

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

On November 9, we commemorated at Hillcrest Jewish Center a new anniversary of Kristallnacht. Over 100 participants gathered to learn about the Witness Project, a project spearheaded by UJA that brings together high school students and Holocaust survivors to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and support survivors through the therapeutic recounting of their experiences.

All those present had the opportunity to become witnesses ourselves of the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Shoa, through a moving film, narrating the live experience of five Holocaust survivors, including our own Bertha Strauss.

Bertha, who came accompanied by her family (4 generations of Strausses were present), was witness herself to the love, appreciation, and admiration of her friends and fellow congregants at Hillcrest Jewish Center, who came out not only to commemorate Kristallnacht, but to honor and celebrate Bertha.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was the presence of Dylan Reisberg, one of the high school students who worked with Bertha on the Witness Project. Dylan shared a beautiful poem she wrote about Bertha.

A big yishar koach goes to the Adult Education Committee of Hillcrest Jewish Center and to Kathy Lewis for putting together the event, to Carol Greenberg for her meaningful words, to everyone who attended the event, and especially to Bertha, who continues to inspire us all.

Rabbi Manes Kogan

By Dylan Reisberg

*In shadows deep where silence fled,
A young girl stood, her heart full of dread.
The world outside is only a storm of pain,
Yet in her mind, love's whispers remain.*

*"Take care of your brother for me," she said,
The words woven in tears, where hope nearly bled.
The woman held them close, like a delicate thread,
A promise unbroken, though all else has fled.*

*The sun took its bow, as shadows stretched long,
But in her heart, echoed a mother's song.
Each word a caress, a guide through the night,
In the midst of such sorrow, a flicker of light.*

*"Be brave, my sweet child, when the world feels so vast,
Hold him through darkness, until this will pass."
A pact made in whispers as her soul took flight.
She'd cherish those words, armed through this fight.*

*In every soft cry of her brother's sweet call,
She'd carry their mother's love overall.
But in a world turned to ashes,
Where hope dwindles thin,
The memory of warmth would guide her within.
Though the shadows grew longer, and the nights turned to gray,
A mother's love lingered like a light on the way.*

*So she vowed in the stillness, with tears on her face,
To hold on to courage when there once was a trace.
With each step she took, in the echoes of time,
She kept her mother's promise, a heart's sacred rhyme.*