

# The Blue Card Newsletter

ISSUE #02  
SUMMER 2019

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## A Special Night to Remember

On the evening of April 8, more than 600 friends, family, supporters, honorees and partners joined The Blue Card at our 83rd Benefit Dinner and Awards Ceremony in New York City. This very special night was filled with heartfelt speeches, meaningful presentations, knockout performances, delicious food and a magnificent fundraising effort by all.

Our intrepid host for the gala was none other than Bravo's Andy Cohen. Andy treated us to memories of his own Bar Mitzvah in St. Louis which included a racquetball party and fast food. He was a good sport throughout the night – even stopping for selfies with the Bnei Mitzvah Project honorees. Attendees were also treated to performances from a premier Jewish cappella group, the Maccabeats, and songs from the hit Off Broadway show "Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish."

*"I always judge the value of an award based on the esteem at which I hold the organization giving the award and there are few organizations engaged in work as meaningful or as urgent as The Blue Card, so thank you, thank you, thank you." Joe Biden*

We had the distinct pleasure to recognize the night's exceptional honorees, Mr. Stanley and Dr. Marion Bergman, David Miliband, New York Foundation for Eldercare and the Bnei Mitzvah Project Alumni. Honoree Vice President Joe Biden gave an inspiring acceptance speech via [video message](#).

"I always judge the value of an award based on the esteem at which I hold the organization giving the award and there are few organizations engaged in work as meaningful or as urgent as The Blue Card, so thank you, thank you, thank you." ~Joe Biden

This incredible event could not have been possible without our staff, Board, event co-chairs and dedicated supporters.

You can read more about the event in [Playbill.com](#), [Patch](#), [Look To The Stars](#), [Jewish Insider](#) and [Bloomberg News](#).



Host Andy Cohen, Emmy Award-winning television producer and author best known as the host and executive producer of Bravo's "Watch What Happens Live with Andy Cohen."

## From Advocating to Action for the Most Vulnerable

### *The Blue Card joins State Assembly to Secure New Funding*

The New York State Assembly announced \$250,000 in funding in this year's New York State budget to provide safety net services and programming for Holocaust survivors.

The announcement made in March shows a commitment from local leaders to help care for the most vulnerable in the community. This new funding will be directed toward services most needed by Holocaust survivors, including help with medical bills, enhanced case management, home care, benefits assistance, social gatherings, caregiver support and mental health resources.

Spearheaded by Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, Assembly members Helene E. Weinstein, Joseph R. Lentol, David I. Weprin, Daniel Rosenthal and Simcha Eichenstein joined The Blue Card, UJA-Federation of New York, Selfhelp Community Services and other local organizations and advocates in the effort. "New York's state budget commits to caring for those who need it most – Holocaust survivors. It is our responsibility to ensure that they have access to all the necessary services to live with the comfort and dignity they deserve," said Assemblywoman Rozic.

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As the leading organization on the front lines working to make sure that Holocaust survivors are able to live their remaining years in dignity, The Blue Card sees the need for assistance grow year after year after year. This crucial support will ensure that needy Holocaust survivors will receive the care and support they so desperately need and deserve.

Said The Blue Card's Masha Pearl of the news: "Thank you to Assembly Members Joe Lentol and Nily Rozic for their tremendous efforts to allocate \$250,000 for Holocaust Survivors in the Assembly's budget. This will make a major impact on those who count on us every day."

## Racing to Raise Funds

This past February, Young Leadership Members of the Jewish Community Services of South Florida's **JCS Alliance**, hosted a team of runners in the **Miami Marathon and Half Marathon** to raise money for South Florida Holocaust survivors living in poverty. The JCS Alliance has partnered with Team Blue Card as an official charity for the marathon since 2013. This year, the team raised over \$54,000 – more than ever before!

Team founder, Adam Schwartzbaum, told the *Sun Sentinel*: "It always gives me tremendous pride knowing that we're supporting these survivors who are the most deserving of help. I'm proud to be able to do this work and I'm very inspired by these individuals who we have the honor to be able to serve."

