



The Survivor Mitzvah Project

"I must thank you for giving me this opportunity to change the lives of Holocaust survivors...to play the role of a 'kind angel.'"

These words were written by our brave courier and guide in Eastern Europe, Liudmila. During our humanitarian trips to Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia, Luda is our guide and translator, and she has become a dear, trusted friend. Many times throughout the year she goes house to house in Grodno and Pinsk, Belarus, delivering your dollars to the elderly Holocaust survivors there.



*We mean it when we say,
"YOUR DONATIONS GO DIRECTLY
INTO THE HANDS OF AN ELDERLY
SURVIVOR."*

At Left: Luda delivering aid. Tomashpol, Ukraine 2010

Under harsh conditions, and in all kinds of weather, we know that our Luda will make sure that each and every Holocaust survivor is cared for by your generosity, and your gift is placed directly into their hands.

After each distribution of funds, Luda writes to us about her visits with elderly survivors:

"When the trip begins I always encourage myself that 'everything will go well. When it comes to an end, I smile to myself, and ask how I could have had any doubts about success? On my way back (six hours in a bus from Pinsk to Grodno) I was thinking of what I will write in a letter to you and came to the conclusion that I must thank you, not only from all those who eagerly waited for me there, but from myself – for giving me this opportunity to change the lives of these people, to support them, to play the role of a 'kind angel.'"

When I come to the door I repeat their name to myself so as not to mistake it, put the broadest smile on my face, and meet the one who opens the door with the warmest words I can imagine. I listen to bits of their news, mostly troubles and diseases, and assure them that everything will be better, that G-d helps them and always thinks of them. I promise to come back and I smile, smile, smile. You know, I get lots of strength and positive energy for myself doing this. After such "trips" I look at the world from a different angle. Actually, I feel much happier. The Survivor Mitzvah Project fills my life with a profound sense of belonging to something meaningful. This is what I wanted to thank you for.

General impressions are beyond any possible words. The people I visit just don't have enough words to thank you. Some said that now they have an opportunity to live (the situation with the lack of medicine and the numerous problems they face is almost unbearable). Often, there were tears in their eyes. Some kissed my hands. Of course, I tried to convince them that I have nothing to do with all this, I'm simply a messenger, but at the same time I am happy to be connected to such a noble all of you great thanks from everybody I visited.

When I first joined the SMP in 2005, some people were afraid to open the door or to talk to me on the phone. They were very suspicious, and asked me what organization I belonged to. Now they meet me as their close friend. If they are able, they prepare dinners, and make tea while they wait for me to arrive. I can also say that I have made new friends, though most of them are almost twice as old as I am.

Usually I start my rounds from the northern end of the city with Anya and her neighbor Sima. Believe me, they have enough grief for a whole bunch of people. These two old women usually wait for me in the yard not to miss the very moment of my appearance. But this time in winter, with temperatures far below zero, they stay inside. The "presents" I bring them from you are saving and prolonging their lives.

Below: Sima and Luda in Pinsk



Sima is alone. Born in 1919, her only daughter died several years ago of cancer. Now her life is just memories of better times when she was not the only one in the world. Sima keeps her three buckets of potatoes (her main winter food supply) on the open balcony. When the frost became unbearable, she had to carry them bit by bit to the corridor to save them. Otherwise she would have to buy expensive ones in winter. Also, there is one more problem – who will bring the potatoes? She doesn't go out and has trouble walking. When it becomes warmer, Sima has a new problem – and must repeat the same route in reverse, because the potatoes will become

rotten in the warmth of the corridor. So she makes this second trip hundreds of times. I tried to imagine a 93-year-old woman carrying these potatoes – how many can she lift at a time?! My eyes became wet.

Two elderly sisters Dasya and Zina are my next stop. They moved to live together, because the younger has to help the elder who is very ill and now walking only leaning on a walker. In their apartment I suddenly felt cold, the temperature there is only a bit warmer than in the snowy street. They wear all the warm clothes they have – jackets, kerchiefs, woolen socks. Your aid enabled them to get the heat turned on and buy needed medication.

I should confess that while visiting people I try not to stay long – my journey distributing your aid takes more than ten hours both ways. However, there is one place where nobody even asks whether I have time or not – Lira's home. She herself is almost 90, ill with an endless list of diseases. She is totally blind from a stroke five years ago on receiving the news of her daughter's death. Her son also died very young. Lira has been a widow for most of her adult life. Her granddaughter, Oxana, works as a nurse in a hospital (believe me, her salary is so low it can hardly be called a salary at all, maybe \$30 a month), and they must care for a small great grandchild who is without a father. They struggle day to day and could not survive without the help of The Survivor Mitzvah Project.

Why do I always stay longer at their place, you ask? Just because they can't imagine it any other way. "You came a long way. You have to rest and eat dinner." Then they serve me soup, fish cooked in two different ways (fried and stewed), some omelet, potato, tea, one cup, then another ...

