



Holocaust Survivors Oral Health Program

Program Guardians

The Claire Friedlander Family Foundation
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"Because of what they went through then,
helping now isn't a matter of choice -
it's a matter of conscience."

AO-HSC PROGRAM NEWS

Livia Horovitz My Survivor Story

As told to Komal Khokhar, program summer intern

Livia Horovitz is 85 years old, resides in Bellmore, New York (Long Island), and is a patient in the Alpha Omega-Henry Schein Cares Holocaust Survivors Oral Health Program. Growing up in Hungary, she encountered innumerable traumatic experiences. At the tender age of six, life suddenly transformed for Livia and her family. They lived in 'ghettos' where twenty people were in one room and isolated from normal living conditions, the food and the water supply were inadequate, and they were restricted from going outside the ghetto. She and her family, as well as the people who also boarded the small room, ate whatever was available. She said, "I remember eating grass to survive after witnessing a plethora of people die from starvation and dehydration."

When she was in a concentration camp, the same thing happened to a very good friend of hers. Livia offered the girl grass; however, it was too late; she passed away in Livia's arms. Livia, like many other Holocaust survivors, never imagined she would not see her close relatives again. Some of Livia's relatives died in the gas chambers, while others were fortunate to escape to countries like Egypt, Canada, and Australia. This gave Livia more hope to not give up the fight for a better life. She and her friend attempted to cross the Hungary-Austria border, where Soviet soldiers caught them and demanded they return home. Admittedly, they lied to survive, made another attempt to escape, and ran into her mother's old friend, who set them off with his son, Tibor, and cousins on a train. But this success did not come easy. She shared how they were not prepared to walk in freezing temperatures and always feared the guards would catch them.

Tibor and Livia became very close and developed feelings for each other. And because Tibor was afraid they would not survive this arduous journey he planned to propose to her. As Livia was about to enter a new life she had dreamt of for many years, her sole focus was on crossing the border.

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Livia was happily married for
63 years to her husband Tibor.



Meet Donor: Jonathan T. Eskow

Eskow Law Group

Jonathan Eskow is the Founder and lead attorney of Eskow Law Group. Jonathan and his team at Eskow Law Group work closely with hundreds of dentists, group practices and DSOs throughout the country across a wide range of areas, including practice transitions, DSO partnerships, employment agreements and corporate structuring. Having grown up in a family of dentists, Jonathan has a unique understanding of the business and practical needs of his dentist and DSO clients. Jonathan lives in Brookline, Massachusetts with his wife, three kids and a dog.

How did you learn about the Alpha Omega-Henry Schein Cares Holocaust Survivors Oral Health Program?

I learned about the program from one of my clients, Dr. Steve Spitz (SmileBoston). Dr. Spitz participates in the program in Boston, MA and as soon as he mentioned what it was and what he was doing to support Holocaust survivors from an oral health standpoint, I knew I had an obligation to help as well – even if I could not provide the actual dental care.

What attracted you to the Alpha Omega-Henry Schein Cares Holocaust Survivors Oral Health Program?

Both of my maternal grandparents were Holocaust survivors, and they are the two biggest heroes in my life. The pain they endured, losses they experienced and sacrifices they made to persevere and survive are the reasons I am here today. The least I can do is support an organization that seamlessly blends my family's history with my professional career.

Does anyone in your life play a role in supporting your involvement? In providing inspiration?

Supporting Holocaust Survivor-related initiatives has always been important to my family and there was no greater inspiration needed beyond my grandparents. They were real-life superheroes who survived numerous labor/death camps, came to America with nothing, and built up a rich life through a simple combination of hard work and kindness that was built upon a foundation of strong family values and integrity that gave me the opportunity to become the person I am today. Every Survivor's story is so different yet so similar. Each time a Survivor is helped or cared for I feel like we are in turn helping my grandparents.

What do you wish others knew about the program?

Frankly, I wish more people knew about the program itself. I know of many dentists and potential donors who would probably love to support this cause but may not know enough about it. Unfortunately, this program will not go on forever, but as Survivors continue to get older and older, the least we can do is collectively provide the comfort and dignity of healthy teeth and overall oral healthcare to this cherished population of heroes.