Our charity partner program at sports endurance events around the US and the world continues to be an amazing success. Since 2009, Team Blue Card has raised over \$1,500,000 for Holocaust survivors. The races, such as the TD Five Boro Bike Tour, have also been invaluable in building awareness for The Blue Card and our cause with the younger generations by creating connections and memories that last a lifetime.

First time team member Gloria Garces told the paper how running with Team Blue Card was an inspiring experience for her: "I have run the marathon before, but this is the first time that I felt I ran with such an important cause in my mind. It was a beautiful experience. I was able to meet new people who also feel the same way as I do in terms of needing to step up as a community and help those more than 600 Holocaust survivors who live in our community at the poverty level or below the poverty level."

In May, Team Blue Card also continued its tradition of hosting a team in the **TD Five Boro Bike Tour**. This 40-

mile, family friendly, recreational ride of more than 30,000 cyclists starts in Lower Manhattan and ends in Staten Island, traveling through all five boroughs.



## Run for Team Blue Card

Team Blue Card will once again be hosting a team of runners as an Official Charity Partner of the **2019 TCS New York City Marathon** on **Sunday, November 3**. Around 50,000 runners will push their limits to the extreme to complete the 26.2 miles through the five boroughs of NYC.

If you're ready to tick something off the bucket list, we still have a few race spots available for this chance of a lifetime! This is such a rare and the only opportunity left to still join the excitement this fall.

Visit the [Team Blue Card page](#) on our website for an application to run, or to donate.



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## The Blue Card Recognized for High Standards in Giving

We are thrilled to inform you that The Blue Card has once again achieved accreditation from the Better Business Bureau (BBB) Wise Giving Alliance – the most comprehensive charity evaluator which promotes high standards of conduct among national organizations.

The BBB Wise Giving Alliance helps donors make informed giving decisions among organizations that solicit contributions from the public, evaluating them against comprehensive Standards for Charity Accountability.

This independent evaluation gives our donors confidence that donations given to The Blue Card will help to make a responsible difference in the lives of thousands of Holocaust survivors who count on us each day.

## Program Spotlight: *Family to Family*

In 2002, after Pam Koner, a Westchester County, NY parent and entrepreneur, read an article in The New York Times about the extreme poverty in the town of Pembroke, IL, a community so poor that some houses had dirt floors and there were tires on roofs to keep them from blowing away, she felt compelled to help. And so Family-to-Family was born with the simple, grassroots idea of linking families she knew with “more” to families with less.

Pam contacted an outreach worker in Pembroke and was given the names of 17 of the neediest Pembroke families. She then convinced 16 friends and neighbors to join her in sending monthly boxes of food to one of the Pembroke families. The 24 linked families soon grew to 120 linked families, and the 120 families grew to over 1,200 linked families across the U.S. In addition, Family-to-Family has morphed its model to assist families in need devastated by natural disasters like Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy.

Today, Family-to-Family helps families and individuals in 36 U.S. communities in 17 states across the U.S. with food and other basic life essentials. What makes it unique is that it connects donors one-to-one with families and individuals in need, often along the way fostering personal connections between the donor and the recipient. Food security is critical to Holocaust survivors entering their late 80s, 90s and some now over 100 years old who also faced extreme deprivation and harsh conditions as children. In addition to rising prices and competing financial priorities, the majority of survivors live on their own, making

it more and more difficult to access fresh produce and nutritious food. Inspired by these conditions, Family-to-Family realized that it needed to act quickly to both help survivors living in poverty by forming connections with survivors before it's too late, and to help ensure that current and future generations never forget.

With the personal, one-to-one approach, Pam and Family-to-Family launched its Holocaust Survivor Sponsorship program. Donors provide the funds for Family-to-Family to purchase and send monthly \$50 gift cards to Holocaust survivors recommended to them by The Blue Card and a number of other agencies in the NY metropolitan area. The gift cards are for supermarkets the survivors request. By providing the means to shop at the store of their choice – often a store with fresh or Kosher food that would likely prove too expensive otherwise – the experience adds a measure of dignity.

Working in partnership with The Blue Card and others, Family-to-Family's program links each participating donor with one senior Holocaust survivor in dire need of assistance. The relationship is started as anonymous but can lead to communication and companionship if desired at both ends.

