



Irena Sendler with people she saved

Ms. Sendler is among the “Righteous Among the Nations” at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (which honors the approximately 7,000 Poles who saved Jews, the largest group in the world). Nonetheless, her acts of heroism were largely unknown outside of Europe until the 21st century, when a group of teenage girls in Kansas wrote a play, “Life in a Jar,” that became a national hit. Ms. Sendler was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2006, and she died in 2008 at the age of 98 years old.

“Every child saved with my help is the justification of my existence on this Earth, and not a title to glory.”

Irena Sendler



Dr. Markus Thiel, Lady Blanka, Mrs. Christine Caly-Sanchez

THE COURAGEOUS HEART

BY DR. MARKUS THIEL

Every Thursday evening from May 10 to May 31, 2018 the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence at FIU presented European-themed outdoor movies free of charge on WALLCAST, a soaring, 7,000-square-foot projection wall that uses striking visual and audio technology, at the New World Center Soundscape Park in Miami Beach. This exciting month-long program was established in coordination with the European Consulates of Poland, France, Italy and Spain, as part of the diplomacy grant, “Getting to Know Europe.”

To kick off the series, the Polish film *The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler* was shown, giving the audience an inside look at the full extent of Polish Catholics’ involvement in the underground movement against the German occupation in World War II and their efforts to save Jews under dire circumstances. Poland was the only country that the Germans decreed instant death to any citizen, their families and possibly their entire village who harbored or helped Jews. The film depicts the true story of the Polish Catholic, Irena Sendler, who was part of a clandestine organization, *Zegota*, which was established in 1941. She was instrumental in saving the lives of almost 2,500 Jewish babies and young children from the brutality of the Warsaw ghetto. The children were smuggled out and handed over to convents and foster families who raised them as their own, avoiding their certain deportation to the death camps.

Irena Sendler, a social worker who posed as a nurse as it would give her open entry into the Ghetto, risked her life and the lives of other selfless Poles who helped her, many times over by her sheer willpower and bravery. Irena’s commitment, compassion and love for other people never wavered and her audacious acts in the ever-present threat of torture and death are rarely surpassed.

The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler captivated the audience on May 10th in its portrayal of a woman who refused to be broken, of a Polish heroine who stood up to her country’s oppressors, and of a community who risked everything to save the lives of their fellow countrymen.



Wallcast in Miami Beach