

# Maria Borzecka

## Poland

■ A few years ago, Maria Borzecka participated in an intensive teacher-training seminar at Yad Vashem designed for Polish educators, supported by the Adelson Family Foundation and ICHEIC - the International Commission for Holocaust Era Insurance Claims. There she was introduced to the story of Holocaust survivor and author Hannah Gofrit, which became a great inspiration for her in teaching about the Holocaust in Poland.

Hannah Gofrit was born in Biala Rawska, Poland. Her childhood wartime experiences are featured in the popular elementary school book, *I Wanted to Fly Like a Butterfly*. This Yad Vashem educational resource, translated into a number of European languages, is frequently presented at pedagogical workshops organized by the International School for Holocaust Studies.

After reading Gofrit's story, Borzecka decided to visit 64 Zelazneh Street in Warsaw, where Gofrit hid with her mother for two years in the apartment of the Skowronczak family later recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.

In May 2009 the visit was reciprocated when Gofrit and her family visited the Willy



■ Maria Borzecka (left) and Hannah Gofrit (center) with a class of students at the Willy Brandt School in Warsaw, Poland, May 2009

Brandt Bilingual German-Polish School in the Polish capital, where Borzecka teaches. During a meeting with Borzecka's students, Gofrit answered questions and admired the children's colorful art projects inspired by her personal story.

Gofrit says her close relationship with Borzecka has been particularly meaningful. "As a six-year-old girl during the *Shoah*, I was not allowed to attend first grade together with my friends in Poland. This painful childhood experience has never left me. Visiting Maria's school in Warsaw with my husband and son has brought me closure, and I feel as though I have come full circle. Since then, I have started

to read in Polish again and speak more freely in my mother tongue. My connection with Maria has made an enormous impact on my life."

In December 2009, Borzecka returned to Yad Vashem with a group of dedicated Polish educators and leaders to attend a special graduate seminar. She spent time with Gofrit, and reinforced her commitment to Holocaust education in Poland.