



## Alaska Jewish Museum Fall/ Winter 2021 Newsletter

### Greetings Members!

The last few months have been very challenging for the museum because of the defacing of our building with swastika stickers, as well as the carving of a swastika into our back door. The culprit has not yet been caught. The Alaska Jewish Campus has partnered with StandWithUs Northwest to offer a \$5,000 reward. Local police and the FBI are working to crack this case. Museums Alaska and the Alaska Historical Society have each issued statements in support of the Alaska Jewish Museum and the Alaska Jewish community.

The Covid epidemic has also created rifts within Anchorage because of the wearing of the Yellow Star by some folks who compare current mask and vaccine mandates with the Holocaust. Rabbi Greenberg of the Alaska Jewish Campus and Alaska Jewish Museum Curator Leslie Fried were filmed by Channel 2 expressing their desire for peaceful civil debate. They also spoke of their shock and disappointment over the appropriation of a symbol of the brutal murders of millions of Jews for use by disgruntled citizens over Covid restrictions.

Fortunately, the Alaska Jewish Museum has received a sizable grant to upgrade its security systems and is currently enrolled in a six-month program **Preparing Alaska's Cultural Organizations for Emergencies, or PACO**.

In spite of these disruptions, the Museum is forging ahead with the development of its new virtual and traveling exhibit **Through a Jewish Lens: The Founding Fathers of the Alaska Commercial Company** that explores the little-known background stories of the Jewish founders of the Alaska Commercial Company.

It is also working on its virtual presentation about Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat kidnapped by the Soviets from Budapest in 1945 during the final months of World War II, when he was carrying on a one-man crusade to save as many Jews as possible. In the years following World War II, many inmates of the Soviet Gulag had either heard that Raoul Wallenberg was still alive and in one of the camps or claimed to have seen him. The Soviets, for their part finally admitted in 1958 that he was captured by the NKVD and that he died in prison in 1947. However, many inmates of the Soviet Gulag had either heard that Wallenberg was still alive and in one of the camps or claimed to have seen him themselves. Other witnesses said that he was imprisoned on Wrangell Island above the Arctic Circle for at least three or four years in the early sixties. This story has captured the imagination of many people and we are fortunate to have speaker Mark Seidenberg share with us his life-long pursuit knowledge of the facts surrounding this amazing piece of history.

By the way, we would like to let you know that our annual Jewish Cultural Gala has been postponed until February 2022 because of the pandemic. Please check out the Alaska Jewish Campus website for more information about this fun event!