

# News from *Remember Us*

In this issue:  
International  
developments



Spring/Summer  
2010

*"So long as we live they too shall live, for they are part of us as we remember them"*



**Remember Us**  
The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project

## About Remember Us

**Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project** offers an invitation to each child preparing for bar/bat mitzvah: *remember* one specific child who was lost in the Holocaust, and *act* for the good in memory of that child. We provide the names, and suggest ways for young people and their families to express their commitment to memory: dedicating their Torah reading, doing *mitzvot* and *tikkun olam* in the name of the child, lighting *yahrzeit* candles, etc.

## Board of Directors

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Barbara Tobin, Treasurer

## Current Status

13,174 children have received names from Remember Us, in more than 520 congregations in 34 states and 6 countries. Participation is voluntary. There is no charge. The concept has been endorsed by all Jewish denominations.

## Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project

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## Stepping Up for Memory

When Hilary Miller accepted the Remember Us invitation to honor and remember Lina Gerson z"l, a six-year-old from the Netherlands who died during the Shoah, she did not anticipate that her commitment would expand to include authorship of a book, serving as a Holocaust educator, or recruiting upcoming bnei mitzvah students from other area congregations to participate in Remember Us.

Hilary's extensive involvement was initially motivated by her surprise and sadness at having overheard a conversation filled with both misinformation and obvious lack of knowledge of the Holocaust by some non-Jewish members of her soccer team. When she engaged them in further discussion, it became obvious to her that more needed to be done to educate young people. "I was shocked that they didn't know anything. It was a part of our family's conversation and I learned about it school but I didn't think people my age had no idea. I just wanted to make sure that these girls had information".



Prompted by this event, as well as a suggestion by Congregation Beth Israel educator Samara Sofian that she interview one survivor to get a first-hand perspective, Hilary decided to undertake a much bigger project than she ever expected. Independently she undertook the task of interviewing *Continued on page 2*

## Names Go with March of the Living

Remember Us entrusted names to nearly four hundred teen participants on the March of the Living when they traveled to Poland and Israel in April 2010. Through the leadership of Mariana Roytman-Schiffner, partnerships were made with the Bureau of Jewish Education Los Angeles, March of the Living New England Region (Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island), Orloff Central Agency for Jewish Education in Davie, Florida and the Shalhevet Program of the Holocaust Center of Northern California. This initiative was an opportunity to personalize the March of the Living experience for delegation members. Each teen received a memorial card for the child they were remembering, and a name tag which they wore behind their own names.

Eleanor Ghinghis, a Los Angeles March of the Living delegation member carried with her the name of



*The Los Angeles March of the Living delegation gathered at a mass grave for children in Tarnow, Poland under a tallis made by one of the delegation parents to pay homage to all of the children.*

*Continued on page 3*

**Hilary Miller** Continued from page 1

and writing histories of two local survivors and two children of survivors. She compiled them with educational background material provided by the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education and Resource Center (HERC) and research that she did into a book entitled "Survivors of the Holocaust: Keeping the Candle Lit". According to Hilary, "If anyone who reads this book, whether they are Jewish or not, takes action to educate themselves or someone else about the Holocaust, think of the difference it would make in the world."

According to Hilary "I feel that it is especially important for my generation to interview survivors because the new generation will not be able to hear their stories first-hand. It is a responsibility that I feel as a Jew, and especially as a Jew living freely in America, not being forced to wear a yellow star on my jacket...I hope that this book, and the stories of survivors will educate and move its readers to keep the candle burning. We must never forget"

Hilary has now been invited to share her knowledge of the Holocaust with middle school students at two areal schools. She brings her framed Remember Us

Memorial Certificate and her book with her to share. She has also accompanied HERC Director and Remember Us partner Bonnie Shafrin to speak to pre-bnai mitzvah students at other Milwaukee synagogues about the importance of participating in Remember Us.

*Hilary is the daughter of Jamie and Felicia Miller of Bayside, WI. She is a 7th grade student at Milwaukee Jewish Day School, an avid reader, and soccer player. She became Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Beth Israel in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she is a fourth-generation member. ■*

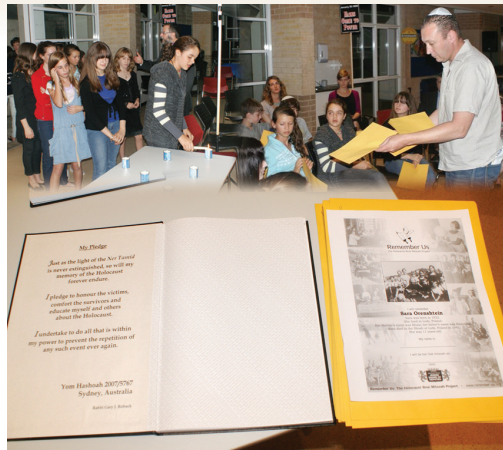
## News About Strategic Partners

### Australian Students Accept Names at Yom Hashoah

The New South Wales (Australia) Jewish Board of Deputies Remember Us Project in a special ceremony invited 150 bnai mitzvah students from the two largest Orthodox Jewish Day Schools in Sydney, Moriah College and Masada College, to accept the honor and responsibility of remembering a child.

In an educational program which coincided with Yom HaShoah, students first participated in a candle lighting ceremony in memory of the six million who died during the Shoah. This was followed by a multimedia tour through history, which included six checkpoints with historical accounts from Kristallnacht through liberation. The program included personal recollections from two local survivors as well as past participants of the March of the Living.