This is the story of survival and resilience of my grandparents, Marsha and George Goldrich.

My grandfather, George Goldrich, was born in Annapol, Poland on March 3, 1926. He was born into a loving, working-class family and had two brothers and two sisters. When the Nazis invaded Poland, he was forced into the Budzin concentration camp, which would be just the first of eleven different labor/death camps where he would end up imprisoned at various times during the war. He was a strong



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Shalom!

It is hard to believe that summer is over and that we will soon celebrate Rosh Hashana 5783! Most of you know that since the start of the pandemic, I have been working remotely. I recently left the DC area and am now residing in NYC. The business address only for the AO-HSC Holocaust Survivors Oral Health Program:

Alpha Omega Dental Society
Holocaust Survivors Dental Program
PO Box 286332
New York, NY 10128

My cell phone remains the same: 240-876-3330. In addition, the AO-HSC dental program website is being updated! Stay tuned.

The last several years have been challenging for all of us, and 2022 is no exception. Not only are we coping with new Covid variants, antisemitism, gun violence, soaring inflation, and monkeypox, but the war between Ukraine and Russia continues. Ukrainian Holocaust survivors find themselves fleeing their homes for a second time! Estimates are that at the time of the Holocaust, about 1.5 million Ukrainian Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis and Nazi collaborators. One of the largest mass shootings of World War II was at Baby Yar in Kyiv, September 29-30, 1941. Read about Maya Gumirov's (Chicago social services) family history page 7.

Despite all, the dental program continues to treat Holocaust survivors in need. This program was originally a three-year pilot that started in 2015. We are nearly completing eight years, and survivors have received dental care valued at over \$4.3 million. To all the: dentists and dental office staff, social service agencies, dental laboratories,



Bernice Edelstein

corporate partners, philanthropic partners, and donors, thank you for your commitment and participation. We could not run this program without you. A huge shout-out and heartfelt thanks to my Executive Committee!

I would like to also thank Jonathan Eskow for participating in providing his family story, page 2, and my summer intern, Komal Khokhar, for assisting me with this newsletter.

From my family to you and yours, best wishes for a Shana Tova U'metukah! May we all be inscribed in the Book of Life for a happy, healthy, and peaceful New Year.

Bernice Edelstein
Program Manager

If you have any suggestions for the newsletter including items for submission (stories and/or photos) please contact me at bedelstein@ao.org

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teenager at the time and survived by combining guile with an innate ability to achieve proficiency in multiple different vocations ranging from working in the kitchen to working as a mason. In 1945, he was in Dachau when all prisoners still alive were abruptly packed into freight trains and transported out of Germany and into Austria as the Nazis fled the Allied Forces. He and a few similarly aged young men he had befriended ran away and for the next few weeks lived in vacant barns on the edges of town until they were able to see with their own eyes the tanks belonging to the Allied Forces rolling by signifying freedom.

My grandmother, Marsha Goldrich, was born a few years later (the specific date is unknown) into an upper-middle-class family with five siblings – four sisters and a brother. They lived in a small town south of Vilna in a small house that they owned on many acres near a lake. In 1939, the Russians invaded their town, and her family was split up. Her mother and three of her sisters were taken to Stutthoff Concentration Camp where they were murdered shortly upon arrival. Her brother escaped to Russia to fight with the Russians. My grandmother and her other sister were imprisoned in various labor camps, ghettos, and at a German farm. They endured long marches with no food or shoes in the winters and overcame serious bouts of typhoid. Finally, they were liberated by the Allied Forces.

