The mission of The Blue Card is to provide direct financial assistance, with dignity and respect, to needy Holocaust survivors living in the United States.

The Richard C. Holbrooke Award for Social Justice
Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering (Retired)

The Max L. Heine Humanitarian Award
Seth A. Klarman
President & CEO
The Baupost Group, LLC

The Blue Card Young Leadership Award
Amanda Bilski

Master of Ceremonies
Danny Burstein
5 Time Tony Nominee

Special Performance
Emily Kessler
Holocaust Survivor
Singer and Mandolin Player
The Siggi B. Wilzig
"Fighting Cancer Together"

Program of The Blue Card

Fighting cancer is tough enough when you have the means.

When you don’t, support from The Blue Card can give you the strength you need to fight another day.

The "Siggi B. Wilzig, Fighting Cancer Together" Fund is the only national program established exclusively to help impoverished survivors with cancer who can’t afford the basics, let alone the extra care and luxuries we would want for our aged and ill loved ones.

The Program provides The Blue Card clients who are battling cancer with insurance co-pay assistance for treatment, funds toward transportation, special diet requirements and support group services.
November 3, 2014

GIA MACHLIN, PRESIDENT
AND MASHA PEARL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Welcome and opening remarks

DANNY BURSTEIN
Emcee

Video

EMILY KESSLER
Special Performance

ORIT HODARKOVSKY, VICE CHAIRMAN
Introduces Give by Cell

Dinner

Award Presentation

SETH KLARMAN
THE MAX L. HEINE HUMANITARIAN AWARD
Presenter: Doris Grunwald

AMANDA BILSKI
THE BLUE CARD YOUNG LEADERSHIP AWARD
Presenter: Heidi Rieger

AMBASSADOR THOMAS R. PICKERING
THE RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE
AWARD FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
Presenter: Kati Marton

Silent Auction
Menu

Appetizer
Boston & Radicchio Lettuce Cups, Endive Shaving, Arugula and Mache Tossed With Quartered Artichoke Hearts, Red and Yellow Cherry Tomatoes, Seedless Cucumbers and Baby Radish in a Lemon/Thyme Vinaigrette

Entrée
French Cut Chicken Breast, Herb Stuffing Timbale of Rice Pilaf Tied Bundle of Haricot Verte A Blistered Baby Pepper Frizzled Onion Red Wine Demi Glaze

Dessert
Chocolate Mousse Fantasy Dark Chocolate Ganache’, Mousse, Brittle Chocolate Abstract Dome Diced Fresh Fruit

Coffee and Tea
Dear Friends,

Tonight we welcome you to The Blue Card’s 2014 Annual Benefit Gala at Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall. We are honored to have you join us in celebrating our organization’s 80th anniversary and numerous accomplishments since its inception in Germany in 1934.

While we reflect on The Blue Card’s many achievements, we realize there is still much work to do. As the number of remaining Holocaust survivors declines, their needs grow, and today we have an opportunity to still make a difference in their lives. For a group of resilient men and women who have been through so much, we can help them live out the rest of their lives with dignity.

Thanks to supporters like you, year after year, The Blue Card continues to alleviate survivors’ most pressing needs such as dental, medical and homecare expenses, in addition to emergency response programs that address the dire circumstances faced by this fragile group.

In 2014, we successfully reached more survivors than ever before as we now have programs in over 25 states. Our sustainable expansion coupled with core initiatives, is a direct result of your generosity and since its founding, The Blue Card has distributed more than $26 million to thousands of Holocaust survivors in need.

The Blue Card is proud to recognize the achievements of this year’s honorees: Seth A. Klarman, Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering, and Amanda Bilski. We are delighted to present this evening’s musical performance featuring Emily Kessler, a Holocaust survivor and mandolin player whose indomitable spirit and love of music will amaze you.

Please join us in welcoming multitalented actor Danny Burstein as tonight’s emcee. We are thrilled to have him lead us into this evening’s program.

We would like to thank all of you for your support of The Blue Card’s mission and for joining us on this memorable evening. It is your dedication to our cause that empowers us to continue providing hope and comfort to the individuals who need us the most.

Sincerely,

Gia Machlin
President

Michael Lissner
Chairman

Masha Pearl
Executive Director
At a time when survivors need our assistance more than ever, The Blue Card is enabling our donors to support the organization’s mission in inventive ways. One such way is connecting supporters to our mission during their online shopping. The Blue Card was accepted as an approved charitable organization of both Amazon Smile and eBay Giving Works. Through these platforms, you can help to generate donations by simply selecting The Blue Card as a charitable organization when checking out. Amazon will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases, while eBay will allow you to select a percentage of the sale price that will support The Blue Card. I hope you will consider taking these extra steps next time you make online purchases, as every amount raised will help us continue our work ensuring the comfort and safety of survivors.

