

M'Yad L'Yad

Enhancing lives through uniquely personal
yet anonymous giving



JANUARY, 2008

M'YAD L'YAD NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 11

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A Message From Our President

A Note In A Box

More than 150,000 Long Islanders are living below the poverty level, and similar numbers are considered to be near-poor. What do we do to help our neighbors? I know there are no easy answers or magic solutions. For nine years M'Yad L'Yad-Helping Hands has been trying to alleviate this pain by providing items to our recipients which their incomes just don't allow, e.g., an extra pair of underwear, admission to a movie theater, a gift card to buy fresh fruit at the grocery, etc. You, our sponsors, have been diligent and generous in helping our recipients have a little better life. For this, we thank you wholeheartedly.

What has become more apparent is that as much as the recipient appreciates and welcomes the items the sponsor sends, a letter or note from the sponsor, enclosed in the box, is just as important and eagerly awaited. This little piece of paper is often the lifeline to a world recipients feel has abandoned them. We who are not recipients often find it difficult to understand the isolation poverty imposes.

Letters or notes from the recipients to the sponsors frequently say, "I can't believe you

care," or "I don't feel so alone anymore. Your letter gives me hope." These notes are you extending a hand in friendship to someone in real need. The sending of personal correspondence is a recognition that our hearts need nourishing as well as our bodies.

So, I implore all our sponsors to take the time to enclose a note to their recipients when they send a package. Talk about the weather and how you are dealing with it. Talk about how your child or grandchild is growing. Talk about a book you read or a new recipe you tried. ASK questions. Show how interested you are in what they do and how they feel. Create a dialogue. This establishes friendship.

We often think of tzedakah as giving money or materials items. An equally important way of giving tzedakah is to uplift a person's spirit to help make them whole. By offering these neighborly and generous acts of kindness, we build a stronger community.

A note in a box will do it.

Gloria Safran

Support from Legislator Stern and Suffolk County

The Board of Directors of M'Yad L'Yad offers our thanks to Suffolk County Legislator Steven Stern for his assistance in enabling us to obtain a Community Service Initiative Grant. This grant will be utilized to defray the cost of sending packages to our recipients. Earlier this year our Board

committed to covering this cost so that our sponsors could put more in the box to benefit our program recipients. Thanks to the

guidance and support of Legislator Stern and his assistant Debbie Harris, this grant will enable us to continue funding this expense in support of our sponsors and recipients.

This county funding covered the shipping charges for the pictured Thanksgiving packages, donated by the Commack

Jewish Center Religious School. See page 3 for more information on this and many other wonderful community projects.



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

A Recipient's Story

New Monthly Feature Highlights M'Yad L'Yad Recipients

Editor's Note: The M'Yad L'Yad program is all about our recipients. Our recipient list includes single parents, adult couples, young families, senior adults, and every other family configuration. Our recipients live across Long Island, from the Hamptons to the Rockaways, with a few located in New York City as well. As a regular feature in our newsletter, we will be providing a description of some of our recipients. While it is important that we maintain their anonymity, it is also important that we know their stories and recognize that they are not simply charity cases, but human beings with interests, with hopes and with needs. Our first featured recipient is Laura.

Laura is eighty years old. She is an educated, articulate, mentally vibrant woman. She attended Jackson College, the womens' school of Tufts University, where she received a teaching degree. She never taught because it didn't pay enough money, so she worked at many jobs to support herself. She was married and divorced twice, and has a son with whom she has little contact.

She lives alone in an apartment building, where she makes friends with the building staff who enjoy

her wit and intelligence. Engaging with these people helps satisfy her need for contact with others. She is lonely, and finds it difficult to get around due to Parkinson's Disease and recent back surgery, for which she is in physical therapy. She recently fell in her living room and had to have thirteen stitches in her right arm. She had to call for an ambulance herself and as is typical of her, impressed the doctors in the emergency room with her biting wit and sharp sense of humor. Despite

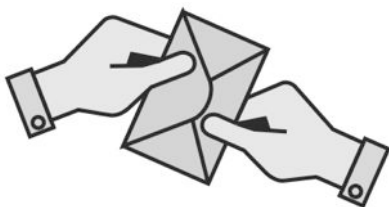
her physical limitations and feelings of isolation and loneliness, Laura maintains a positive attitude. She often says to me, in a spunky tone of voice, "What am I going to do kid, I've got no choice."

Laura expresses gratitude to her sponsor, whom she calls "a wonderful woman." She especially appreciates the letters she receives, which give her a feeling of being connected to and not cut off from the rest of the world.

Janet Zimmerman, LCSW-R

Cards anyone?