Soon after being liberated by the Allied Forces, my grandfather returned to his hometown and to the home he grew up in. However, during the war his home and all their possessions had been stolen by their non-Jewish Polish neighbors. Upon showing his face at the front door, he was gruffly told that if he did not leave immediately, he would be killed. My grandmother had a similar experience upon returning to her hometown, but with the help of some old neighbors, she was at least able to find her brother, who had passed through their hometown a week earlier on a search for any family survivors. Given their treatment in Poland, neither of my grandparents wanted to stay in that country, so they coincidentally ended up in a Displaced

Persons camp in Mittenwald, Germany. It just so happens that my grandmother's brother and my grandfather became leaders and then subsequently friends within the Displaced Persons camp. That is how my grandparents met, and only a few short years later, in 1948, they were married under a chuppah in the Displaced Persons camp. This began a lifetime together filled with unconditional love,



commitment to family and achievement of dreams that ironically arose in the aftermath of a time during which so much love, family and dreams had been cruelly torn away from them.

In August 1950 (two years after they were married and about five years after they were liberated), my grandparents were finally able to immigrate to America. At the time, it was not easy to come to America. After numerous efforts, my grandmother was able to make contact with a cousin in Boston, Massachusetts, and the cousin agreed to sponsor their immigration to America. Once in America, my grandparents settled in Dorchester, Massachusetts, where my grandfather began his career working as a butcher (when he arrived in America, he was asked what trade he wanted to practice – he answered by asking what trade paid the most money, and when he was told it was a butcher, there were no other options in his mind). They soon had two daughters (one of whom is my mother, Karen) and then later relocated to Brookline, Massachusetts where they lived happily for just about the rest of their lives.



We Need You!

Volunteer your time and talent to treat a survivor through the AO-HSC dental program. Nearly one-third of Holocaust survivors live at or below the poverty level, making it nearly impossible to access the care they need. Restore a smile, you will be glad you did! Pictured to right is Dr. Gail Schupak, AO International Dental Society President; Bernice Edelstein, Program Manager; Dr. Jaqueline Winter, NYC dental provider; and Dr. Rada Sumareva, NY Ambassador.



Winning Smiles

Dr. Matthew Zizmor
Boston



Dr. Victor Siegel
Washington, DC area



Dr. Alina Lukashevsky
New York City



Meet Maya Gumirov

Survivor Services Director- CJE

Senior Life, Chicago, Illinois

Maya has been with CJE since 2014 and provides clinical case management to Holocaust survivors. She oversees intake, referrals and other services. The AO-HSC dental program partnered with the agency and since the start of the program in 2015, dentists have provided \$615,355 in oral care to Chicago area survivors. Below is Maya's forward from Volume II of Never Heard, Never Forget, a collection of narratives in memoriam and honor of Chicago Russian-speaking survivors.

From the Editor

I was born many years after World War II. I never saw my grandfather Moisey Vakhnenko, after whom I was named Maya as he died of multiple wounds shortly after the victory. My father, Aleksey Vakhnenko, along with his mother, brother, and sister, fled from Rokitnoe, Kiev region, a few days before the Germans entered Kiev. My father survived the evacuation, but later he learned that most of his family, including his grandfather and grandmother, had left for Babiy Yar. To my great sadness, even today, I still know too little about my grandfather, a World War II hero, about his parents killed in Babiy Yar, and about my father's evacuation to Fergana, Uzbekistan. When I was growing up in the former Soviet Union, it was simply not customary to talk about it.

My other grandfather, World War II veteran Zakhar Khondrash, died on May 9, 1987, when he was getting ready to attend a Victory Day parade—his heart stopped as he was putting on his military uniform decorated with medals. Grandfather Zakhar never talked about the war. He usually brushed off all questions about the war, saying, "In war, nothing interesting—blood, pain, death."

Only a few years ago, while researching Russia's military archives, I learned that my grandfather Zakhar was a Voroshilov rifleman and an excellent sniper; in just a single operation in enemy territory, he killed sixty-one German occupiers. His commander recommended that my grandfather receive the Order of the Red Star for his bravery and skill in battle; however, he never received this honor. Instead, someone had crossed out the Order's name on the presentation and substituted for Medal of Glory, a less prestigious award. I am still trying to understand why the army headquarters did not agree with the commander's recommendation. Who authorized the change, and why was it necessary to downplay the merits of the brave sniper? Alas, I will never get the answers to many questions that torment me. Neither my grandfathers nor my father had time to tell me, and I did not insist.

