

N O R D S T J E R N A N

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Rachel Oestreicher Bernheim Awarded the Royal Polar Star

By Eva Stenskär
New York

The Chairman of the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States, Rachel Oestreicher Bernheim, was awarded the Royal Swedish Order of the Polar Star, and was presented with the medal by Ambassador Ulf Hjertonsson, Consul General of Sweden, at a ceremony at the Consular Residence.

“His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf has decided to appoint you the order of the Polar Star, and we’re glad to have you here and to have your family in attendance,” said Ambassador Hjertonsson. “To receive this order, there is a strict rule: You must have accomplished things beyond the call of duty. And that is a fitting description of your efforts on establishing the Raoul Wallenberg legacy.”

Oestreicher Bernheim has been part of the Raoul Wallenberg Committee since its founding in 1981, and she has for over twenty-five years been actively involved in the daily work of the committee. She has also been instrumental in the search for the truth about the fate of Wallenberg, working closely with the Swedish and the American governments, as well as other international institutions and organizations. In addition, she conceptualized and co-developed the program “A Study of Heroes” as a living monument to honor



Photo: Eva Stenskär

Rachel Oestreicher Bernheim surrounded by (from left to right): Survivors of WW2 atrocities who were saved by Raoul Wallenberg Peter A. Vagi, Margit Kelemen Demeny (in front), Ivan E. Becker, and Ambassador Ulf Hjertonsson. Oestreicher Bernheim's medal is obstructed.

Wallenberg and pass forward to future generations his values of non-violent heroism, compassion and courage.

“A Study of Heroes” is an award-winning interdisciplinary academic program that has already reached more than 1,000,000 American students in public, private, and parochial schools, and in adult prison classrooms. It is used

across America, and in schools in other countries.

“I’m so grateful,” Oestreicher Bernheim said. “This is far more than I expected. It’s a beautiful decoration and I am honored. But I haven’t worked alone. Today I am surrounded by my family and by board members, who all have helped me. I’m very appreciative of His Majesty. This is a gift to

me. I am also grateful to Raoul Wallenberg. With all the sadness that surrounds his story, he also has brought so much joy.”

Partaking in the ceremony were also three special people, three of the survivors saved by Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest during WW2.

For more information on the organization: www.raoulwallenberg.org



The Royal Swedish Order of the Polar Star

The Order of the Polar Star

Nordstjärneorden is a royal order of chivalry created by King Frederick 1 of Sweden in 1748, together with the Order of the Sword and the Order of Seraphim.

The motto, *Nescit Occasum* (“it knows no decline”) is meant to prove that Sweden is as constant as a never setting star. The Order’s sash is now blue with yellow edges (it used to be black), and the Maltese-type cross is white, blue and golden. Until 1975, it was intended as a reward for Swedish and foreign “civic merits, for devotion to duty, for science, literary, learned and useful works and for new and beneficial institutions.” After reorganizing the orders in 1975, it is now only awarded to foreigners and members of the royal family only.

Recipients of the order includes:
Johan Magnus Almqvist (Theologian and Politician) Bengt Petri (Politician)
Susan Sontag (American Author)
Giorgios Papandreou (Greek Politician)
Rudolf Walden (Finnish Industrialist)
Greta Garbo (Swedish-American Actress).

A clipping from *Nordstjernen*— America’s oldest weekly Swedish newspaper, founded in 1872.

www.nordstjernen.com