998 CHEVROLET SUBURBAN \$5,950	2004 SATURN ION \$5,950	1993 FORD F-150 4X4 \$4,950	2004 CHEVROLET COLORADO LS \$7,935	2010 NISSAN FRONTIER LE \$20,930	2005 CHEVROLET SUBURBAN \$12,385
	2010 CHEVROLET IMPALA LT/LEATHER \$18,937	2011 CHEVROLET MALIBU \$15,989	2011 CHEVROLET CAMARO AUTOMATIC \$21,930	2011 CHEVROLET HHR \$13,845	2010 CHEVROLET IMPALA LTZ \$18,930	2009 CHEVROLET HHR \$9,979
	2011 CHEVROLET SILVERADO 4X4 \$22,625	2008 CHEVROLET IMPALA LT \$12,930	2010 CHEVROLET SILVERADO LTZ \$32,755	2011 CHEVROLET MALIBU LT \$14,937	2003 CHEVROLET VENTURE EXT \$8,781	2010 CHEVROLET AVEO \$13,274



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