The Blue Card takes pride in our popular sports endurance program. As an official charity partner of the TCS New York City Marathon, each year Team Blue Card runners request sponsors whose gifts support the organization. Since 2009, this has been a successful initiative for The Blue Card. Apart from our New York City marathon, the organization also participates in the Jerusalem Marathon and, most recently, we have been accepted into the 2015 Panasonic New York City Triathlon. We are thrilled to be participating in the triathlon for the very first time: individual and relay spots are available.

Working with social service agencies across the country allows The Blue Card to keep the overhead low and ensures that all donations go directly to Holocaust survivor programs.

The Blue Card has earned nine consecutive four-star ratings from Charity Navigator, a distinction awarded to only four percent of all charities. The Blue Card is Better Business Bureau (BBB) certified, and was named as one of the best Jewish charities in 2012 and 2013 by Federal Times.

Thank you for joining us to commemorate our 80th anniversary and the many achievements of The Blue Card. Your support has sustained our efforts for the past 80 years and we rely on you to continue our mission.

Sincerely,

Masha Pearl
Executive Director
The Blue Card's 2013 Grants at a Glance

1. Monthly Stipend $564,879
2. Emergency Cash Assistance $455,808
3. Dental Program $425,000
4. Telephone Emergency Response $271,966
5. Jewish Holiday Program $145,477
6. The Siggi B. Wilzig Fighting Cancer Together Program $56,272
7. Birthday Program $52,000
8. Summer Vacation $21,560

Total Grants: $1,992,962
Richard C. Holbrooke lived a profoundly purposeful life. Regarded as one of the country’s most influential and accomplished diplomats, he was a deeply committed humanitarian whose intelligence, persistence and unusual skills made the seemingly impossible possible — across the globe.

Among his innumerable achievements, Mr. Holbrooke expanded upon Richard Nixon’s trip to China to establish full diplomatic relations with China, and he spotlighted conflicts and health crises in Africa and Indonesia, where he called for more peacekeeping forces. His deft prodding led to the landmark 1995 Dayton peace accords that ended the war in Bosnia — a feat Mr. Holbrooke sought to duplicate as chief envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan before his untimely death in 2010. And after the collapse of Communism, he successfully fought for Holocaust survivors to receive restitution from then-emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.

“He was a hurricane—of eloquence and energy and force,” said President Bill Clinton. “He was a great diplomat because he was smart, and he could learn, and he could think, he could write, he could speak, and most importantly, he could do . . . there are a lot of people walking around on the face of the earth today — or their children or their grandchildren — because of the way he lived his life.”

The Blue Card’s Richard C. Holbrooke Award for Social Justice is a fitting, lasting tribute to a man who, according to Henry Kissinger, “saw a challenge not an obstacle” and, because of his inspired leadership, elevated “a forlorn problem into a moral adventure.”
RECIPIENT OF
RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE
AWARD FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering

Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering, currently Vice Chairman at Hills and Company which provides advice and counsel to a number of major US enterprises, retired as Senior Vice President International Relations and a member of the Executive Council of The Boeing Company on July 1, 2006. He served in that position for 5 and one half years. He was responsible for The Boeing Company’s relations with foreign governments and the company’s globalization.

Pickering joined Boeing in January 2001, upon his retirement as U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, where he had served since May 1997. Prior to that, he was briefly the president of the Eurasia Foundation, a Washington-based organization that makes small grants and loans in the states of the former Soviet Union.

Pickering holds the personal rank of Career Ambassador, the highest in the U.S. Foreign Service. In a diplomatic career spanning five decades, he was U.S. ambassador to the Russian Federation, India, Israel, El Salvador, Nigeria, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Pickering also served on assignments in Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

From 1989 to 1992, he was Ambassador and Representative to the United Nations in New York. He also served as Executive Secretary of the Department of State and Special Assistant to Secretaries William P. Rogers and Henry A. Kissinger from 1973 to 1974.

Pickering entered on active duty in the U.S. Navy from 1956-1959, and later served in the Naval Reserve to the grade of Lieutenant Commander. Between 1959 and 1961, he was assigned to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the State Department and later to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and from 1962 to 1964 in Geneva as political adviser to the U.S. Delegation to the 18-Nation Disarmament Conference.

Pickering received a bachelor’s degree, cum laude, with high honors in history, from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine in 1953. In 1954, he received a master’s degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to the University of Melbourne in Australia, and received a second master’s degree in 1956. In 1984, he was awarded an honorary doctor-of-laws degree from Bowdoin College, and has received similar honors from 12 other universities.

In 2012, he chaired the Benghazi Accountability Review Board at the request of Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton which made recommendations on improving security stemming from the attack on the US Mission at Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012 and the loss of the lives of Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans.

In 1983 and in 1986, Pickering won the Distinguished Presidential Award and, in 1996, the Department of State’s highest award – the Distinguished Service Award. He is a member of the International Institute of Strategic Studies and the Council on Foreign Relations. He speaks French, Spanish and Swahili and has some fluency in Arabic, Hebrew and Russian.
Max Heine was a giver. He gave because he felt it was the right thing to do; because he cared deeply about other people; and because not giving was not an option for him.