At the close of the program, each bnai mitzvah student received a Remember Us Memorial name certificate and materials to explain participation. One of the survivors who participated in the program, an elderly man who became a Bar Mitzvah recently at the age of 77, was also presented with a Remember Us memorial profile of a child from his native Poland. He becomes the oldest Remember Us Bar Mitzvah participant.



*Students from two Sydney, Australia day schools gathered together at Yom Hashoah to light memorial candles, participate in an educational program, and each receive a memorial certificate for a child provided by Remember Us.*

Laurence Bloch, a Jewish educator in Sydney who has been instrumental in bringing the Remember Us concept to the community, facilitated the ceremony and educational programming and has assumed responsibility for promoting Remember Us in Australia. Yasher Koach and todah rabah to Laurence for his efforts! ■

### Welcome To the Board of Rabbis of Southern California

The Board of Rabbis of Southern California recent endorsement of and partnership with Remember Us will be a significant opportunity to expand congregation and individual bnai mitzvah participation in Southern California. The Board of Rabbis, with more than 300 members, brings together Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, Reform and transdemoniational streams of Jewish life. Promoting Remember Us is consistent with the many Jewish learning and living programs that the Board sponsors and promotes. Rabbi Mark Diamond, Executive Vice President of the Board of Rabbis, "The Board of Rabbis of Southern California is pleased to endorse and promote Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Program. Through this partnership, our 320 member rabbis will have access to resources that enable their b'nai mitzvah students to remember and honor children who died in the Holocaust.

Remember Us, with the Board of Rabbis endorsement, will have the potential to reach hundreds of congregations in Southern California." ■

### International Developments

In the last few months bnai mitzvah students from England, Italy, South Africa, Canada and Israel have contacted Remember Us to request names of children to remember. Our enhanced website has made the program easily accessible internationally. A news feature story on the Israel's news site YNET, which appeared in both Hebrew and English, generated publicity for the Project in Israel and elsewhere (English version at (<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3874471,00.html>)). Project founder Geshar Calmenson and his wife Cynthia, who for many years handled Remember Us outreach, will be visiting Israel in June and meeting with education, civic, and religious leadership to create the partnerships and infrastructure to support Israeli youth participation in the Remember Us concept. On the other side of the world, the Board of Trustees of New South Wales Australia, a leading rabbinic association, endorsed the program (see the full story on this page). ■



**March of the Living**

Continued from page 1

Samuel Varsano. The MOTL staff member responsible for assigning Remember Us names to participants realized that Samuel had died on The boy died on April 14 1943. Motl was at the camp on April 14 2010. At Majdanek, Eleanor was prompted by the MOTL staff to look carefully at the dates affixed to the name card backing up her own name. Her words to the young woman, looking at the dates, were "You must never forget." Eleanor's parting words to March of the Living staff at the end of the two-week trip: "I will never forget".

This year's cooperation with March of the Living has been a pilot project for providing individual names to all the teens who will go on future Marches. ■

**Grants Support Remember Us Capacity Building**

Two significant grant awards, a mini-grant for capacity-building from Upstart Bay Area and a generous grant from the UpStart Bay Area with funds provided by the Lazlo N. Tauber Foundation will allow Remember Us to expand our capacity-building, outreach, and programmatic initiatives targeted to post-bnai mitzvah age youth.

The Tauber grant enables us to maintain contact and connection with Remember Us participants following their bar/bat mitzvah participation. The Yahrzeit project will provide a written reminder to past participants upon the anniversary of their bar/bat mitzvah to encourage them to accept the mitzvah of saying Kaddish for the child they remembered, as well as inspire them to turn remembrance into

action in the name of that child.

The grant will also provide funding to test the effectiveness of a new outreach process by exhibiting at the CCAR Convention, the national gathering of Reform rabbis, as well as expand the partnership with March of the Living from the three pilot groups to the national organization. The Upstart Bay Area capacity-building grant will enable Gesher Calmenson, Executive Director and Founder of Remember Us, to travel to Israel to focus on outreach and partnerships designed to significantly expand the program's geographic outreach and Israeli participation. In addition, the grant provides for the technological hardware and software to manage the demands of increased program participation. ■

**New Participating Communities**

Remember Us welcomes the following communities at which the Remember Us Project is made available to bar/bat mitzvah students. May they go from strength to strength.

**Australia**

Sydney  
New South Wales Board  
of Deputies

**Israel**

Beit Shemesh  
Ohel Yona Menachem  
Jerusalem  
Acheinu Beit Yisrael

**Italy**

Milano  
Beth Shalom

**South Africa**

Johannesburg  
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Herts  
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of America**

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HaAloneem  
Palm Springs  
Temple Isaiah  
Valley Village  
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**Connecticut**

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**New Jersey**

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**New York**

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New York  
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New York  
Temple Israel  
Patchogue  
Temple Beth-El of  
Patchogue  
Smythtown  
Temple Beth Shalom

Valley Stream  
Temple Hillel

**Pennsylvania**

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Greater Harrisburg  
King of Prussia  
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Yardley  
Congregation Kol Emet

**Rhode Island**

Barrington  
Temple Habonim  
Providence  
Bureau of Jewish  
Education of Rhode  
Island

**Texas**

Flower Mound  
Congregation Kol Ami  
Houston  
Houston Congregation  
for Reform Judaism

**Virginia**

Norfolk  
Temple Israel

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