When I was growing up, the Holocaust was not talked about in the USSR. In the history lessons at school, the extermination of Jews in Nazi-occupied Soviet territories was discussed only in the general context of the deaths of Soviet citizens. In the former USSR, as many of you know,



the history of the Great Patriotic War always received great attention. An endless stream of films, books, television programs, and songs were forever imprinted on the collective memory of the people, with such themes as so-called Soviet patriotism, the general suffering of the Soviet people, and the military glory of the victorious heroes. However, the official and generally accepted version of the history of the war, carefully constructed by Soviet ideologists, did not tell about the 500,000 Jews who fought in the Red Army nor about Holocaust victims and survivors.

The USSR carefully hushed up information about what happened in the first months of the Great Patriotic War, a phenomenon called "the forgotten Holocaust." Immediately after German troops invaded the republics of the Soviet Baltic states, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and then Russia, the Germans began to implement a program that was called the "final solution to the Jewish question." In these occupied territories the Holocaust unfolded at a particularly accelerated pace and was accompanied by cruelty. The Germans did not bother to construct ghettos or camps. People were killed in the streets and outskirts of their own cities, in their homes, schools, and synagogues. By the end of 1942, when the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

MEET MAYA GUMIROV continued

full-scale extermination of European Jews began, half of the victims of the Holocaust had already been eliminated on Soviet territory.

The fact that the bulk of the mass punitive actions were directed against Jews was silenced for ideological reasons. As the captured territories were liberated, the Soviet authorities were aware of both the problem of collaborationism and the widespread extermination of Jews in the occupied territories, but clearly the level of antisemitism in the country was already so high that it was considered appropriate to conceal the truth that Jews were the main victims during the occupation. With the beginning of the policy of state antisemitism in 1948, and for many decades beyond, the atrocities against Jews were skillfully “hidden” in the archives, and the number of Jews killed by the Germans in the territory of the USSR became a state secret. The rulers apparently decided that to emphasize the suffering of the Jews would diminish the significance of the sacrifice made by the Soviet people. That is why, until recently, plaques on the official monuments erected in the places of mass executions of Jews proclaimed only that “peaceful Soviet citizens” were buried there. I cannot stop thinking that whoever reversed the recommendation that my grandfather receive the Order of the Red Star simply decided that such a distinguished award should not be given to a Jewish soldier.

Antisemitism and silence about the genocide of the Jewish people have always been the cornerstones of state policy in the former USSR. They were the reasons my family came to the United States in 1995. Thousands came before and after us. Given the passage of time and the experience of life in the United States of America, many people realized that keeping silent about the Shoah implies consent to the willful destruction and suffering of a people. Twenty or more years have passed since I first met Holocaust survivors Matus Stolov, Yakov Zakon, and Stella Sokolovskaya. At the same time, the journalists and publishers of the newspaper Reklama undertook the mission that gave profound meaning and purpose to their work: to preserve the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust as well as the stories of those who survived it and remained silent for so many years.

It was then that the idea of the “Never Forget” project was born. Enthusiasts from the Reklama newspaper and “Witnesses of the Holocaust” leaders organized volunteers from our community who devoted all their free time to collecting, preserving, and disseminating the memories of witnesses to the crimes of the Nazi regime. We recorded dozens of never-before-told stories that were included in three photo albums dedicated to the memory of Holocaust victims and survivors from the Russian-speaking Jewish community in Chicago. The stories also generated a growing awareness of what Soviet Jews experienced during the fascist occupation and of how this information was deliberately and skillfully hidden.

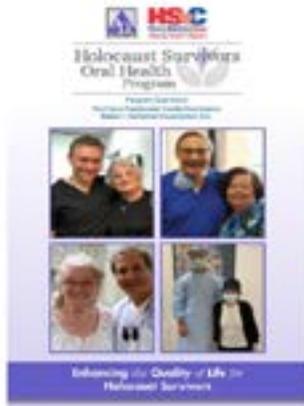
Later, volunteers from the Russian Jewish Division of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago and the staff of Holocaust Community Services at CJE SeniorLife joined this project. We recorded every story we heard in Russian and translated it into English. We engaged the Illinois Holocaust Museum to partner with us, in addition to the many community contributors.