Tribute cards are available from M'Yad L'Yad, which can be used to commemorate holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays, or to honor or remember someone special. The cards include the M'Yad L'Yad logo on the front and a description of our program on the back. We can send a card to whomever you designate, noting your donation, or if you prefer, we can mail blank cards to you that you can use when an occasion arises. Cards can be purchased or sent by us for a \$5.00 donation, or you can buy a set of four cards for \$18.00. By using M'Yad L'Yad tribute cards, you not only financially support our program, but you help us to spread the word to others about our work. To purchase cards, please send in the Donation Form found on page 7.



Stuff'n the box!

Here are some simple, useful items to include in your packages:

- Kitchen equipment: Pot holders, oven mitts, cutting board, vegetable peeler, etc.
- Hangers, shoe polish, shoe laces
- Tissues, hair brush, comb
- Batteries, flashlights, candles
- Movie passes
- Gift certificates for fast food or chain restaurants
- Supermarket coupons (can be downloaded from the internet)
- Office supplies: Pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, envelopes, calendar, calculator, stapler, rubber bands, paper clips, etc.
- Small tools, like screwdrivers, pliers, a tape measure, etc.
- Sewing materials, like top threading sewing needles, safety pins, thread
- Battery operated radio/clock

B'Yachad: M'Yad L'Yad Works TOGETHER With The Community

UJA Supplies for Success

For the second year in a row, M'Yad L'Yad is pleased to have worked with UJA on their annual Supplies for Success program, also known as the Backpack Project. UJA volunteers filled brand new backpacks with a variety of important school supplies, including pens, calculators, notebooks, rulers and more.

Numerous organizations then distributed the backpacks to children of needy families, and M'Yad L'Yad is proud to have sent backpacks to seventy children on Long Island. The Backpack Project is a wonderful example of how Long Island's many Jewish organizations can work together on an endeavor of great benefit for local children. We thank chairs Mindy Richenstein and Ellen Grossman and look forward to working together with them and UJA on this worthy undertaking in future years.

Dix Hills Jewish Center Social Action Committee

The Dix Hills Jewish Center Social Action Committee sponsored a Mitzvah Day Fair with M'Yad L'Yad as the primary beneficiary of their efforts. M'Yad L'Yad board members greeted congregants at a table in the synagogue lobby and distributed information about our organization. Synagogue members participated in a fundraising walk that was kicked off by the sound of the shofar, blown by Rabbi Howard Buechler. Proceeds of the walk were donated to M'Yad L'Yad to support our program. The Social Action Committee recently completed their next undertaking, providing Chanukkah presents for M'Yad L'Yad children. Look for a report on this wonderful project in our spring newsletter.



M'Yad L'Yad executive board members Marilyn Leibowitz (l) and Susan Lustig assist with the Chanukkah Sale at Tiphonie's Gifts

Ben's Offers Support

The Ben's Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the chain of kosher delis, generously provided gift certificates for their restaurants. We were pleased to be able to distribute these coupons to seven of our recipient families who keep kosher, but rarely get the opportunity to eat out. Thanks to everyone at Ben's for their support of needy families on Long Island.

Jewish Congregation of Brookville

The members of the Jewish Congregation of Brookville joined with us for the second time by collecting non-perishable food for Thanksgiving. Thirteen cartons were filled with canned yams, apple juice, stuffing mix and many other items to enhance the holiday celebration of M'Yad L'Yad families. To add to the pleasure that these gifts bring, the children beautifully decorated the cartons, with turkey drawings, stickers, and holiday greetings. We thank Cindy Braunstein for her hard work in organizing this project.

Tiphonie's Gifts

In a wonderful collaboration, M'Yad L'Yad partnered with Tiphonie's Gifts, the Judaica store in the Mid-Island Y Jewish Community Center.

On November 18 and November 27, Tiphonie's Gifts donated a portion of all proceeds to support our program. M'Yad L'Yad invited all of our sponsors and supporters to shop for Chanukkah at Tiphonie's, selecting from a wide variety of holiday items, Israeli jewelry, toys, ritual items and more. We thank everyone who shopped at Tiphonie's, and we especially thank proprietors Renda and Ken Rosenblatt for their generosity and support.

Commack Jewish Center Religious School

Following up on the success of last year's Chanukkah drive, the Commack Jewish Center religious school undertook a collection of clothing, toys and other items to benefit seven M'Yad L'Yad families at Thanksgiving time. The children and their families filled 15 large cartons, each weighing between 35 and 55 pounds. Our executive director, Mark Zimmerman, welcomed the opportunity to speak with the students about anonymous tzedakah, and offered thanks on behalf of our organization and recipients for their hard work and generosity. Special thanks to Chazzan Neil Berris, school director, for coordinating the effort among his faculty, parents, and students.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR SOCIAL WORKER ...