Max was born in 1910 in Berlin. His father was a doctor and his mother’s family owned a large factory that manufactured automobiles, motorcycles and munitions. As a teenager, he rode the company motorcycles, and when he wrecked one, he simply got a new one. He wasn’t much of a student. The comments on his report card ranged from "nicht genügend" (not sufficient) to "mangelhaft" (unsatisfactory) to "genügend" (sufficient). Max was considered the black sheep of the family, and not only because of his grades. He was distressed by the social inequities of the day. While studying law—not very successfully—at the University of Heidelberg in the late 1920’s, he became seriously involved in left-wing politics. A family rumor alleged that he tried to organize the workforce at the family factory. True or not, it suggests where his sympathies lay. In the early 1930’s he was arrested for his activities with anti-Nazi organizations, which turned out to be a stroke of good fortune. He saw the writing on the wall and in 1933 abandoned his law studies and emigrated to the U.S. Many of his relatives were not so lucky.

In America, Max had to start at the bottom. His first job was as a salesman for women’s haberdashery and men’s neckties. He wasn’t much of a salesman, and if he knew anything about fashion, he kept it well concealed. Soon he moved on to a job as a runner in a Wall Street brokerage firm. He had no idea that within a few decades he’d be known as "The Dean of Wall Street." It was around this time that he fell in love with Lotte Hirsch, another German émigré. They married in 1938 and remained inseparable until her death almost 50 years later. They had three daughters, Doris, Karin and Peggy, and lived in the same house in Roslyn for 40 years.

Max flourished on Wall Street, first by helping many of his fellow émigrés invest their savings, then by spotting value in the bonds of bankrupt companies. In 1949 he took over the leadership of Mutual Shares, a pioneering mutual fund. He later became chairman of Herzog, Heine, Geduld, and chairman of Heine Securities.

No matter how brilliantly he maneuvered in the world of capitalism, Max never cared all that much about money. He cared about people. He always thought of the stock market as a game; he enjoyed the game immensely, but it didn’t make him feel bigger or smarter or worthier than anyone else, and it was never the most important thing in his life. He was an incredibly loyal friend, a loving husband and father, a doting grandfather. He considered himself a very lucky man, and he wanted to help others. He never thought of it as a sacrifice; he just thought of it as the thing to do, as natural as getting up in the morning. And Blue Card was the perfect fit—helping people like him, but less fortunate.
Seth Klarman is the President and CEO of The Baupost Group, L.L.C., which manages funds on behalf of institutional and individual clients. He has had primary responsibility for managing the investments of Baupost since the company was formed in May, 1982. Author of Margin of Safety, a book that outlines his value investment philosophy, Mr. Klarman was chosen as lead editor for the recently published Security Analysis Sixth Edition and has been featured in a variety of investment industry publications. Seth is a 1982 graduate of Harvard Business School, where he was a Baker Scholar and a 2011 recipient of the Alumni Achievement Award, and received his Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, in Economics from Cornell University in 1979. Born in New York City, he grew up in Baltimore. He is married and has three children.

Seth is Chair of the Board of Trustees of Facing History and Ourselves, a teacher training organization, and is a member of the Board of Dean's Advisors at HBS, where he has been a senior lecturer on value investing and was a member of the Alumni Board. Mr. Klarman serves as a member of the National Executive Committee of AIPAC, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, is on the Board of Directors of The Israel Project, and serves as Co-chair of the Board of Trustees for The David Project. He is on the Board of Trustees of the American Enterprise Institute, on the Board of Directors of the Broad Institute, Vice Chair of Beth Israel Hospital’s Board of Managers and a member of their Board of Trustees. Seth is Chairman of The Klarman Family Foundation; his wife, Beth, serves as its Executive Director.
Since 2012, Amanda Bilski has been involved with The Blue Card, playing a pivotal role in fundraising and raising awareness through her involvement with The Blue Card Young Leadership Committee. She is the fourth generation of her family to volunteer with The Blue Card, starting with her great grandmother, Minnie Rosenak, who immigrated to New York from Germany in 1939. In addition to helping Holocaust survivors, Amanda is dedicated to working with other underserved communities.

In 2008, Amanda was selected for the Jewish Week’s “36 Under 36” for co-founding J-Teen Leadership, a community service and leadership initiative for high school students in New York. Through volunteering with J-Teen, she provided aid to Hurricane Katrina victims and the struggling Jewish community in Havana, Cuba, as well as local communities in need. After participating in a 2013 mission to Haiti, she was moved by the high prevalence of malnutrition and developed “Healthy Eating for Healthy Minds,” a school feeding and nutrition program at Ecole Nouvelle Zoranje School in Haiti. The program provides two balanced meals each day to 500 students and 70 adults and funds a school nurse to monitor students’ health.

Amanda completed her undergraduate studies at Washington University in St. Louis with a major in anthropology and minor in mathematics. After college she worked as an associate researcher in the Pasinetti Laboratory at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, where she co-authored several publications identifying various natural compounds as potential therapeutics in neurodegenerative disorders. Amanda is currently applying to medical school while completing a Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences and a Master of Public Health at Tufts University.
Danny Burstein is currently playing Herr Schultz in *Cabaret* on Broadway for which he was nominated for a Tony Award, Drama Desk Award and Outer Critics Circle Award.