Trust me, I don't think they have anything substantial to eat every day, but such is the soul of these people who suffered and still suffer more than anyone else – they share what little they have with me. This attitude to other human beings goes from the bottom of their hearts and you simply cannot hurt them, whether you have time or not, you stay and eat and talk with a lump in your throat.

Sadly, over the years, some of our friends have passed away. I think of people like dear Esfir Braylovskaya when I walk the streets of Pinsk. Almost bedridden after a stroke, half paralyzed and barely able to speak, she smiled openly, happy to see me and receive news from her American friends who helped her.

At right: Zane & Esfir (with hand on her heart, as a gesture of thanks)
- SMP Humanitarian Expedition

The money she got from you, prolonged her life.

She used it to pay for better medicine and better food. Because of her condition, she couldn't write letters to send you her personal thanks. But I will always remember her with her hands pressed to where her heart was, in eternal gratitude.



Another one I will never see again is Rakhil Girshevna, born in 1911! A former teacher, living in a tiny one-room flat, she kept her only treasure, a 55-volume set of Lenin's works. This is all she earned during her 50-or-more years of service to the state. With your financial support, she managed to buy bedding, fruit and medicine. Here I must mention a woman with a great soul, Nina S., a neighbor who took care of Rakhil till her last breath. She said, "You see, we lived in one house for more than 40 years; we became like closest relatives." She thanked those from America who have such "great hearts, who are so kind..." to which I answered, "kindness attracts kindness". I thank Nina for her generous heart and selfless labor of making somebody's life easier for so many years.



Right: Nina &
Rakhil Gershevna (age 98)



I also remember Nina B., who used to live nearby. She always went all the way down the stairs to the street to open the entrance door. She was very emotional – no words to express her gratitude to the unknown people who send part of their income to the unknown survivors in Belarus.

At Left: Nina with Liudmila in Belarus

long ago, she fell down and hurt her head and injured her arm. In winter, she is afraid to go out, lest she fall on the icy street, and so waits for some good soul to bring her food or medicine. Your help lets her get caregivers and patronage nurses to visit.

Some blocks away I visit dear Fima, age 89. A quiet woman, who never complains, never speaks about her diseases, which she has plenty of. Her legs hurt and her blood pressure jumps. Not



At Right: Fima

*And down the road, I visit Reyza, who is also ill. **It's without exaggeration that your money from America returned Reiza to life.** Her only relative, her brother, died in 2005 and she didn't want to live anymore. With your aid she was able to buy a gravestone, and got help from a psychiatrist and other doctors. I remember once when I came to visit her, she was crying in despair. The local authorities ordered her to change the old gas stove, threatening to cut off her gas supply. She didn't have money for such a huge purchase. How she sighed when she opened the envelope and saw your gift and exclaimed, "There is G-d and he comes in time!"*

G-d came in time with your aid to Gala in Grodno. Bedridden for more than five years because of progressing diabetes, she can now pay for a caregiver not only during the daytime, but also in the evenings. Being absolutely helpless, when she is alone, she falls off her bed, needs medication and is simply thirsty very often. Now there is somebody to offer her a glass of water.

Visiting Genya who is in her 90s, I noticed important improvements. She changed her old cracked door and windows to modern plastic ones! This was made possible by The Survivor Mitzvah Project, of course. Where else could the lonely old woman expect such help from? Now, without a doubt, her apartment will be warm in winter, saving her from colds and flu.

And there is poor Fanya, blind and immobile, who all day long sits in an arm-chair waiting for her son, Misha, to come home from work to feed, wash and dress her. **The aid from SMP came just in time. Now there is a nurse taking care of her during the day.**

And finally, 99-year-old Rachil F., who lives in a decrepit hostel for poor people. While visiting, I saw how lonely and forgotten she feels there and how much she needs nutritious food, which she doesn't receive there. When money from America arrives, Rachil's life is brightened with colors. She can pay people to bring her juice, fruit and the fresh berries she likes so much, medications for her blood pressure, and she can hire a nurse who helps her take a bath. She gets attention and doesn't feel so lonely! And always she is in a state of disbelief, that somebody in America, thousands of miles away, is thinking about her.

*Dear Survivor Mitzvah Project supporters, thank you for giving me
a chance to do something I am proud to be a part of.*

I pass along words of great gratitude from all the people you help.

You do the right thing – you save peoples' lives.

- Lúdmíla"

Luda writes about just a few of the more than 2000 elderly survivors we are trying to help through donations. Please remember that in Eastern Europe there is no Medicare, no health insurance, and nothing like "Assisted Living" for these elderly people who have fallen through the cracks.

Only we can make a difference. Please be as generous as you can.

And please tell at least one other person about *The Survivor Mitzvah Project*.

With great thanks to all of you who are taking part in this urgent humanitarian effort,

**Zane
Zane Buzby**

*The Survivor Mitzvah Project is a 501c3 non-profit organization.
All donations are tax deductible to the full extent allowable by law.*

Watch our humanitarian expeditions at: www.youtube.com/user/SurvivorMitzvah

Contact us: (800) 905-6160 survivormitzvah@gmail.com

Donate online at: www.survivormitzvah.org or send a check to:

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