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# Asper Foundation expands Holocaust studies

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**WINNIPEG** - The Asper Foundation has launched the second phase in its Holocaust Studies Program, which sponsors trips for middle school students to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

For the past two years, the foundation has sponsored a trip to the Holocaust museum for all Grade 8 students attending the Winnipeg Board of Jewish Education's Simkin Middle School, as part of the program aimed at educating students about the dangers of intolerance and racism.

Now Israel Asper has opened up the program to all Jewish Grade 9 students in Winnipeg. (Previous participants are not eligible.)

On Dec. 13, the Asper Foundation, in collaboration with the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada and the Winnipeg Jewish Community Council, held an information evening for Jewish Grade 9 students and their parents, to discuss the Washington trip. About 100 people attended, says project co-ordinator Shelley Faintuch.

"We had a very enthusiastic response," she says. "A number of parents said that this is a wonderful gift that we are offering."

Gary Jacobson had some questions going into the session but reports that they were answered to his satisfaction.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for our children to relate to the history of the Holocaust and learn about the past," he says.

Jacobson, whose son, Noah, is looking forward to going with his friends, is impressed with the educational preparation for the visit and says he is pleased with the 16 hours of community work that trip participants have to commit to. There is also a \$200 participation fee.

The application deadline is Jan. 21, Faintuch says.

Applicants have to submit a 250 to 300-word essay on what they hope to get out of the trip. The students will also be interviewed as part of the application process. The trip is slated for next June.

Faintuch adds that eventually the Asper Foundation plans to open the trip up to non-Jewish students as well.

In a press release, Israel Asper writes: "I am deeply committed to the teaching of the history of the Holocaust, its abuse of human rights and why we need to ensure that it will never happen again. Not only, may I add, to the Jewish people, but to all peoples threatened and persecuted because of their race, religion, ethnic background, gender or age. I consider it very important that we tell our sons and daughters this story of degradation, denial, humiliation, hatred and, ultimately, genocide."