

Press Release

Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect
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After Knowing Anne Frank as a Child, a Lifetime of Humanitarian Service

*Pieter and Susan Kohnstam to be presented with Legacy of Hope
at Anne Frank Center's Spirit of Anne Frank Awards*

May 17, 2019

Anne Frank's name and words have become so iconic that it can be easy to forget she lived not so long ago—recently enough to still be actively remembered by the people who knew her. One of those people is Pieter Kohnstam, who knew Anne as his babysitter when he was a child in Amsterdam, before the Frank family went into hiding and his own family escaped through a series of countries, eventually settling in Argentina. While in Amsterdam, the Kohnstams were neighbors of the Franks on Merwedeplein and became close, as both families had fled Hitler's Germany.

It is in part this experience that led Pieter and his wife, Susan, to decades of humanitarian service—promoting peace, unity, compassion, and understanding as two of the Anne Frank Center's most inspiring volunteers. The Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect is honoring them with the 2019 Legacy of Hope Award as part of this year's Spirit of Anne Frank Awards (SAFA), acknowledging the Kohnstams' tireless commitment to teaching about the Holocaust and its frightening relevance to events today.

For more than 20 years, Pieter Kohnstam has traveled the world to share his story of escaping Nazi occupation, through lectures, conferences, and readings from his book, *A Chance to Live: A Family's Journey to Freedom*, which has been published in English, Dutch, and German. Based on a memoir by his father, Hans, Pieter's book details his family's escape to freedom and memories from that time. Pieter recalls:

"Anne was a vivacious, outgoing girl who adored children. She had an infectious laugh and was well-liked by everyone. ... She was one of those girls on the verge of becoming a teenager, who could act like a grown-up one moment and play tag with the younger children in the neighborhood the next."

It's a story that reminds us not only of the innocence of youth, but the basic human desire for connection and community. That human connectedness has guided Pieter through years of

public presentations throughout the country, as he shares his story with others as a caution about what could happen again:

"Let us pray that we stand up to fight for a better world with understanding, imparting knowledge of history...and standing up to fight genocide and xenophobia."

Other 2019 honorees include: SAFA Human "Writes" Award winner Jack J. Hersch and the inaugural SAFA Interfaith Unity Award, recognizing congregations who have witnessed unspeakable tragedy in the midst of prayer: Linwood & Al Noor Masjids in Christchurch, New Zealand; Tree of Life *Or L'Simcha Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The world has been deeply moved by these and other horrifying tragedies. The award acknowledges that millions of people both share in the mourning and are inspired by the spirit of solidarity that has emerged—especially important as we approach what would have been Anne Frank's 90th birthday on June 12, 2019. It is an opportunity to reflect on how much, and how little, has changed in the eight decades since World War II.

Education award winners for 2019 include: SAFA Student Scholars Masaraat Asif, Emily Herrmann, Emilia Peters, and Grace Schuler; SAFA Teacher-of-the-Year Robert Lurie; and Outstanding Educators Brendan Murphy and Elliot Hearst.

The 23rd Annual Spirit of Anne Frank Awards will be held in New York City at the Edison Ballroom on Monday, June 17. To register, volunteer, or make a contribution in honor of any of the honorees, visit www.annefrank.com/safa. Holocaust survivors attend free of charge.

What is done cannot be undone, but one can prevent it happening again.
—Anne Frank

About the Anne Frank Center:

The Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect offers educational programs, traveling exhibits, and theatrical performances to share the impact of the message of Anne Frank's diary by promoting respect for all humanity.

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