

Creative License



Peter Incantalupo's family consists of five. The Syosset residents park these cars in the driveway so it reads "INCANTALUPO 5."



Frank Loiacono bought his first new car, a Hyundai Genesis, but doesn't get to drive it much while he's away at college. But when the West Islip resident comes home, he says he loves taking it out for a drive. "Feels like I'm 'swaggin,'" he says.

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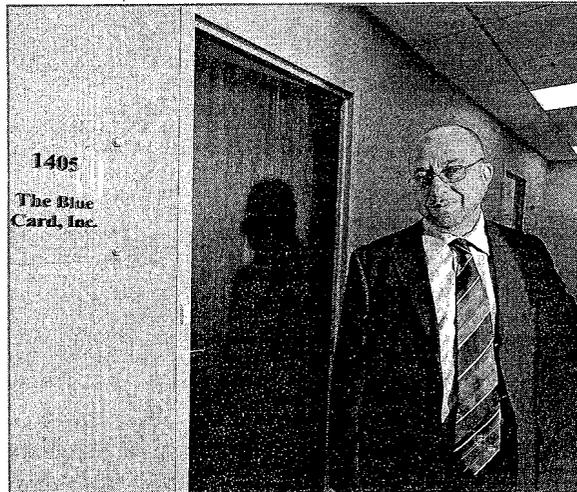
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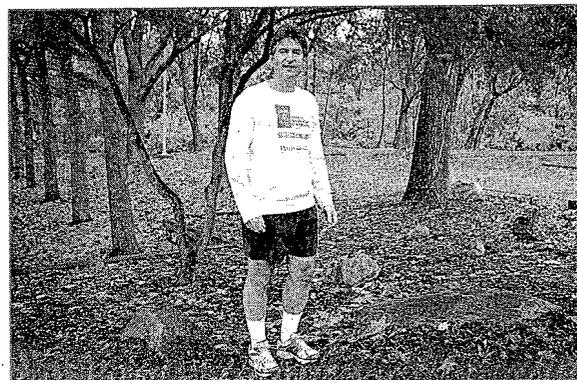
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STILL PROVIDING FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

For 77 years, Blue Card has helped indigent Jews through donations



Elie Rubenstein is executive director of The Blue Card, which was started in Germany in 1934. Arnold Breitbart, below, of Great Neck, ran the New York City Marathon on Nov. 6 on behalf of The Blue Card. His father jumped off a train bound for the Treblinka camp, and spent much of the war hiding under a stable.



BY CLAUDIA GRZYVATZ COPQUIN
Special to Newsday

In 1944, Judith S. became an orphan and an only child. "My father was taken away, my brother was taken away, I never saw them again. I was 12 years old," said the Holocaust survivor. "I was left all alone."

It all began when Germany occupied Hungary and the Nazis began deporting Budapest Jews older than 16 to concentration camps. Soon thereafter, remaining Jews were rounded up and ordered to the newly established Budapest Jewish ghetto. It was while walking to the Pest ghetto with multitudes of others that Judith said she scurried off, unnoticed. Eventually, she found shelter and aid with the Swiss Red Cross.

Now 79, Judith, a Long Island resident, is on her own again, and once again in need of assistance.

This time she is getting it from an organization founded decades ago and oceans away but now based in Manhattan — The Blue Card. The nonprofit is funded specifically to help Judith and fellow Holocaust survivors who are indigent.

Last year, New York State was home to 38,000 Holocaust survivors, according to the UJA-Federation of New York, a philanthropic organization. A UJA survey in 2002 — the latest year for its figures — showed about 3,400 Holocaust survivors living in Nassau and

Suffolk counties. Many survivors are in ill health and are struggling with poverty.

"It's estimated that about one-third [nationally] live below the poverty level," said Elie Rubenstein, executive director of The Blue Card, the only organization of its kind in the United States whose sole mission is to provide financial assistance to destitute Holocaust survivors.

Last year, The Blue Card gave close to \$1.3 million in grants to more than 1,800 Holocaust survivors in the United States, two-thirds of whom live in the New York area.

Rubenstein said that of the about 127,000 Holocaust survivors in this country, three-quarters are older than 75 and about two-thirds live alone. Many of them struggle to afford basic needs, such as adequate food and health care; more than half fall 200 percent below the federal poverty line, meaning they earn less than \$21,660 annually.

All the organization's clients come by referral from other social service agencies.

Program started in 1934

When The Blue Card was founded by German Jews in 1934, it offered financial support to those being persecuted by the Nazis. As a way of maintaining records, an issued blue card was stamped whenever a recipient got a donation. The organization was re-established in New York between 1939 and 1940, Rubenstein said.

