

Connect 2 Matches Volunteers With Survivors

Volunteers from Connect 2's, a Homebound Holocaust Survivor visitation program, got together in the Midwood section of Flatbush on the Sunday evening just before Chanukah. Over 100 volunteers of Connect 2 spread light and good cheer to the Holocaust Survivors they visit on a regular basis as part of the program.

Connect 2 is a joint project of Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island and Shorefront Jewish Community Council. It is funded by a grant from the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

"It's inspiring to be in the presence of people who dedicate themselves to visit these special, yet lonely seniors," said Sheva Frank, Program Director. "There is no generation gap here."

The program's name, Connect 2, illustrates the goal of this unique visiting program, which brings caring neighborhood volunteers into the apartments of frail Holocaust survivors. Connect 2 connects these lonely seniors to the community by providing friendly visits and regular telephone contact. In addition, Connect 2 volunteers assist these homebound Holocaust survivors with reading mail, shopping, and other needs.

Connect 2 volunteers come from all walks of life. Many are teenagers who are excited by the chance to reach across the generations and establish a unique friendship with a lonely senior. Others are local community members, particularly retired individuals, who want to make a difference in the lives of those in need. All Connect 2 volunteers are screened and trained prior to beginning their home visits. In particular, the volunteers are trained to identify the Holocaust survivor's other social service needs, so that Shorefront Jewish Community Council can bring in an outreach caseworker to help the senior access additional benefits and services when necessary.

Volunteers communicate regularly with Program Coordinator, Sheva Frank. Ms. Frank also makes an initial visit to each senior's home in order to assess the senior's needs and concerns.

Connect 2's enthusiastic volunteers look forward to their visits almost as much as the seniors do. At Chanuka's get together, volunteer Aliza Dubroff said, "They have so much wisdom to share with us, and we have the privilege to listen."

If you know of a Holocaust survivor who would like to be a part of this program, or if you would like to volunteer for Connect 2, please contact Sheva Frank at (718) 449-5000, Ext. 216. ■



Assemblyman Sheldon Silver and Mayor Michael Bloomberg celebrate Chanukah together while lighting the second candle on the Menorah at Solo Restaurant on Wednesday night, December 8, 2004. A festive time was enjoyed by all.