



The
Survivor
Mitzvah
Project

A New Year... A New Life!

To our kind and compassionate donors,

I feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to visit survivors on our Emergency Aid Expeditions to see first-hand the results of SMP's efforts to help the last Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe. On our recent expedition to Belarus and Lithuania, we visited survivors who have been receiving aid from us since 2005. We were so gratified to find that their lives are dramatically improved.

RIGHT: Mina in 2005 with her first SMP check

When we first met Mina Zalmanovna in Belarus, she was in such poor health we weren't certain she would live even a few more months. She could barely walk, even with canes, couldn't afford the expensive injections she needed for her knees or insulin for her diabetes, or the heart medications she required after suffering several heart attacks. Her apartment had old, drafty windows and the front door was not secure, leaving her at risk.

I still remember her joy and surprise when she received her first SMP stipend. She was overwhelmed with gratitude that people had not forgotten the survivors.

Barely able to speak about her Holocaust experiences, Mina mourns and remembers her family and friends who did not survive, and tries to forget the starvation and the cold she suffered for years as a child:

"We were starving. We ate the crumbs that fell from a horse's mouth...Hunger, bitter cold, lice...my three younger brothers died from this..."

Through your ongoing generosity we have been able to help Mina more throughout the years, addressing her essential needs.



This year, when I knocked on the door to her flat, an energetic Mina greeted us! Her vibrant red hair, the bounce in her step (now walking now without canes), and her vigor and exuberance made her seem much younger than she did ten years ago. She is now enjoying life in her clean, modernized one-room apartment, a far cry from the crumbling interior she used to call home.

Left: Mina Zalmanovna 2016

The funds Mina and hundreds of other survivors receive from SMP provide them with food, heat, medications and support for other critical needs. Mina replaced her old broken windows so she can stay warm in the winter. She also replaced her broken front door so that she is no longer vulnerable to attacks by those who prey on old people living alone. And importantly, she purchased a new stove so she can now cook nutritious meals and even make a cup of hot tea. To let us know how much Mina appreciated this "modern convenience" she cooked a meal for us to make sure we wouldn't be hungry during our travels.

Due to your generosity, many other survivors were also able to purchase new gas stoves, replacing those that were built into walls over 100 years ago, requiring survivors to constantly chop firewood.

Why is this so important? Our housebound survivors can no longer chop wood and haul it indoors. Survivors have sustained serious injuries going outdoors during the icy winter months, attempting to complete this chore. This is no longer an issue for them, due to your help.



BELOW: Old, dangerous stoves (LEFT) are replaced by new stoves (RIGHT) provided by you.



Survivor Raisa Grigorievna lives in this old crumbling hut:



For years Raisa had no indoor plumbing. Thanks to you, she was able to install not only a stove, but a new sink, bathtub, and running water.



Left: Raisa's new facilities, provided by you.

Raisa was also finally able to replace the old outhouse and buckets with proper bathroom facilities. Although the roof still leaks, and the old floorboards are rotting, she says, "Now I feel human."

Raisa and Zane 2016



We are continually reminded that these dramatic life-saving and life-enhancing results are due to your compassion and generosity.

Raisa and Mina both cried as we left, not wanting our visit to end. By the time we arrived back in Los Angeles, a letter from Mina was already waiting for us, written in her signature red ink, with a hand drawn heart, "for everyone."

"Dear Zane, I am so happy we could meet. I recall it, rejoice, and cry, because I understand we may not meet again, because of my very old age. Thank you all for the gifts and money. You are my saviors. Without you I would not be able to buy the things you saw: the iron door, new windows, a gas stove, and medication (especially the expensive knee injections.) My dearest, I constantly recall our meeting, I even see it in my dreams. I can't find enough words to express how grateful I am to all of you for your kind hearts. With kisses, Mina"



**We've helped so many, yet the need is still great.
There are not enough funds to help all of our survivors.
Please give as generously as you are able and urge others to donate as well.**

Donate online at survivormitzvah.org

Text the word GIVING to 41444

Donate by mail:

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