

Volunteers host warm reception for an amazing woman

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Chabad of Venice and North Port volunteers invited sponsors and friends to a lovely reception at the Venice Community Center.

They wanted to give sponsors of the Morning of Inspiration and members of Chabad a chance to meet Helga Melmed.

They also wanted to give Helga a chance to relax and meet friends interested in her story. Everyone was anxious to meet this woman who lived an extraordinary life. Helga's daughter, Lisa Bean, was with her.

"I'm nervous," Helga said.

Friends assured her that everyone on-hand loved her and was anxious to meet her.

Guests who met Helga immediately recognized her gentle spirit. There is a peace and calm about her. She is gracious. She is soft spoken.

She was the center of attention and it was fun to see her smile and chat and pose for pictures accommodating all who came.

Rabbi Schmerling

introduced several sponsors at the reception and showed off a painting his son

Mordechai created for Retta and Alex Vainer,

contributors to the Chabad of Venice Hebrew School.

The Vainers lit the Menorah at Chanukah this past year.

The Chabad volunteers served a buffet of fruit and cookies, including chocolate, everyone's favorite. They can take a bow for delicious food and drink and morning coffee.

Luisa Goldman, chair of the program, hosted Helga with respect. She found a way to ask important questions with dignity.

Helga's final message was to educators and parents to talk to their children about the Holocaust and discuss it with family and friends so that we never forget.

Rabbi Schmerling hoped for 100 to 200 people to attend the Morning of Inspiration with Helga Melmed. More than 700 came. They left with their hearts filled with inspiration and love generated by Helga Melmed.

All were blessed.

ONE OF OUR BEST

The special person of this week is Mordechai Schmerling. His gratitude to the Vainers is an example of the peace and love message Helga Melmed brings to all but especially to young people.

Mordechai is a regular at Chabad events. He is always kind and welcoming and ready for a little conversation.

At the community Chanukah, Mordechai often sings in the children's choir, takes pictures, hands out flyers and candles. He always participates in the candle lighting. He honors his parents by his work.

Mordechai Schmerling is one of the young men who makes Venice a great place to live. Fran Valencic is the social columnist for the Venice Gondolier. She welcomes your tips and ideas. Contact her at franvalencic@comcast.net.

Left: Mark Pritchett, president of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, one of the sponsors of morning with Helga Melmed, enjoys the chance to meet and talk to Helga at the reception organized by Chabad of Venice volunteers. Helga graciously welcomed conversation with everyone who wanted to meet her and share a few words.





Mordechai Schmerling presents Retta and Alex Vainer with a painting he created to thank them for their generous contributions to the Chabad Hebrew School.

GONDOLIER PHOTOS BY FRAN VALENCIC



World renowned violinist Vladimir Tsypin played familiar music from Schindler's List on his 16th century violin as more than 700 people gathered at the Venice Community Center to hear Helga Melmed.

Right: Chaya Rifka and Rabbi Schmerling welcome everyone to the Helga Melmed morning at the Venice Community Center. They are always kind gracious hosts.

FRAN VALENCIC

Columnist

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