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For Immediate Release

**JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF SAN FRANCISCO (JCCSF)  
PRESENTS  
*LETTERS TO SALA: A YOUNG WOMAN'S LIFE IN NAZI LABOR CAMPS*  
EXHIBIT IN THE KATZ SNYDER GALLERY NOVEMBER – JANUARY**

SAN FRANCISCO, September 21, 2009—The Katz Snyder Gallery located on the second floor of the JCCSF is proud to feature *Letters to Sala: A Young Woman's Life in Nazi Labor Camps*, a treasure trove of documents saved by one young woman during her five year ordeal of internment. The exhibition, a graphic narrative through facsimiles, provides a remarkable first-hand view of the human drama that unfolded among Jews forced to work as slave laborers during the war. *Letters to Sala*, curated by **Jill Vexler**, and on loan from the New York Public Library and the French Children of the Holocaust Foundation, will be on display in the Gallery from November 9 through January 31, 2010.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the JCCSF will host a talk on November 16 at 6:30 pm, featuring **Ann Kirschner**, Sala's daughter and the author of *Sala's Gift*. A book signing and reception will follow. Co-sponsored by the Holocaust Center of Northern California, the event is free, but pre-registration is required through the JCCSF Box Office 415.292.1233.

The power of the written word to sustain life is a theme of *Letters to Sala: A Young Woman's Life in Nazi Labor Camps*. Sala Garnarcz saved the items -- from handwritten postcards to photographs to official documents -- from the time she entered a labor camp in 1940 until her liberation in 1945.

The exhibition presents approximately 100 postcards, letters, photographs, documents, and other artifacts drawn primarily from the Sala Garnarcz Collection of the New York Public Library's Dorot Jewish Division. The total archive, which encompasses more than 300 items that Sala Garnarcz collected and saved at great personal risk during her five years interned in Nazi labor camps, was donated to the Library in 2005 by Sala Garnarcz Kirschner and her family.

Sala Garnarcz was 16 years old in 1940, when she was sent from home to Geppersdorf, a German forced labor camp where Jewish men were building the autobahn and women worked in the laundry and kitchen. During her 5 years' internment, which took her to seven different camps in Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, Garnarcz received more than 300 letters that were mailed or smuggled to her by friends and family on the outside or in camps themselves. Remarkably, she preserved these letters during her internment and continued to hide them for nearly five decades following her liberation and subsequent marriage to an American G.I., Sidney Kirschner.

The letters on display impart details about Jewish life in occupied Poland, Nazi labor camps, and the human ability to reconstruct life. For Garncarz, the letters provided evidence that her world still existed outside the camps and that her existence within it still mattered. Some carefully handwritten in elegant prose, others hastily jotted down, highlighting the urgent circumstances of their composition, the letters were her lifeline to the friends and family waiting for her return. Saving the letters became inextricably linked with preserving her own life.

The letters portray a young woman through the eyes of those who loved her: her sister, Raizel Garncarz, who wrote on behalf of herself and the immediate family; a suitor, Harry Haubenstock, whom she met in a camp; and Ala Gertner, a campmate who looked after her and stayed in touch with her by mail after they were separated.

"The letters that comprise this exhibition are the true embodiment of how the written word can give life," said curator Jill Vexler. "What emerges from the exhibition is an inspiring portrait of human resilience in the face of unthinkable atrocity."

Upon liberation in 1945, Sala located two of her sisters, the only surviving members of her family. Resuming the life-affirming correspondence, her sister Raizel wrote, "I did not doubt that you were alive, but I could not figure out how you -- the one of us who knew best how to survive - remained silent ... Once more, we live for your letters." Her love of years earlier, Harry Haubenstock, had married another, and less than a year after her camp was liberated, Garncarz married Sidney Kirschner, an American soldier, and moved to the United States.

The letters were hidden away for decades following the war, until Garncarz revealed their existence to her daughter, Ann Kirschner, before undergoing cardiac surgery in 1991. Sala Kirschner currently lives in Monsey, New York and Pembroke Pines, Florida.

"My family and I are delighted that, through The New York Public Library's exhibition Letters to Sala, the public will have the opportunity to learn my mother's incredible story of survival and courage," said Ann Kirschner. "When the world seemed entirely hostile, a young girl found refuge and hope in these remarkable letters written by her family and friends. Their words will now be preserved and made accessible to the historians and artists whose insights will help future generations to understand the lessons of the past."

Exhibitions are presented free to the public by the Friend Center for the Arts in the Katz Snyder Gallery located on the second floor of the JCCSF. It is open during all regular JCCSF hours: Monday through Thursday: 8 am to 10 pm and Friday through Sunday: 8 am to 6 pm. The JCCSF is located at 3200 California Street. For more information visit [www.jccsf.org/arts](http://www.jccsf.org/arts).

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