His 15 Broadway credits include: *The Snow Geese; Golden Boy* (2013 Tony and Outer Critics Circle nominations); *Follies* (2012 Tony, Astaire & Grammy Award nominations; Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards); *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown; South Pacific* (Tony and Drama Desk nominations, Outer Critics Circle Award); *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Tony and Ovation Award nominations); *Saint Joan; The Seagull; Three Men on a Horse; A Little Hotel On the Side; The Flowering Peach; A Class Act; Titanic and Company.*

Off-Broadway credits include: *Talley’s Folly* (Lucille Lortel & Drama League nominations); *Mrs. Farnsworth; Psych; All in the Timing; Merrily We Roll Along; Weird Romance and I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change.* Film/TV includes: *The Family Fang* (directed by Jason Bateman); Lolly Steinman on “Boardwalk Empire” (directed by Martin Scorsese); “Louie”; “Transamerica”; “Absolutely Fabulous”; “Ed”; all the “Law & Order” series; etc.

He recently made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Frosch in in the Jeremy Sams/Douglas Carter Beane production of *Die Fledermaus.*
EMILY KESSLER

Holocaust Survivor

Singer and Mandolin Player

Emily Kessler was born in the small town of Khmilnyk in western Ukraine in January of 1917. Khmilnyk was captured by the Germans in 1941. She was only 24 years old in the winter of 1942 when the Nazis and Ukrainian police came for her family. Her handicapped brother along with their parents were shot in front of her when the SS entered their home. Along with many others from her village, she was marched to a death camp in the forest at the edge of town. Unsure of her ethnicity, the Germans briefly allowed Emily and her young son to leave, but quickly after the release, a local officer recognized them. As that officer searched for them, Emily got on her hands and knees so she could crawl through the forest. Carrying her son under the back of her shirt, she somehow managed to get away.

Within two weeks of the escape, Emily sadly learned that more than 11,000 Jews from Khmilnyk were shot and killed. She lived in a labor camp for the last two years of the war.

After the war, she tried to pick up the pieces and worked as an editor of school textbooks in Ukraine. However, in 1980, she decided that moving to a new country might help the healing process and so, she came to the United States at age 64, with little knowledge of English. New to the country and not speaking the language, Emily supported herself by babysitting and rebuilt her life making a second home on the Upper West side of Manhattan, where she found a community of friends and neighbors.

One of the things that sustained her during the desperate times of persecution and still does so today, is her love of music and practicing the mandolin. Like many Holocaust survivors, she fled her homeland as an accomplished artist and still plays and performs today, so many years later.
My mother, a Holocaust survivor, turns 90 on October 28th. As she gets older, her own memory of what happened in Europe seventy six years ago fades away.

Some survivors, like my mother, become frailer and more memories fade. We are tempted to have our own memories fade. We may want to forget, or believe that the needs are less perhaps because there are fewer survivors with every year passing.

That is a fallacy. As survivors get older resources become more limited. Their health gets worse. Their own loved ones may have left this life. Their cries for help are louder, but they no longer have a voice.

As we run the 26.2 miles through the five boroughs on New York City on November 2nd, there will be numerous crowds cheering us on. But what we will hear in our hearts and our heads, are the voices that can’t be heard – these are the voices we will hear when we run. There will be 6 million spectators cheering but we will remember 6 million voices who were not heard seven decades ago. And as we run we will be saying these voices have never been louder.

Thank you for all your hard work, and all your support!

*Steven N. Joseph*
*Team Blue Card, 2014*
Arnold Breitbart
Hadas Brieger
Adolfo Dabbah
Vladimir (Vlad) Frenkel
Melissa Friedberg
Vanessa Fridman
Ron Gidron
Marshall Huebner
Barney Isralls
Not pictured above:

Cynthia Dayan, Yoni Levine, David Schechtman

and Henry Soussan
My father, Emil Wildman, was a Holocaust survivor. His mother had a prison-number tattoo on her forearm, but never told us the story of how that came to be, probably because the story was too terrible to recount. They came over by boat in '39 to Cuba, as the U.S. was not taking refugees from Germany at the time. Once the world started figuring out what happened, they came through Ellis Island in '40 and settled in the Bronx.

Growing up in New York City, my dad made sure that his kids always had enough, and they had what he did not. He also made sure that my brother and I always had a bicycle. That was important to him -- and remains vital to me today. Despite living in a modest New York City apartment with my family, which includes 2 kids, I have a collection of 9 bikes (10 if you include my Citibike membership). Sure there are bikes for my kids and my wife, but also a bike for all purposes and all seasons. I've been cycling my whole life, and started riding long-distance and road bikes about 20 years ago. About 15 years ago, I started riding in group events, including the 5 Boro.