By connecting donors with specific families in need, Family-to-Family's mission is to bring a large and seemingly intractable problem – poverty – into personal focus, making proactive, attainable results possible, one family at a time.

## Holocaust Remembrance Day

The Blue Card was once again proud to partner with the Museum of Jewish Heritage, A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, for New York's largest Annual Gathering of Remembrance. Every year, the Museum brings together members of the community and organizations to Temple Emanu-El to say: “We will never forget.” The April 28<sup>th</sup> observance of Yom HaShoah honored the memory of those who perished at the hands of evil, and paid tribute to those who survived and have made a better world for us all.

## The Next Generation Remembers

### *NJ's Matt Baltuch Talks About New Documentary*

This past May, I had the privilege to premiere my new documentary film, *Children of the Holocaust Remember*, at a special screening at Temple Har Shalom in Warren, NJ. The movie, which is co-sponsored by Temple Har Shalom and The

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Blue Card, was made by myself and other temple congregants, and features eight Holocaust survivors being interviewed by local Somerset County Middle School students.

Making this movie was a passion project of mine after I had worked with a Holocaust survivor in need a couple of years ago. After meeting this individual, I was stunned to learn of the plight that the survivor, and thousands of other survivors, face with not being able to afford basic necessities.

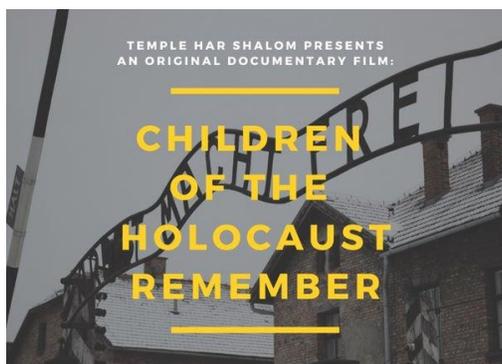
Thinking that it might shed a small light on these issues, I enlisted the help of my fellow congregants, David Schwartz, an amateur filmmaker, and Donna Connelly, to document the stories of local Holocaust survivors living in Somerset County. Knowing that today's children don't seem to have a high degree of awareness of the Holocaust, we decided to have children from the Temple congregation be the ones to conduct the interviews with survivors for the film.

We thought having students who were around the age that the survivors were during World War II ask the questions would make the film more interesting to teens. It would also serve as a vivid reminder to viewers of how much these survivors had to deal with at such a young age.

We began filming in the fall of 2018, and include interviews with eight Holocaust survivors: Sol Lurie, Erwin Ganz, Harold Fischel, Irene Butter, Inge Katzenstein, Larry Schtoil, Jacob Weinglass and Inge Markowitz. A number of the stories and first-hand accounts told by survivors in the film have not been shared frequently with the public.

Our hope is that the words of the survivors carry on through many generations to come.

~ Matt Baltuch



Temple Har Shalom Presents, An Original Documentary Film: *Children of The Holocaust Remember*

## A Life Remembered

### *Michael Danziger Tells Us About His Fundraiser*

Recently I found a Holocaust survivor, Jacob Morkowitz (1910-1991), buried in a cemetery in Woodbridge, NJ, without a headstone. As a child of two Holocaust survivors it stung me to see a survivor's life end in essentially an unmarked grave. I did not know Mr. Morkowski but found him while doing genealogical research. He was married to a cousin twice removed, Regina Kartus, who I also never had the honor to meet or know. I would like to remember Jacob by putting a headstone on his grave, but I would like to do more.

We recently saw the Yahrzeit of my father Arthur, z"l, Yom HaShoah, and the 74th anniversary of my mother, Jochewed's, z"l, liberation from concentration camp. This fundraiser honors their memories. The Blue Card will use the first \$2,500 of this fundraiser for the headstone, but all excess funds will be used to help remember survivors still with us. As those remaining survivors have grown older, their financial and social needs have grown as well. The Blue Card helps touch their lives with money, but also, importantly, by helping to bring teens to their homes to meet them and hear their memories, bring volunteers who bring meals and emotional support, and much, much more. Nearly 3,000 survivors in 35 states are beneficiaries of The Blue Card Fund. Zachor. Let us mark the grave of Jacob. Let us touch the lives of many other survivors.

