

# A diary, a dramatist, a 'dream come true'

Actress to bring Anne Frank to life in Lancaster

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LANCASTER -- For those of you who don't know, Anne Frank is the author of one of the most read books in the whole world, "The Diary of a Young Girl."

Anne began writing her diary at the age of 13, while she and her family were hiding from the German occupation of Amsterdam during World War II.

Sadly, Anne did not survive and died when she was only 15 in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Her father, Otto Frank, the family's only known survivor of the camp, later found her diary and published it, making it a worldwide wonder.

In this world, where, unfortunately, there is a lot of hate, a wonderful program is being planned to illuminate Anne Frank's message of perseverance, hope and love.

"Anne Frank -- A Life to Remember: A Story of Hope, Love, and Perseverance" will be held Wednesday, Jan. 3, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., at Thayer Memorial Library, 717 Main St., in Lancaster.

At the program, you will "meet" Anne Frank, who was born in Germany on June 12, 1929, through the historical performance of actress Sheryl Faye, who lives in Amesbury.

"I am excited to honor Anne Frank and other historical women, including Helen Keller and Clara Barton," Sheryl says, "portraying them as strong character role models for students in grades kindergarten through eighth."

Sheryl is a graduate of Emerson College, where she earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts in acting.

"I have been portraying historical women for the past 14 years," she says. "Aside from Anne Frank, I currently portray, Helen Keller, Clara Barton, Eleanor Roosevelt, Sally Ride, Amelia Earhart, Laura Ingalls Wilder and, coming in February 2018, Abigail Adams."

Anne Frank lived most of her life in or near Amsterdam, having moved there with her family at the age of 4 when the Nazis came to power in Germany. By May 1940, the Franks were trapped in Amsterdam because of the German occupation of the Netherlands. As the hatred for Jewish people increased in July 1942, the family went into hiding in some concealed rooms behind a bookcase in the building where Anne's father worked. From then until the family's arrest by the Gestapo in August 1944, Anne kept a diary she had received as a birthday present and wrote in it regularly.

"Our story starts on July 6, 1942, in the secret annex and gives you a taste of what life was like for her," Sheryl says. "I portray two characters in this show. I first come out as Miep, one of the four people who helped hide the Franks. Then I come out as Anne, and I end the story as Miep. I didn't feel Anne could wrap up her own story, given what happens."

Sheryl's hope is that you will get a little taste of what life was like for the Franks.

"In very unusual circumstances, and going through very normal emotions, such as love and puberty, my hope is that you will get a sense of Anne's character, determination, strength and love," she says.

"The Thayer Memorial Library is hosting this performance in conjunction with the Luther Burbank Middle School in Lancaster, where students are learning about World War II and reading Anne Frank's diary," says Susan Mello-Conroy, children's librarian at Thayer. "We had Sheryl here to portray Helen Keller during October for Lancaster Accessibility Awareness Month. She was amazing."

All the women Sheryl portrays have very strong personalities.

"I love how they stand up for themselves even when others try to discourage them. They fight against the norm. They overcome obstacles and don't accept the word no," she says proudly.

Students are usually very interested in history if it's presented the correct way. For instance, can they relate to it and does it have relevance in today's world?

"It is one of the library's missions to provide information for students and adults to expand their base of knowledge," Susan adds. "I believe there will be a good number of people who will come away from this event knowing much more than they had previously."

Sheryl's perspectives on these women gives students a firsthand look at the historical role models through school assemblies and performances.

"As someone of Jewish faith, I have always been interested in Anne Frank," Sheryl says. "It is a dream come true to portray her and tell her story."

Unfortunately, Sheryl feels there is still too much hate in this world.

"Anne chose love when she could have chosen hate," she says. "She helped to humanize the inhumane. I am hopeful that this performance reminds people that the Holocaust didn't happen all that long ago. It did happen, and we can't let it happen again."

Not only does Anne Frank's story educate us about an important historical event, but it also reminds us of the importance of learning to accept our differences and embrace diversity.

And there is no better time than now.

"We don't always have to agree with one another, but we need to start listening to each other with an open mind and an open heart," Sheryl says. "Because like Anne Frank said, 'Despite everything I still believe that people are good at heart.'"

No registration is necessary, and the presentation is suitable and encouraged for middle-schoolers, high-schoolers and adults. For more information on this event or others held at Thayer Memorial Library, call 978-368-8928.