We also had the opportunity to work with materials collected during oral history interviews by Professor Elliot Lefkowitz and survivor Gdalina Novitsky. Professor Lefkowitz had been doing survivors recordings at the Museum for many years, and these new narratives of survivors from the FSU especially became the basis for several dozen never-before-told stories.

Many Holocaust survivors had never shared their experiences with anyone, not even those closest to them. Consequently, meetings between a survivor and a volunteer-listener often became the beginning of a new friendship; in many instances, the interviews helped Holocaust survivors realize that they were ready to tell their stories to other people, including their children and their grandchildren. Many times, we have heard that our project—later renamed “Never Heard—Never Forget,”—“opened the eyes” of family members who never suspected what their loved ones had endured.

This project also inspired Russian-speaking Chicagoans from all over the former Soviet Union to begin writing down their family histories and commemorating their loved ones through interviews, literary stories, meetings with schoolchildren and students, Yad Vashem memorial plaques, and other means. For people who had never been recognized in their home country as Holocaust survivors and who remained silent about something so painful, this opportunity to tell the truth has become a necessity and a duty.

I regret that both my grandfathers, who went through the war, and my father, a survivor of the Holocaust, will never tell their stories and the story of my family who died in Ukraine and Poland. While working on this book, however, I realized that to some extent my personal story is the history of my people and that we never again will allow it to be hidden or silenced.



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Tibor was about to ask her to be his wife, when her friend suddenly and elatedly exclaimed, “she will marry you; she will marry you!”

Livia and her family arrived in the United States via airplane, which Livia recounted as “being lucky” because others before her had a long journey as they commuted on ships. Her generous aunt lived in the Bronx and offered to accommodate Livia in her house along with Tibor. “I arrived on Thursday afternoon; by Monday morning, I had a job at a doll factory. I was very grateful,” recounts Livia.

Livia expressed profound gratitude to the oral health care professionals for their benevolent services. Dr. Andrew Rutman, a general dentist, initially treated Livia, and after he retired, Dr. Ishwarpreet Singh continues to provide care, and Dr. Kenneth Kobliner provides periodontal treatment. She had significant dental issues, as she describes that, “back in Hungary during and immediately after the invasion, the country was depleted of the

necessary sources to upkeep dental care.” Unfortunately, deprived of wholesome nutrition and essential vitamins that are so important for good oral health, Livia’s oral health suffered. It is not unusual for Holocaust survivors to have received little or no dental care throughout their childhoods. However, Livia said, “Due to the good oral care she receives from the Alpha Omega-Henry Schein Cares Holocaust Survivor Oral Health Program, her life has improved even more as she is able to eat better and have a quality of life free of the complications of oral ailments.”

Komal Khokhar

I am Komal Khokhar, recently graduated from Hofstra University with a Bachelor of Health Science degree. It is an honor to be this year’s summer intern at the Alpha Omega-Henry Schein Cares Holocaust Survivors Oral Health Program. Throughout my undergraduate career, I was able to gain invaluable insights into how health care differs across our country, and now I think it is time to work together to make a better system of care—one that ensures every patient receives the best of what medicine has to offer each and every time!

From volunteer work in underserved communities to employment in the dental office and learning through academic exploration, I have thought carefully and had the chance to find my professional interests, which lay in the field of dental medicine. Although a dentist is part of the larger healthcare team, access to this type of healthcare is

limited in many areas. I passionately want to work towards bridging this gap between accessible health and dental care, especially in underserved areas of our country.

It is one of the main reasons I found my way to the Alpha Omega-Henry Schein Cares Holocaust Survivors Oral Health Program, which encourages the practice of giving back to our community and serving others. I saw the impactful difference dental professionals make in the lives of their patients, as this program provides pro bono oral care to Holocaust survivors who are vulnerable to complicated health issues. These initiatives in our community have enhanced the quality of life for many Holocaust survivors contributing to building stronger communities and a better tomorrow.

In this desensitized world, I believe that humanity comes first. I am hoping that from here, I will emerge as a more experienced healthcare professional ready to serve the medical needs of society.



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