

Montreal teachers to attend seminar at Yad Vashem

Compiled by CJN Staff

Four Montreal-area educators from the public system will spend three weeks in Israel this summer attending an international seminar on the teaching of the Holocaust, thanks to the generosity of a survivor of the Shoah and his wife.

Teacher Julie Etheridge of the English Montreal School Board, teachers Steve Santella and Carin Schwartz of the Lester B. Pearson School Board, and Mary Rutherford, a spiritual guidance and community involvement animator with the latter board, are this year's recipients of Riva and Thomas O. Hecht Scholarships that enable local educators to attend the annual program at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Educators from several countries will attend the seminar July 1 to 19.

The Hecht scholarships, now in their seventh year, have fully sponsored 21 Quebec educators to date. Upon their return, each recipient is asked to create at least one teaching unit or module on the Holocaust or antisemitism based on what they learned at Yad Vashem.

Etheridge is the head of the visual arts department at Vincent Massey Collegiate in Rosemount, where she has taught since 2001.

Santella has taught at Westpark Ele-

mentary School in Dollard des Ormeaux since 2006, while Schwartz has been teaching English, media and drama at Lakeside Academy in Lachine since 2007 when she graduated from McGill University in education.

The granddaughter of German and Austrian Holocaust survivors, Schwartz also has a degree in communications and a diploma in documentary film. She is already involved in Holocaust education at her school, and works on cross-curricular projects with other teachers.

Rutherford is the first spiritual or community animator to be awarded a Hecht scholarship. Over the past decade, she has worked with many schools in human rights, conflict resolution, social justice issues and intercultural understanding.

"Our scholarship program is an essential educational component for teaching about the history of the Jewish People," said Riva Hecht.

Her Czech-born husband was 12 years old when he, his parents and sister arrived in Montreal on Dec. 31, 1941, after a harrowing flight from the Nazis, from Bratislava to Paris to Nice to Lisbon. There they set sail with 900 other refugees aboard the Serpa Pinto.

Over its history, 350,000 teachers from 100 countries have studied at Yad Vashem,



Riva and Thomas O. Hecht, seated, congratulate the 2012 scholarship recipients, from left, Mary Rutherford, Carin Schwartz, Steve Santella and Julie Etheridge.

said Yaron Ashkenazi, executive director of the Canadian Friends of Yad Vashem.

"You are going to be exposed to the true story of the Holocaust and be provided with the pedagogical tools for your

schools," he told this year's recipients.

Past recipients invited to meet the 2012 cohort spoke of the impact the trip had on them and how they have transferred this knowledge to the classroom.