After my mother, Edna Wildman, retired, I got her a bicycle and took her out for a few rides. Elie Rubenstein, my mother’s colleague & protégé, remembered Mom telling him about our bike rides -- and how much she enjoyed them -- and in 2010 reached out to me with a special proposition. As then executive director of The Blue Card, Elie had an idea: to sponsor a team to ride in 2011 Five Boro Bike Tour. He asked me to be the team’s captain. How could I say no? My mother worked on behalf of Jewish interests for most of her adult life; my Viennese father narrowly escaped becoming a victim of the Holocaust himself. Jewish activism is in my DNA.

2014 was my 4th year captaining Team Blue Card at the TD 5 Boro Bike Tour. My daughter Edie (a nickname for Edna) rode with me (as a passenger; she is barely five years old). My son, Mili (short for Emil) will be two and half and joined us on the bike, too (remember, I have a lot of bikes for a lot of purposes, including hauling human cargo). I only got my mom out on a bike a handful of times, but I think she’d be thrilled her grandchildren are riding by my side this year. I never got my dad out on a bike, but getting his namesake on this ride to lend a helping hand to those who were also probably deprived of bicycles as children, would make him feel very loved.
November 3, 2014

The Blue Card
171 Madison Avenue, Suite 1405
New York, NY 10016

Dear Friends:

It is a pleasure to send greetings to everyone gathered for the 2014 Annual Benefit Dinner of The Blue Card.

Founded in 1934, The Blue Card is an effective organization committed to providing direct assistance to vulnerable Holocaust survivors living in the United States. Everyone affiliated with this extraordinary initiative, including the strong team you fielded yesterday at the New York City Marathon, works hard to ease the burden of the survivors and to promote the right of all people to be treated with respect and dignity, helping new generations build a more tolerant and peaceful world.

Tonight, you come together to celebrate a milestone anniversary and to pay tribute to those who further your important mission, and I join in congratulating your distinguished honorees. On behalf of all New Yorkers, I commend those assembled this evening in respectfully acknowledging the courage and fortitude of the survivors of the Holocaust, and for providing us all with indelible lessons of the power of hope and perseverance.

With warmest regards and best wishes for an enjoyable evening.

Sincerely,

ANDREW M. CUOMO

WE WORK FOR THE PEOPLE
PERFORMANCE • INTEGRITY • PRIDE
printed on recycled paper
November 3, 2014

Dear Friends:

It is a pleasure to welcome everyone to The Blue Card’s Annual Benefit Dinner to celebrate its 80th Anniversary and the outstanding runners of The Blue Card TCS New York City Marathon team.

New Yorkers are united by our shared responsibility to lift each other up and support causes that better the lives of people in need across the five boroughs. Since 1934, The Blue Card has been a shining example of the generosity and compassion of our residents, making vital contributions to the well-being of Holocaust survivors and their families by providing medical services, financial assistance, and free vacation programs. The Blue Card continues to offer athletes the chance to dedicate their races to this important mission, and tonight is a wonderful opportunity to recognize their hard work and renew our commitment to building a better world.

On behalf of the City of New York, congratulations to all tonight’s honorees and marathoners. I offer my best wishes for a wonderful evening and continued success.

Sincerely,

Bill de Blasio
Mayor
COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor
October 8, 2014

Dear Friends:

I am pleased to commend you on your outstanding service with the Blue Card Foundation to care for underserved survivors of the Holocaust. Virginia is proud to have residents from across the Commonwealth participating in the New York City Marathon as part of the Blue Card Charity team.

Since 1934, The Blue Card Foundation has played an essential role in aiding Holocaust survivors in need. Your foundation’s dedication to aiding more than 2,000 survivors by providing financial assistance, medical care, and other essential services is commendable. It is essential to provide healthcare to all Americans, and your commitment to caring for those in need continues to set an inspiring example of service for all Americans. I send my best wishes for your continued success in the future.

Dorothy and I send you our best for a successful marathon.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor

TM/fo

Patrick Henry Building • 1111 East Broad Street • Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 786-2211 • TTY (800) 828-1120
www.governor.virginia.gov
The family of Margit Ulrich is deeply honored that The Blue Card is renaming its joint Simcha Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program with the Anne Frank Center, in her memory.

Born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1928, Margit immigrated to the United States in 1938. She and her sister Rita were first welcomed to Chicago by a foster family while their father found work and a place for them to live in New York; the three were reunited a few months later. Margit tended to recall few of the hardships she faced in having to flee her native land, but rather focused on the kindnesses she received as a young German Jewish immigrant in the United States. Despite the hardships of her childhood, she was deeply conscious of what she considered her good fortune and actively reached out to children, elderly and infirm people, through teaching, family dinners and charitable contributions. As the Trinity School’s Transportation Coordinator for many years, Margit also took a personal extra step each year with fourth grade students, by sharing her own Holocaust survival story, as well as the story of her second cousin, Anne Frank. Children were always greatly moved by Margit's history and she would answer every question with honesty and respect. In February 2007, the New York Times profiled her efforts as part of their ongoing chronicle of ordinary New Yorkers doing heroic work.

