

Recap of past local Jewish Federation Holocaust Survivor Day events

Palm Beach County, FL

Ferd & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service (Alpert JFS) held our inaugural Palm Beach County Holocaust Survivor Day at Temple Shaarei Shalom in Boynton Beach on Sunday, June 26th, 2022. The celebration began at 3 pm, with approximately 50 Holocaust survivors and their spouses and caregivers, in attendance for this joyous occasion, where we celebrated and honored their lives, strength, and resilience. It was a day of joy and celebration, not a time for mourning or condemnation of the Nazis. Survivors represent the best of the human spirit, and we celebrated them that day with love, honor, laughter, and song.

The afternoon began with a warm welcome from Alpert JFS CEO Marc Hopin and immediate past President and Board Chair Zelda Mason, followed by Dr. Elaine Rotenberg. She led us in singing the Star-Spangled Banner and Hatikvah anthems. This portion of the event led into the announcement that June 26th has been proclaimed Holocaust Survivor Day in Palm Beach County. Greg Weiss, Vice-Mayor of Palm Beach County, presented this proclamation. The celebration continued with live entertainment and singing, followed by a hot Kosher dinner and dessert. Alpert JFS was to present commemorative certificates to each survivor in honor of their strength and resilience, with certificates to be mailed to our survivor clients who are not in attendance. The event was on Zoom live for all our survivor clients to share in the joy and celebration. Our Holocaust care managers attended with other staff members to ensure that our survivors were comfortable, socialized, and enjoyed the day.

Instead of certificates, they had medal coins made. The coins were not ready when the event took place due to supply chain issues. When they came in, we had care managers visit the survivors and present them with their medals. The medals came in a very nice box along with a card signed by Alpert JFS's CEO and with the logos of the other organizations involved in Holocaust Survivor Day. The medals had a great impact. The survivors appreciated the quality of the gift in recognition of Holocaust Survivor Day and some see the medals as an affirmation of their status as victims of Nazi atrocities. They were visibly made happy, some brought to tears, when they received the medal.

We took pictures of the survivors with their medals. You can see some of the pictures here.

<https://www.alpertjfs.org/photo-gallery-holocaust-survivors-honored-with-medals/>.



When we tried to take a picture of a few of the survivors they said no, I am not properly dressed. They insisted we come back another day for their picture. They wanted to look their best for the picture.

The medal, rather than a certificate, is something they can pass on to a family member and remain in the family for years to come.

Cleveland, OH

https://www.jewishcleveland.org/news/blog/supporting_caring_for_and_celebrating_survivors/

We wanted to organize a party for Holocaust Survivor Day that was going to be fun and celebratory. We were having the party around the time of year typically when high school seniors have their proms so we thought it would be really to have our own “senior prom”. Most, if not all of our clients never had an opportunity to experience a prom back when they were 18 so we wanted to recreate it for them in a way. We decided early on that we wanted to have the event in the beautiful atrium space at Green Rd Synagogue because of its significance to survivors in our community (it was actually founded by survivors many years ago). We organized a rat pack cover band, festive decorations, corsages, a photo booth, gift bags, etc....and encouraged survivors to wear their fanciest attire. We arranged a lovely catered lunch and invited everyone to stay for dancing afterwards. We thought of everything down to the smallest details. Everyone had a blast.

Chicago, IL

Chicago has an aging community of over 1,500 survivors, many originally from the former Soviet Union. It has celebrated Holocaust Survivor Day for several years as a Kavod Shef grantee. The community has seen lots of success in partnering with musical groups to plan large-scale events where survivors can enjoy art, food, etc. in the company of peers. Special care ensures that programming caters to the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of each guest. Holocaust Community Services (HCS) invited survivors to an in-person event by email and verbally during support group sessions in advance of the event. Attendees were asked to RSVP, and indicate if they needed transportation assistance which HCS would have provided. For the event, 30 survivors enjoyed a celebration of their remarkable lives, while listening to music and enjoying lunch. One survivor who attended had been struggling with increased social isolation and feeling disconnected from his community. At the luncheon he met another survivor who also enjoys playing chess, which they now do together regularly - a lovely connection formed from the



celebration. Note that this was one of the first in-person events the program had hosted since the pandemic began.

Rochester, NY

Rochester has a tight-knit community of over 100 survivors, many originally from the former Soviet Union. It has celebrated Holocaust Survivor Day for several years as a Kavod Shef grantee. The diverse circumstances and needs of local survivors require a multi-faceted approach to reach every individual in a meaningful capacity. One particularly successful strategy that Rochester has levered for HSD pairs a delivery model for everyone with in-person programming for the most mobile community members. For example, a network of volunteers has delivered a meal/plant and a gift card to each survivor in advance of a luncheon for those able to attend. This structure allows for direct contact and connection—regardless of capacity for travel, etc. Rochester hopes to continue offering these and other hybrid options to forge lasting relationships among survivors and their supporters throughout the city.

