

# Honoring Raoul Wallenberg



L-R: Michael Neiman, Abe Biderman, Senator Joseph Lieberman, Sidney Greenberger, Leon Goldenberg, Ben Hoffman, Senator Carl Levin, Erol User, Senator John Barrasso, Peter Rebenwurz, William Nussen, Ezra Friedlander, David Moskovits. The book, *Witness to History*, by Mrs. Ruth Lichtenstein, was presented as an award.

Last Wednesday, March 14, the United States Congress paused to reflect in honor of Raoul Wallenberg, the famous hero who saved over 100,000 Jews during the waning days of World War Two. Senator Carl Levin, who heads the Senate Armed Services Committee, along with Senator Joe Lieberman and Senator John Barrasso, who were introduced by Ben Hoffman, Moshe Neiman and Sidney Greenberger respectively, all spoke passionately about the importance of the legislation

now making its way through Congress to award Wallenberg with a Congressional Gold Medal. The invocation was delivered by Rabbi Levi Shemtov of American Friends of Lubavitch in Washington, D.C.

The award presentations featured the landmark book *Witness to History*, authored by Mrs. Ruth Lichtenstein, and published by Project Witness, a Holocaust education resource center founded and directed by Mrs. Lichtenstein. What is so unique about

Project Witness is that it focuses on the spiritual heroism of Holocaust victims and survivors, so that the courage of the past becomes a guiding light for the future. This message is particularly apt for the commemoration of Raoul Wallenberg, as he embodied strength and courage in the face of darkness and evil.

According to Friedlander Group CEO Ezra Friedlander, who is spearheading this effort, the event resulted in many senators co-sponsoring the legislation as a result of the advocacy and presence of various leaders of national Jewish organizations who attended the event. The Board of Governors of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission are at the forefront of advocating that this award take place in 2012, the centennial of Wallenberg's birth.

The Luncheon, which was chaired by Abe Biderman, was attended by a host of business leaders, ranging from Turkish investment banker and human rights leader Erol User to New York City real estate executives Peter Rebenwurz and Leon Goldenberg, as well as jewelry manufacturer William Nussen. The Luncheon also featured the participation of members of the Lantos family. The late Congressman Tom Lantos was among those saved by Raoul Wallenberg and, after being elected to Congress in 1980, led the effort to grant Wallenberg honorary U.S. citizenship; he was most responsible for bringing Wallenberg's fate to the attention of the American people. Organizational partners who attended the Luncheon included Josh Protas, Vice President and Washington Director, Jewish Council for Public Affairs; Rabbi Bini Maryles, Associate Executive Director of the National Council of Young Israel; and Eric



Sidney Greenberger introducing Senator Joseph Lieberman



Hungarian Ambassador Gyorgy Szapary in a discussion with Wallenberg Commission Board Member, Peter Rebenwurz

Fusfield, Director of Legislative Affairs of Bnai Brith International.

Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, who was introduced by Dr. David Moskovits, President of the Endowment of Democracy in Eastern Europe — sponsors of the Masoret Avot school that boasts proud graduates in various Jewish communities around the world — spoke eloquently and emotionally about how her family decided to raise large families to compensate for the losses that the Lantos family endured during the Holocaust. Mrs. Annette Lantos, who was personally saved by Raoul Wallenberg, concluded the program by alluding to Wallenberg as “the Moses of old who disappeared in the midst of history, leaving behind a legacy of self-sacrifice and the hundred thousand people that he saved,” which was also the subject of the speech by H.E. Gyorgy Szapary, the Hungarian Ambassador to the United States.

Special recognition was also extended to Jesper Pedersen, Democratic Staff Director — House Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasia from the Office of Congressman Gregory Meeks, and Jonathan Gilad from Senator Gillibrand's office, for their leadership efforts in securing Congressional co-sponsors for the gold medal legislation. Mr. Friedlander also thanked Representative Nan Hayworth

and her staff for their efforts in securing the support of Republican members of the House and its leadership.

The Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission is working in cooperation with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the humanitarian organization that provided most of the financial support to the War Refugee Board for the rescue work of Raoul Wallenberg. The JDC was represented by Josh Kram, the Washington Representative of the JDC.

The announcement that Thirteenth Avenue in Brooklyn, a major commercial thoroughfare, will be co-named Wallenberg Way, was greeted with heartfelt applause by the participants. This initiative was passed by the New York City Council, led by its sponsors, Council members David Greenfield and Brad Lander. Corporate sponsors of the educational activities of the Wallenberg Commission were also recognized: Pat Tiffany of Flushing Bank, which recently celebrated their newest branch opening on Thirteenth Avenue, and Health Plus, one of the New York area's largest providers of government-sponsored health insurance. Health Plus was represented by Kathryn Soman and Jonathan Zalisky.

This event was co-sponsored by Project Witness.

**EVERYBODY IS TALKING ABOUT US...**  
Come see why!

**MRSK** 718.436.7075  
4501 New Utrecht Ave.