As part of her 15-year role on the board of The Blue Card, Margit carefully considered applications from Holocaust survivors for emergency funding of health and living needs. She was a life long, passionate advocate for the less fortunate, and believed in the mission of The Blue Card, to honor and give back to Holocaust survivors, and to educate the next generation in a mission of charity and respect.
The untimely passing of my brother, Dr. Mark Babatsky will remain one of his family’s greatest personal losses. To us, his family, he was warm, caring, playful, and gifted in so many different ways. Mark was well read in all genres, the arts, theatre, and politics. He enjoyed debating with anyone fool enough to start an argument about the next election or Hollywood’s Academy Awards in almost every category and year. Mark was well rounded in all his varied interests.

Education was a priority in our Bronx working class family. It was virtually predetermined at a young age that Mark was going to excel in all his studies, and ultimately become a doctor. Mark attended Bronx HS of Science, Columbia College, received his MD degree from Albert Einstein College of Medicine in 1984 and completed his internal medicine residency and chief residency at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Mark was recruited to Mass General Hospital for a GI fellowship program. Later on, Mark returned to Mount Sinai for Gastroenterology, rising in 2010 to become Chair of the Samuel Bronfman Department of Medicine. In this capacity, Mark’s expertise in the health care reforms allowed him to make major strides in the educational, research missions of the Department, and patient relationships. In 2014, he assumed new challenges as the Chair of Medicine at Monmouth Medical Center, St. Barnabas Medical Group.

Throughout his career, Mark was a distinguished physician, well recognized for his work nationally, receiving many honors and scholarship awards. He exhibited strong leadership skills, developing several research initiatives as a Director of the Education Research Consortium of Program Directors, working with the American College of Physicians. He published a defining textbook in the Genomics field, intended to educate physicians and trainees on how to apply genetics-era medicine to real world medicine. He was particularly concerned about passing on the ethical nature of medicine.

Mark’s love of learning was equally matched with his unique gift of teaching and mentoring, recognized in awards at the Medical School. Many of residents, now physicians in their own right have filled pages in tributes to Mark for his teaching and mentoring prowess always conducted with a gentle and kind touch. Mark had a caring and compassionate personality. He respected his patients, his residents, his colleagues and all he came in contact with. As a son of a Holocaust survivor, Mark developed programs to educate medical students and physicians about the atrocities of that era. Since 2004, he served on the Board of Directors of The Blue Card, an organization whose mission is to provide funds to Holocaust survivors in need. Paralleling his move in this direction, Mark met a Holocaust survivor (Irene Hizme) who had had performed medical experiments on her and her twin brother, Rene by Josef Mengele. Irene needed a medical procedure but given the trauma she experienced during the holocaust, she was refusing treatment. Mark was able to gain Irene’s trust which ultimately saved her life. Mark and Irene remained close friends until Mark’s passing.

Mark had more challenges he was looking forward to solving in the future. Mark leaves a truly impressive legacy to his family, his friends, his colleagues, his patients, and future physicians. He was successful as a physician, an educator, a mentor, an innovator, and as a leader.

Linda Meltzer, Esq.
For my mitzvah project, I decided to learn more about the Holocaust and do a community service project. I read about The Blue Card in a book, and thought that it sounded like a wonderful organization. This project taught me about the Holocaust while allowing me to help others.

As a part of my project, I remembered a child who was lost in the Holocaust through an organization called Remember Us. This child’s name was Hinda Muchnik. I remembered Hinda by doing research on her and compiling a packet of information that I found. These packets were handed out at my Bat Mitzvah. In addition, I placed a tallit on a chair on the bima during my Bat Mitzvah service. I hope that this portion of my mitzvah project will help people think of those lost in the Holocaust as more than numbers.

After starting this part of my project, I heard about The Blue Card. I thought that it would perfectly complement my Remember Us project and add an element of community service. I designed blue bracelets for this organization. They read, “The Blue Card Fund” on one side and “NVR 4GET” on the other. I sold these bracelets to my friends, at my synagogue and on holidays. In addition to the money I raised, I also gave my extra bracelets to The Blue Card, so that they can use them to raise awareness.

In conclusion, this project taught me about the tragic events of the Holocaust and helping individuals who are less fortunate. It is very important to remember the Holocaust, victims who were killed and a small minority who survived. Thank you to The Blue Card for this great opportunity.
For her Bat Mitzvah Project, sixth-grader Marlowe Dalton, visited Holocaust survivors on Purim. Marlowe set out to learn about the Holocaust by delivering mishloach manos to Emily Kessler and Eva Costabel. The Blue Card Purim baskets were assembled by Temple Emanu-El.

Visiting Emily and Eva enabled Marlowe not only to learn about the tragic events of the Holocaust, but to also feel the profound trauma World War II had on the Jewish people.

Marlowe spoke about The Blue Card at her Bat Mitzvah which took place on October 11th and announced that she will be donating a portion of her gifts to support the organization’s mission.
62291.

