Anne Frank exhibit opens at Freedom Tower

BY CARLI TEPROFF - CTERRORFF@MIAMIHERALD.COM
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Hector and Maria Caraballo of Kendall take in the exhibit at the opening reception of the Anne Frank: A History for Today, hosted by Miami Dade College at the Freedom Tower on Tuesday, April 7, 2015.
PATRICK FARRELL / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

As Janet M. Coldebella walked through the Anne Frank: A History for Today exhibit in the Freedom Tower in downtown Miami on Tuesday night, Coldebella was brought back to 10 years ago when she visited the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam.

“I remember thinking how scared she must have been,” said Coldebella, who works as business development manager for an airline. “The area she was in was so small, so confined. But still she had hope.”

Coldebella was thrilled that Anne Frank’s message of hope has been brought to South Florida and believes people will learn from the wise-beyond-her-years teenager who died during the Holocaust.

“Unfortunately, I really think a lot of these things that went on in the past are still going on today,” she
said. “It’s a story many people can relate to.”

The exhibit, which will be at Miami Dade College’s Freedom Tower through April 26 and then makes a stop at Florida International University Miami Beach Urban Studios from April 28 to May 22, juxtaposes Anne Frank’s story with Nazi Germany, said Yvonne Simon, executive director of the Anne Frank Center USA.

Large display boards are set up with excerpts from Anne Frank’s diary and snapshots of history. The first board is a picture of the smiling teen with her introduction to the diary: “Writing a diary is a really strange experience for someone like me. I’ve never written anything before, but also because it seems to me that later on neither I nor anyone else will be interested in the musings of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl.”

Simons said Anne Frank Center USA’s mission is to continue share Anne Frank’s spirit so that “history doesn’t repeat itself.” The exhibit has made stops nationwide and has been seen by more than 6 million people. Local schoolchildren will see the exhibit.

At a reception Tuesday night, Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado and U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., spoke.

“Boy, if there was ever a time, in modern times, that it is essential that Anne Frank’s message be communicated universally it would be now,” she said. “Anne’s story transcends religion, nationality and race and it remains a poignant enduring reminder of how one voice has the power to speak for and to millions of people around the world.”

The exhibit’s staging at the Freedom Tower makes it even more powerful, said Nathalie Olijslager Jaarsma, the consul general of Netherlands in Miami.

“The Freedom Tower is the ultimate symbol of Freedom in Miami,” she said.

Director of the museum Jeremy M. Mikolajczak said the Freedom Tower served as a “beacon of hope” for the Cuban exile community. “In many ways, Anne Frank still serves as a beacon of hope,” he said.

IF YOU GO


When/where: From noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday through April 26 at The Freedom Tower, 600 Biscayne Blvd. From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday
and Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 28 to May 22 at FIU Miami Beach Urban Studios, 420 Lincoln Rd.

Cost: Free.

For information: www.annefranktreeusa.com.