~ Michael Danziger is a supporter of *The Blue Card* and child of Holocaust survivors

Michael's fundraiser "A Life Remembered" for Jacob and The Blue Card recipients continues on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/donate/2292070411008063/2292070451008059/>



Holocaust survivor, Jacob Morkowitz (1910-1991)

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## Parents and Grandparents, We are Calling on You!

The Blue Card is looking for Bar and Bat Mitzvah students to participate in The Blue Card's Bnei Mitzvah Project. As middle schoolers prepare for this momentous day, our program provides a meaningful and memorable way to complete an act of Tzedakah. Students have the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust by meeting with a survivor who is a Blue Card recipient, helping them understand the enduring lessons of this tragic history and enable their personal connection to Judaism.

Additionally, students complete their projects by organizing a fundraising project or donating a portion of the monetary presents, to help needy Holocaust survivors served by The Blue Card.

We ask you to spread the word to your family members as well as your congregations.

Check out our new program website [bneimitzvahproject.org](http://bneimitzvahproject.org), or reach out to The Blue Card for more information.



Bnei Mitzvah Project alumni, Suzannah with Holocaust survivor, Dasha R., NYC.

## My Grandmother's Story of Escape and Survival

### *Aviva Gat Shares What Inspired Her New Book*

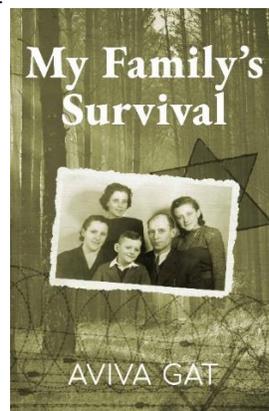
I first came across The Blue Card by accident. Ten years ago, on a whim, I decided I wanted to run the New York City Marathon. It was too late to sign up for the lottery, so running for charity was my only option. I started researching the charities in the marathon, hoping to find

one that resonated with me. That is when I saw The Blue Card. At the time, I wasn't sure if I would follow through with my whim. But after speaking with The Blue Card's Marathon team captain and others involved in the charity, I knew I had to. From then, I became a dedicated supporter of the organization, from running marathons in NYC and Jerusalem, to volunteering with The Blue Card's Young Leadership division.

The reason The Blue Card resonated with me is that my grandmother was a Holocaust survivor. In truth, when I started getting involved with the charity, I didn't know much about my grandmother's story. I knew she escaped the Nazis by hiding in a forest with her brother and his family, but that was about it. A couple years ago, I decided I wanted to know more about her story. Unfortunately, she had passed away by then, but she and other members of her family had recorded their testimonies. I watched and read these testimonies and decided that I wanted to write a book about their experience. Not only is their story incredible and Hollywood-worthy, it also just needs to be told. Every survivor's story needs to be told – especially in today's world, where prejudice runs rampant, and anti-Semitism is on the rise. Those of us who do know what happened in Europe during those dark years must continue to tell the stories and make sure they are passed down for generations to come.

My book, *My Family's Survival*, details the incredible story of how my grandmother and her family escaped the Nazis and survived the Holocaust. It is a powerful tale of luck and resistance during history's darkest hours. It is available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1794470204>

~Aviva Gat



*My Family's Survival* – Aviva Gat

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## Follow @TheBlueCard on Social Media

Make sure to visit @TheBlueCard on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and @bluecard1934 on [Instagram](#), and hit those Like and Follow buttons! We're on a campaign this summer to increase our followers, so also spread the word to your friends and colleagues. And if you see something you like, we'd love if you retweet or share those posts!

## Sign Up for Email Updates

### *Sign Up for Email Updates*

Do we have your email address? Please fill in your information below and mail back to us to make sure you receive all the latest updates from The Blue Card; or Email [milana@bluecardfund.org](mailto:milana@bluecardfund.org) with the subject line "Add me to your email list"

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