The Warmth of Human Caring

Philosopher Martin Buber wrote the following in his autobiography, *Meetings: Autobiographical Fragments*:

“Imagine yourself in a situation where you are alone, wholly alone on earth, and you are offered one of the two, books or men. I often hear men prizing their solitude but that is only because there are still men somewhere on earth even though in the far distance. I knew nothing of books when I came forth from the womb of my mother, and I shall die without books, with another human hand in my own. I do, indeed, close my door at times and surrender myself to a book, but only because I can open the door again and see a human being looking at me.”

M’Yad L’Yad offers our recipients material goods which are sorely needed. However, more than supermarket gift cards, clothing, food and more, our organization offers a human connection to people who often feel forgotten. The human connection is just as impor-

tant - oftentimes more important than material goods. Let me give you some examples.

When delivering some exquisite china donated by one of our sponsors, to Shira, she was thrilled with how beautiful the dishes were. However, what really resonated with her was that someone who didn’t know her would be so generous and so kind. Shira felt the warmth of human caring.

I called and asked Karyn if she could use a beautiful London Fog raincoat that another one of our sponsors had donated. Karyn was thrilled that not only would she have a nice coat to wear to work, but that someone “out there” in the Jewish community had thought to give this gift. She felt enveloped in the warmth of our community.

Rachel called to let me know that she had received another letter from her sponsor; it was full of news about the sponsor’s family, and was so interesting! Rachel felt less isolated than she had before receiving the letter. She was part of

a human network.

A sponsor was reading her recipient, Michelle’s, profile when she realized that one of Michelle’s children was the age of bar mitzvah. She inquired through me as to what the child would like for a present. When I called Michelle to ask, she was overcome by the thoughtfulness of her sponsor. She had been reeling from a very stressful life situation, and her sponsor’s reaching out to her at this time, in such a meaningful and generous way, helped her feel that she was being cared for and supported.

M’Yad L’Yad helps our recipients to experience the warmth of human kindness. Through fostering relationships between sponsors and recipients, and by receiving donations and sending them where they are needed, we are letting our fellow men and women and children know that they are part of a community who cares about them. They are not forgotten.

Janet Zimmerman, LCSW-R

Our Benefactor’s Circle

Anonymous (3)	Renee & Gary Oshinsky
Meryl & Stewart Ain	Lesly & Nathaniel Reichel
Victoria & Hunter Allen	Hinda & Jerry Ritigstein
Terry Schimek & Wayne Barnstone	Betty & Sam Roth
Rabbi Howard Buechler, Dix Hills Jewish Center	Erika & Richard Safran
Miriam & Harvey Finkelstein	Gloria Safran
Terry & Irwin Fishberg	Nina & Julian Sandler
Barbara & Ken Greenberg	Michele & Stephen Scheck
Ellen & Stephen Greenberg	Jane & Rabbi Barton Shallat
Ilene & Jerry Herz	Diane & Gerald Thurer
Robin & Douglas Horn	Elizabeth & Stephen Thurer
Rabbi Ian Jacknis, South Huntington Jewish Center	Myra & Harry Wagner
Gail & Jerry Jospa	Robyn & Michael Weiner
Arlene & Jeffrey Kreisberg	Weisberg/Epstein Family
Elizabeth Krulik	Judy Weiss & Jack Zucker
Margery & Larry Kushnick	The David Kimmel Foundation
Susan & Lenny Lustig	The Herman Goldman Foundation
Rabbi Susie Heneson Moskowitz	Kushnick & Associates, P.C.
	Lustig And Hermer LLP

M’Yad L’Yad

Mission Statement

M’Yad L’Yad– Helping Hands is dedicated to enhancing the lives of the needy in our community. The anonymous pairing of volunteer sponsors with recipients encourages ongoing relationships and provides friendship and dignity, as well as material support.

Our Program

M’Yad L’Yad–Helping Hands makes it possible to give in a way that is personal, yet always anonymous. We match volunteer sponsors with needy recipients, asking sponsors to send packages to their recipients four times per year in order to enhance their lives. Sponsors might send toys, clothing, gift cards, school supplies, or other items that are best suited to their recipient’s individual needs. We are a local organization, supporting families on Long Island. To join with us, please call (631) 742-7194 or e-mail us at hands@myadlyad.org.



SPOTLIGHT ON ... *Diane Thurer*

This month's spotlight shines brightly on Diane Thurer, without whose vision and inspiration M'Yad L'Yad would not exist. Diane was one of the founders who, upon discovering that there were in fact Jewish people in Suffolk County struggling to pay their bills, put their heads together to figure out a way to help these "forgotten" people too often lost below the radar. Inspired by the Appalachia Box Project, they devised a program of direct matching of sponsors and recipients. Recognizing that the recipients of assistance could be neighbors because of the local nature of the organization, they agreed that anonymity, preserving dignity, would be a vital element of the plan.

