

BROOKLYN/Staten Island Update

Connect 2 Program Aids Holocaust Survivors

Caring neighborhood young people are building friendships with homebound Holocaust survivors through Connect 2, a program sponsored by the Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island and the Shorefront Jewish Community Council.

The one-year-old program, funded by a grant from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, is intended to meet a critical need for survivors in Brighton Beach, Manhattan Beach, Sheepshead Bay and surrounding areas, says Elisheva Frank, the program coordinator.

"We began with only a small group of volunteers and now have close to 70 teenagers from various schools and yeshivas," says Frank.

The program's goal is to connect elderly seniors to the community by providing friendly visits and regular telephone contacts. In addition, the volunteers assist with reading of mail, shopping and other needs.

Many of the volunteers are teenagers eager to reach across generational lines. Others are local community members and/or retirees, who want to make a difference. All volunteers are screened and trained prior to beginning their home visits to identify social service needs so that the Jewish Community Council can bring in outreach caseworkers and provide benefits.



Bridging the generation gap: Participants in Connect 2 volunteer program visit elderly Holocaust survivors in shorefront communities.

After visiting each senior client, Frank makes an initial assessment of their needs and concerns. "When I leave each house, I think about how many more people would volunteer if they understood how happy they are making the loneliest and most vulnerable people in our community," she says.

For information about the program, call Frank at (718) 449-5000, Ext. 216.