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Elie Wiesel returning to Charlotte for September film premiere

By Tim Funk
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Elie Wiesel, the Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner, will return to Charlotte in September for the premiere of a documentary about 12 Mecklenburg County students who went to Europe in 2007 to trace Wiesel's footsteps.

The 80-year-old author and teacher will engage in an on-stage dialogue with the students at Knight Theater after the first public showing of the 56-minute film, which features an introduction by actor Richard Gere.

Among the students' stops covered in "In the Footsteps of Elie Wiesel": Sighet, Romania, Wiesel's birthplace; Auschwitz and Birkenau, the Nazi concentration camps where the young Wiesel and his family were sent; and Versailles, France, where he was given refuge as an orphan.

The Echo Foundation, which is sponsoring the Sept. 21 event, will also present its 2010 Echo Award Against Indifference to Charlotte philanthropists Sandra and Leon Levine.



NEW YORK - MAY 04: Elie Wiesel attends Time's 100 most influential people in the world gala at Frederick P. Rose Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center on May 4, 2010 in New York City. (Photo by Theo Wargo/Getty Images for Time Inc)

The award honors members of the Mecklenburg County community who work “with an eye towards peace, a heart filled with compassion and a voice against indifference, in order to remind our community of its highest ideals.”

Past winners have included former Mayor Harvey Gantt, business and civic leaders Alan and Stuart Dickson, community volunteer Sally Dalton Robinson and the civil rights law firm Ferguson Stein Chambers Gresham & Sumter.

The Levines helped launch the Critical Need Response Fund to provide support for those hurt by the recession. They’ve also given to the Levine Children’s Hospital, Shalom Park, UNC Charlotte, the Levine Museum of the New South, the Levine Center for the Arts, Queens University of Charlotte, and Central Piedmont Community College.

The Charlotte-based Echo Foundation was founded in 1997 to carry on the message Wiesel brought to the city that year – a call to action for human dignity, justice and moral courage.

Wiesel returned to Charlotte 10 years later, in 2007, to call on students, religious leaders and others to do more to stop suffering, speak against intolerance and never become “dehumanized by the curse whose name is indifference.”

Later in 2007, the dozen Mecklenburg students who’d demonstrated a commitment to social service flew to Europe as “footsteps ambassadors.”

The documentary about their trip was produced by Charlotte-based Indievision in association with Emulsion Arts. It includes music and lyrics by Joseph Malovany, cantor at the New York Fifth Avenue Synagogue, and an original score by Emmy-winning composer Fred Story.

The participating students and their 2007 schools were: Catherine Auerbach and Casey Horgan, Myers Park High; Adara Blake, Evelyn Denham, Scott Fisher and Margaret Love, North Mecklenburg; Natasha Frosina and Kristine Sowers, Providence Day; Preston Gray and Blake Templeton, Butler; Gabriela Reed, East Mecklenburg; and Harold Robbins, Providence High.

General admission tickets for the Sept. 21 “A Night to Remember” event at the Knight Theater are \$65. They’ll go on sale in late summer.

Also available, now, are patron tickets (\$250) and patron packages and corporate sponsorships ranging from \$3,000.

Details: CharlotteEchoes@aol.com; 704-347-3844.