Diane believes that her greatest contribution to M'Yad L'Yad is in the area of public relations, "reaching out into the community to get people to participate in the organi-

zation in some way." "Having been," as she said, "entrenched and active in my community for thirty eight years," Diane is familiar with many organizations and groups. Currently a member of the M'Yad L'Yad Executive Board, Diane is available to assist wherever or whenever she is needed from planning for a fundraiser to stuffing envelopes. She is very modest about her accomplishments, but her dedication and enthusiasm are evident when she speaks about being part of the sixty families known as the "The Mayflower Group" who were involved in the building of the Dix Hills Jewish Center. Diane is also proud of having been a member of the Board of Directors of SAJES, particularly because of their "inclusion of all Jews from the orthodox to the non affiliated in their educational programs."

"I feel extremely blessed," said Diane, when speaking of her hus-

band Jerry, their three children and seven grandchildren. Diane believes that one of the most important roles of parents is that of instilling in children the need to be part of their community and to "give back." One important means of giving back is membership in a synagogue. "Belonging to a synagogue is a financial, personal commitment and responsibility, not a charity," Diane believes.

Diane studied to become a speech therapist at the University of Michigan. She worked part time as a speech pathologist concentrating on language development in small children for a number of years.

In Diane's own words, "I am comfortable within my own skin; I don't have to be good at everything I do." In fact, Diane is very good at her charitable endeavors as well as swimming, playing tennis and golf, and just plain having fun! Thank you Diane, for all you do.

M'YAD L'YAD DONATION FORM

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ e-mail: _____

I would like: (please check)

- Additional information about M'Yad L'Yad
- To volunteer to sponsor a M'Yad L'Yad family
- To join M'Yad L'Yad as a benefactor (min. donation of \$500)
- To make a donation to M'Yad L'Yad of \$ _____
- To make a donation to the Murray Safran Fund \$ _____
(to assist recipients with emergency needs)
- To buy Tribute cards _____ \$5 each _____ 4 for \$18
- M'Yad L'Yad to send a Tribute card (\$5 each) to:

Please make my donation or Tribute Card ...

In Honor of: _____

In Memory of: _____

Acknowledgment to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Message: _____

A Message From Our Director

Mark D. Zimmerman, M'Yad L'Yad executive director,
reports on the revolving wheel

I'm writing this article on the day after Thanksgiving, the quintessential American holiday, but one that speaks so beautifully to the Jewish values that guide so many of us. Thanksgiving is the American holiday that most reflects the heart of the M'Yad L'Yad program. We are grateful for the things we have, and more so for the family and friends who share our feast and inhabit our lives day after day. At the same time we reflect on those who cannot put a feast on their table and those who are alone, even while living amongst us on Long Island.

For me personally, Thanksgiving evokes a wide range of memories, hopes and emotions. My first thought is that, despite what you may have felt, for me this was a cold Thanksgiving. Growing up in New Orleans, Thanksgiving was usually a warm day where we could spend as much time outside playing football as we spend here watching football on TV. What was a wonderfully mild New York day in the mid-60's would have been considered a cold day at my childhood Thanksgiving celebrations.

I'm also reminded of Bubby, my mother's mother, at whose house our entire family gathered year after year on the fourth Thursday of November. So much of my understanding of Jewish values originated with this humble religious woman who lived most of her 97 years in a small town in Cajun country but always remained connected to the Jewish people.

And I'm sadly reminded of events two years ago, when the levees failed and the government failed, and the people of New Orleans found themselves overwhelmed by the tragedy that befell the city. The Talmud speaks of Rabbi Hiyya, who told his wife to quickly give food to beggars at the door so that the same might be done for their children if necessary. His wife cried out, "You are cursing our children" because she thought he was suggesting that they might become poor. But Rabbi Hiyya replied, "There is a wheel which revolves in this world." The revolving wheel transformed so many in my family and so many others in New Orleans from lives of comfort to lives of need. And this revolving wheel has left many in our local Long Island communities in need as well.

Our job – the job of M'Yad L'Yad sponsors and supporters, and the job of every one of us, is to help rotate the wheel back for those who have suffered. In Proverbs 10:2 it is written that charity saves from death. At this time of Thanksgiving, as we give thanks for the goodness in our lives, let us remember to help those less fortunate. Let us recognize that those in need are no different than the rest of us, that they are only people for whom the wheel has turned the wrong way. Let us save them from physical and spiritual death by giving quickly to the beggar at the door.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of M'Yad L'Yad, I thank you for your past efforts, and look forward to working together in the new year to enhance the lives of those in need in our local communities.



M'Yad L'Yad – Helping Hands
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