A simple number. Yet this number was beat down, spit at, shot at and dehumanized. This number was expected to wither away and perish like so many other numbers that passed under the ‘Arbet Machet Frei’ sign at the gates of the camp.

Yet this number survived.

This number lifted itself from the ashes and the gas. This number lifted itself up from the very gates of hell to live once again.

This number is more than just the number tattooed on my grandmothers arm, but this number is the reason I am here today. It’s the reason that the two children, the seven grandchildren and the eighteen great grandchildren that are all apart of this world today because this number decided not to be just a number written down in the column of ‘dead’ on the files of the SS, but did the impossible task of surviving, living, and passing the memory on to all those who would hear.

Today I remember not only the number on my grandmothers arm, but the uncountable many who never had the chance to survive, to live and to pass on the memories of their own.

I pledge to my grandmother, to the survivors and to the many who perished in the flames of the Holocaust, that I will never forget.

Mendy Friedman,

*Student at the Frish School*
DELIVERING PURIM BASKETS TO HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS IN NEW JERSEY

Mendy Friedman, and sister Niki Friedman
Dear Young Leaders,

As the chairman of the Young Leadership committee I would like to congratulate my Young Leadership colleagues of the Blue Card for another successful year.

We have implemented a number of initiatives this year: Launching the volunteer hospital visitation program; hosting exciting charity events including our biggest ever annual Ping Pong tournament and auction at the Chelsea Piers; recruiting bikers and runners for our various marathon partnerships in New York and Israel; organizing a clothing drive, and volunteering for ongoing educational projects.

Your dedication and hard work is greatly appreciated and means so much to Holocaust survivors. Dignity was forcibly taken from them during the Holocaust and now more than ever, in recent times with all the turmoil in the world, we are even more so appreciative of the survivors’ endless struggle to preserve human rights and dignity against all odds.

Let us all continue to stay united together, give back and never forget. We look forward to another great year ahead. Kol Hakavod to all of you and the important work that you do.

Best Wishes,

Eve Stieglitz, Blue Card Young Leadership Chair
THIRD ANNUAL
PING PONG SOCIAL

Young Leadership Committee
Josh Pearl, Masha Pearl, Mitch Kaftik
Guests

Rinat Brodach and Albert Spector
Barbara and Michael Lissner
with guests
Ariella Lichtig and Eve Stieglitz

Aaron Krantz, Ariella Lichtig, Eve Stieglitz and Konstantin Burshteyn
Eliese Lissner
Guests

Raffle winner
Kayla Mahler and guest
Izabella Safiyeva, Elie Rubinstein and Tanya Figelman
In Honor of The Blue Card organization. Your cause is the most noble and unfortunately needed. You perform your task with utmost respect and dignity.

I congratulate the hard working staff of The Blue Card. Congratulations to the extraordinary honorees, Seth Klarman, Ambassador Thomas Pickering, Amanda Bilski.

*Arie & Elaine Hochberg*
With deep respect and admiration for the important work of The Blue Card

In honor of Amanda Esther Bilski

You inspire us with your passion for helping others and your commitment to improving conditions for those in need!
May you go from strength to strength!

All our love,
Mom and Dad, Meredith and Charlotte

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” - Anne Frank
Amy and I are gratified to introduce with The Blue Card the “Rita Berkowitz Nutrition Guidance Program” and to carry forth our mission

Amy & Louis Berkowitz
The Shillman Foundation and Robert J. ("Doctor Bob") and Mao Shillman express their heartfelt appreciation to Elie Rubinstein and the staff of The Blue Card for their continued and unwavering efforts to assist needy Jewish survivors of the Holocaust

Robert J. Shillman (Doctor Bob)
& Mao Shillman
In loving memory of our parents, grandparents and great grandparents

_Lotte and Max Heine_

Doris and Hans, Karin, Peggy and Jared, Michael and Cristina, Judy and Steve, David and Ruchira, Daniel, Jordan, Adam, Allison, Zachary, Max, Lina, Jacob and Priyanka
Seth,

We are honored to celebrate your leadership, commitment and impact. Max would be so delighted.

Doris, Hans, Karin, Peggy and Jared
The Trustees of the Curt C. and Else Silberman Foundation are pleased to support the vital work of The Blue Card and the Silberman Dental Program

Curt C. Silberman was a jurist, educator, community leader and organizer of numerous Jewish organizations and social agencies in Germany and the United States. As a young lawyer in Germany, Curt witnessed the disintegration of that country’s fragile democratic institutions and the suffering of his generation that ensued. He was determined that the memory of that suffering not paralyze, but educate future generations. He devoted his life of 94 years to fighting for the rights of the victims of Nazi persecution, and to assuring that the roots of prejudice and the Holocaust, and the lessons thereof, are understood, so as to serve for the betterment of society. It is this legacy that guides the work of the Curt C. & Else Silberman Foundation, Peter Friedmann, President. (Curt Silberman; b. Wurzburg 1908, d. West Orange, NJ 2002)
Congratulations to Seth A. Klarman on receiving the Max L. Heine Humanitarian Award

Michael F. Price
Shoshanna Lonstein Gruss and her company are proud supporters of The Blue Card.

