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Dear Friends,

As the New Year approaches, I am happy to report that because of your kindness and compassion, hundreds of Holocaust survivors new to our program are now receiving the help they so desperately need. Because of you, these survivors who only months ago were suffering terribly, have begun the incredible journey of healing, care, and comfort that our other survivors have experienced for years due to your kindness. Only because of you, thousands of elderly Holocaust Survivors are now cared for.

Everyday our mailbox fills with donations from you, our steadfast donors. Individuals and family foundations are the life's blood of *The Survivor Mitzvah Project*, which has always been a grass roots effort. I am moved by your dedication. Over and over you continue to help, continue to stand with the survivors and continue to be part of this urgent humanitarian effort to bring them aid and let each survivor know that they have not been forgotten. We also receive donations from new donors who have heard about *The Survivor Mitzvah Project* and are compelled to help. I am so proud to stand with all of you who prove every day that kindness and compassion are the most important things in life.

This year the crisis for survivors has escalated. Prices for food, medicine, and heat have skyrocketed, yet government pensions for survivors have dropped to as low as \$25 per month, almost twice below the internationally recognized poverty levels for the poorest countries in the world. Most survivors in Eastern Europe are alone, aging in place, without any of the social safety nets available here for the elderly: no Medicare, no assisted living facilities, no nursing homes, no home health aides, no Social Security.

We recently analyzed a data sample of 530 *SMP* survivors to evaluate how best to allocate funds based on these current, escalating needs:

- 69% of survivors do not have enough food
- 73% cannot afford doctors, medications, or surgery
- 48% have mobility issues and are without wheelchairs, elevators or ramps
- 50% need homecare, and help with cleaning, shopping, bathing, cooking. They live in pre-war huts or apartments with crumbling roofs, broken windows and doors, leaving them vulnerable to the elements and easy targets for those who prey on old people living alone
- 66% lost their life savings during Perestroika, leaving them destitute
- 33% are ill due to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster (in Belarus and Ukraine that jumps to 75%)

These are alarming statistics, which is why your help is literally lifesaving.

In certain areas in Eastern Europe there is limited financial help available to some survivors (via Germany or local assistance) but the amount of that financial aid is tragically low. From these sources, survivors receive on average, just \$22 per month, which does not begin to cover current needs:

- 1% of survivors receive \$17.83 per month for dinners. **The rest get nothing, except for your help.**
- 8.9% of survivors get only \$1.07 per month for personal hygiene items (diapers, toilet paper, soap, etc.). **The rest get nothing, except for your help.**
- 2.5% of survivors get \$7 per month for firewood or heating fuel (yet one household needs \$170-200 to cover winter heating costs). **The rest get nothing, except for your help.**
- 47% receive only \$5.96 a month for medications. **The rest get nothing, except for your help.**

Your generous help is critical. By donating to *The Survivor Mitzvah Project* you alleviate suffering for those who have endured a lifetime of pain and neglect. I want you to know that every dollar you donate has a profound, life-changing impact on the last survivors of the Holocaust. They could not live without your help. As Tsyle B. from Ukraine wrote, ***“Without your help, I couldn’t even afford an apple.”***

We need more people like you so we can help more survivors like Tsyle. As our list of survivors in need continues to grow, let’s make sure our funding grows too.

People are now deciding where their year-end charitable contributions will go. Please reach out to others and tell them about your own philanthropic work with *The Survivor Mitzvah Project* and the commitment you have made to help. Most people do not even know that Holocaust survivors are in critical need, they don’t realize that survivors are ill, isolated and alone, lacking the funds for even the basic necessities of life: food medicine, heat and proper shelter. But I know from experience that once people learn about the plight of survivors, just like you and I, they are compelled to help. No one wants to see Holocaust survivors suffer; people just need to know that there is a way they can help them.

Please pass along these 5 donation envelopes to friends, family and colleagues. There are 5 people out there just waiting to help if asked. In this way we can grow to meet the needs of every survivor, one friend, one family member, one family foundation at a time.

We have over ten thousand letters from Holocaust survivors, whose lives you have changed in miraculous ways. I leave you with the words of survivor Anna Israelevna:

“I do not have enough words of gratitude in my vocabulary to thank you for everything you do for me. I don’t know how to thank you for such support. You brought me back to life. Till the end of my days I will be in irredeemable debt to you. Thanks to your organization, The Survivor Mitzvah Project, I stay alive, I am warm, I have food, and because you helped me, I was able to have the operation on my eyes, and now I can see. Without your help, I would be blind. I am thankful to everyone in my “American family”. A low bow to you all for your kindness and humanity.”

Yes, a low bow to you for your generosity and loving kindness. Wishing you a happy, healthy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.

With heartfelt thanks from all of us at *The Survivor Mitzvah Project* and all of the Holocaust survivors you have so generously helped in Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Slovakia, Russia and Ukraine.

Warmest regards,

Zane

Zane Buzby, *The Survivor Mitzvah Project*