Over the years, The Blue Card has provided more than

PHOTO BY STEVEN SUNSHINE

PHOTO BY JEREMY BALES



PHOTO BY NANCY BOROWICK

To learn more

The Blue Card

- All the organization's clients come by referral from other social service agencies and must avail themselves of all public entitlements and benefits for which they are eligible to qualify for Blue Card financial aid.
- It's a four-star Charity Organization, the highest rating given by Charity Navigator, which evaluates more than 5,000 charities on the effectiveness of their day-to-day operations and their ability to sustain programs over time.
- To learn how you can help, visit bluecardfund.org or call 212-239-2251

The Holocaust

- Visit The Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County in Glen Cove. The museum also examines current genocides and intolerance.
- For more information, go to holocaust-nassau.org

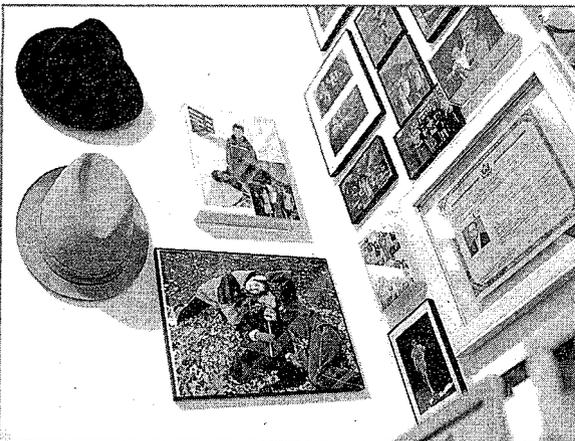
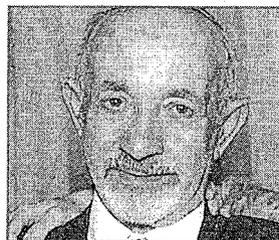


PHOTO BY NANCY BOROWICK



COURTESY OF MOGILNIK FAMILY

Nina Mogilnik, top, of Great Neck, has raised money for The Blue Card to honor her father, above, who survived the atrocities of the Nazis thanks to a Polish farmer. Mogilnik has decorated a room with memories of her father, including his old hats.

the organization. "As a child of survivors, The Blue Card has a special place in my heart," said Arnold Breitbart of Great Neck, who has raised thousands of dollars for the organization.

Breitbart, a plastic surgeon, ran the New York City Marathon on Nov. 6 on behalf of The Blue Card, an official charity of the marathon for the past three years. His late father, Morris Breitbart, was a teenager in Poland when the family was suddenly ousted from the Lodz ghetto and put on a train bound for the Treblinka concentration camp. Morris made a daring leap off the train and spent much of the war hiding in a hole under a stable in a small village.

His mother, Lucy, along with other members of her family, first hid in Poland before they were all sent to Siberia for much of the war, after the Russians invaded Poland, Breitbart said.

Nina Mogilnik, also of Great Neck, has raised money for the group to honor her father, who died in 2006. Jakob Mogilnik and a few family members survived the atrocities of the Nazis thanks to a Polish farmer who risked his life to keep them hidden. "The farmer said, 'We will survive together or all die together,'" Mogilnik recounted tearfully.

Mogilnik, who is executive

director of the Child Welfare Fund, and Breitbart were part of a marathon team of 65 runners from the United States, Argentina, Israel, South Africa, Australia, United Kingdom and Brazil. They raised about \$230,000 for The Blue Card this year.

Holidays, birthday money

The Blue Card does more than help Holocaust survivors with life's expenses. The organization also provides stipends for Hanukkah and Passover, sends clients money on their birthdays and sends them away on summer vacations.

"They do whatever they can," said Judith. "This spring I spent a very nice week at a timeshare at Gurney's Inn!"

That timeshare was one of several donated to the organization by Larry Goldstein of Roanoke, Va., who said he wants to contribute in some way, because "I have great empathy for what these people went through."

The ranks of survivors still alive to enjoy such generosity are dwindling, a detail Mogilnik and others said makes it imperative to help the group now.

Despite their financial difficulties, Rubenstein stresses that Holocaust survivors are not alone in their struggles.

"We, as a community, have a last chance to make a difference in their lives," he said.

\$20 million in aid to survivors, including providing psychological and psychiatric support to survivors' children, according to the group's website. With just two full-time employees, overhead, which is covered by legacy revenues and investment income, is low, allowing 100 percent of donations to go directly to those in need.

One of The Blue Card's main charity programs is emergency cash assistance for clients who can't pay their rent, mortgage or electric and heating bills.

"All I have is my Social Security income," confides Judith, who has been a Blue Card client for

15 years. Though she said she is comfortable in a one-bedroom apartment, she said she often can't pay her monthly expenses.

Paying for medication

Besides covering living expenses, funds are distributed for dental and vision care, medications and medical expenses. Holocaust survivors are particularly vulnerable to health problems, Rubenstein says, citing a 2009 Israeli study linking higher cancer rates among European Jews who went to Israel after the Holocaust, than among those who immigrated there before or during the war.

"I found out about the organization in 1987," said Irene H., 73, also a Long Islander. She had been diagnosed with a serious illness and, because she could no longer work, was in desperate financial straits. As a young child, Irene was held in the Auschwitz concentration camp, where Dr. Josef Mengele conducted sadistic experiments on children.

Though she is in ill health, Irene said she is thankful for The Blue Card, which has helped her with mortgage payments and other financial emergencies.

It's not only those in need of assistance who are grateful for