

Moving & Shaking: Zane Buzby honored

by Ryan Torok



Zane Buzby. Photo courtesy of CNN

A local hero's work is getting a global spotlight. Last month, CNN heralded Hollywood director and philanthropist/Holocaust survivor advocate Zane Buzby as part of its 2014 CNN Heroes television special.

Buzby is the founder of the Survivor Mitzvah Project (survivormitzvah.org), a Los Angeles-based nonprofit that has provided 2,000 Holocaust survivors across Eastern Europe with financial assistance, friendship and more. Survivors in eight countries, including Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Estonia, Slovakia and parts of Russia, are currently receiving assistance from the organization.

"The saddest thing for me is future generations will look back at 2014 and kids are going to say, 'You mean, there were Holocaust survivors still suffering 75 years after the start of the war?' And we are going to have to say, 'Yes, there were, but when we found out about it, we helped,'" Buzby told the Journal.

The cable network included her as part of a feature that highlighted 12 Americans doing good works helping others. The honorees are "everyday people changing the world," according to cnn.com.

A successful television director, Buzby was inspired to action after a 2001 trip to Eastern Europe in search of her grandparents' birthplace. The excursion into the shtetl-like neighborhoods of Belarus brought her face to face with poverty-stricken, elderly survivors of the Shoah. Since the trip to Belarus, she has spent years donating her own money and collecting funds to send to Eastern European survivors. The organization became a 501(c)3 nonprofit in 2009.

Providing emergency aid to survivors for essentials such as food, heat and medication is just one of many elements of the organization, according to Buzby. By writing personal letters with the help of volunteer translators, her organization also tries to mitigate the loneliness that so many in that community suffer through.

CNN debuted the video segment about Buzby on June 6 and published an accompanying piece, titled "For Holocaust survivors, letters are lifesaving," on its website on June 11.