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**WALPOLE:Holocaust Survivor touches the hearts of Walpole High Students**



PHOTOS BY DIANE THOMAS [CLICK HERE FOR MORE PHOTOS](#)

help to be captivated by the guest speaker's story, considering part of her young life was filled with hardship, poverty, and overwhelming hatred. Janet Applefield, a holocaust survivor, has shared her heart-wrenching story to many before, and generously came to speak with the Walpole High School students that day.

Applefield shared not only her experiences as a child but how she was amazed that atrocities still occur today. "It seems we do not learn from our mistakes and history," Applefield told her audience. She also commented that during the past 20th and 21st centuries there have been approximately 100 million people killed from genocides.

While Applefield was speaking, pictures were displayed on a projector in the background. The pictures were well preserved and aided the audience in visualizing Applefield's story. "Most survivors don't have anything. I am very fortunate to have these pictures." As the pictures scrolled through, Applefield began telling her terrifying journey: surviving through the Holocaust.

Applefield's story begins when her father and his brothers joined the Polish Army. At that time, the Germans were waging war to conquer Poland. At age four, Applefield, her mother, and little sister were sent away to stay with her maternal grandparents in the village of Wadowice. However, Applefield's grandfather feared their safety and sent them to Russia. "My father didn't know where we were because many Polish people were fleeing to Russia," Applefield told the audience.

Fortunately, Applefield, along with her mother and sister, had arrived near a city called Lvov, on the Polish-Russian border. Her father found them in Lvov through a newspaper ad, but he did not come in time to save her sister, who died at only 18 months old from diphtheria.

Applefield and her parents assumed they would now be safe in Poland and returned there after staying in Russia. To their horrible surprise, the SS police were rounding up Jewish people and moved them to ghettos. Her parents made the decision to give their only daughter to one of their cousin's nanny. She stayed with her temporarily. To Applefield's dismay, her parents met a different fate. Her father was sent to a concentration camp and Applefield never knew what happened to her mother.

When Applefield stayed with her cousin's nanny, she could recall one particular frightening experience. "I remember a man from the Gestapo ransacking our apartment. I still remember his blonde hair and chilling blue eyes."

Applefield's father decided to transport her to a different residence, after hearing news of what had happened. Her name was changed to Krystyna Antoszkiewicz, the name of a deceased Polish girl, after her father managed to buy the deceased girl's birth certificate from a priest so that Applefield could hide her identity. "Throughout my life, I've changed my name three times," said Applefield.

A cousin of Applefield's took her in, but was far from being hospitable and compassionate. She beat Applefield severely and made her suffer the infections from the wounds. Luckily, the kindness of Applefield's next-door neighbor helped her to survive

**This Week's Highlights**

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- Rex Trailer visits Hometown Weekly!

**Dover/Sherborn Events**

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**Westwood News**

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- Westwood Library announces new schedule

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the cruelty from her cousin.

Applefield's cousin was involved with the Resistance against the Nazis. One day, her cousin brought Applefield to a church and asked Applefield to stay until she returned. Her cousin went to a cafe across the street to participate in a Resistance meeting. Applefield waited for hours in the church, but her cousin did not returned to her.

Later, Applefield emerged from the Church to discover that the Gestapo had abducted her cousin. Alone and scared, Applefield wandered the streets alone. An elderly woman discovered the young Applefield, and helped her to escape to a near by farm. Later, Applefield was transferred to an orphanage and stayed there until her father discovered her.

Her father had difficulties trying to find her, but luckily he went to a refugee center and met with Lena, the director of the Applefield's orphanage. Applefield and her father were finally united and soon left for the United States. Furthermore, they were fortunate enough to have family in New Jersey. Both Applefield and her father made a new life for themselves in March 1947, almost ten years after the atrocities began in Europe.

In reflecting on her experiences, Applefield explains, "My message is to stand up to intolerance, bullying, and to take a stand against injustice." Moreover, Applefield, at first, hesitated in telling her story. "I didn't feel my story was as important because I wasn't sent to the concentration camps."

Regardless, many students proved that Applefield's story was moving and also thought provoking, far from being insignificant. Several students approached Applefield and expressed their gratitude towards her. Many came to the podium to shake her hand and shared their sympathy and deepest respect towards her.

Janet Applefield has spoken at several different middle schools, high schools, and universities across Massachusetts and a few in Rhode Island. She is a clinical social worker and is working on a memoir and documentary based on her experiences during the Holocaust. More information about Janet Applefield can be found at <http://www.janetapplefield.com>.

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