When I came across The Blue Card and its mission of helping destitute Holocaust survivors, I knew I had to get involved. It touched every area of my heart and concern. As the daughter and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, I saw first-hand how much pain and suffering these people had endured. To imagine people having gone through the incomprehensible atrocities of the Holocaust and continuing to suffer is more than I could bear. I felt I had to do anything in my power to help spread the mission of The Blue Card, and to help stop the suffering these brave people are still experiencing.
In honor of the Sonia and Max Lonstein "Bring-A-Smile" Program.

Lending support to Holocaust survivors facing life-threatening illness.

Betty & Zach Lonstein
To the 3,000 brave villagers of Le Chambon for saving 5,000 Jewish children... We are forever grateful.

Harriet Abramson
Congratulations
to
Masha Pearl,
Executive Director
of
The Blue Card

*Brahman Capital Corp.*
Congratulations and Mazel Tov to our dedicated Board of Directors and staff.

We thank our wonderful honorees
Seth Klarman
Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering
Amanda Bilski

From the Lissner Family
Thank you to our honoree, Seth Klarman, for inspiring us all to bring about change and to make the world a better place.

Richard and Heidi Rieger
Amanda Bilski
we are so proud and in awe of all
that you have accomplished.
We look forward to what lies ahead.

With love,
The Rieger Family
BRONZE

With Gratitude to The Blue Card for its Life-Affirming and Life-Saving Work with Indigent Holocaust Survivors

And

In Honor of the Lives and Memories of:

Jakob Mogilnik, z’l (2006)
Gita Mogilnik, z’l (2001)
Sara Mogilnik, z’l (1996)
David Mogilnik, z’l (1975)

Asna Rodwogen Mogilnik
Beryl Mogilnik
Sonia Mogilnik
Hershele Mogilnik (age 4)
Shepshele Mogilnik (age 2)
Murdered at Ponar, 1943
z’l

Rachmiel Mogilnik
Murdered at Majdanek
z’l

Zalman Mogilnik
Time and Place of Death Unknown
z’l

Leib Mogilnik & Family
Murdered in Vilna, Date Unknown
z’l


BRONZE
In Loving Memory of Jakob Mogilnik
Loving father, husband, brother, uncle, 
grandpa, fighter, survivor.

Ossie and Douglas Spector
Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York is proud to support The Blue Card in its work on behalf of the Jewish community
In memory of my paternal grandfather, enslaved at Mauthausen, and my grandmother who escaped death numerous times at Auschwitz. Most of their relatives did not survive.
Wishing everyone who works so tirelessly for The Blue Card, congratulations! May you continue your outstanding work for many years to come.

*Aish NY*

*Engaging young Jews to live inspired Jewish lives*
The Anne Frank Center USA

Congratulates Seth Klarman
Ambassador Thomas Pickering
Amanda Bilski
Thank You for 80 Years of Ensuring Victims of the Holocaust Are Not Forgotten

_Yasher Koach_

We are grateful for the privilege to engage with you

The Barnert Temple Community,
Franklin Lakes, NJ

Jeff Wild, Chair, Social Action
Rich Edelman, Chair, The Blue Card Liaison
The Board of Trustees, Kathy Hecht, President
Elyse Frishman and Rachel Steiner, Rabbis
Sara Losch, Lifelong Learning Director
Bike New York

Congratulates The Blue Card!

www.bikenewyork.nyc
Mazal Tov to Amanda Bilski on this incredible honor. May you continue to be a source of great pride and nachat to your family and everyone who knows you.

*Cindy and David Pitkoff*
Proud to support
The Blue Card
On behalf of the Russian-speaking Jewish community of New York, COJECO would like to congratulate The Blue Card on your exemplary work!

To learn more about COJECO, please visit www.cojeco.org; tel: 212-566-2120.
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Best wishes for continued success

Elizabeth Bergstein
For Irene Hizme
Always in my heart
Love you

Ellie
Congratulations to this year’s inspiring honorees:

Seth Klarman

Ambassador Thomas Pickering

Amanda Bilski

Thanks for all you do to make the world a better place and to help the Blue Card’s clients live out their lives in dignity.

Best wishes,
Gia Machlin & Corey Sclar
In recognition of Masha Pearl and the amazing Blue Card staff

*Gregory & Tatyana Girshin*
80 years of providing assistance to the community.
Keep up the great work.

*Harriet and Sy Finder*
Congratulations to this year’s honorees
In honor of
Seth Klarman
Ambassador Thomas Pickering
Amanda Bilski

Happy to support our
Executive Director, Masha Pearl
who goes above and beyond
the call of duty.

Inessa and Elie Rubinstein
All our love to our special
Temmi Merlis
Hatzlacha + Kol Tuv

Heshy + Lobo
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Jerusalem Marathon

salutes its charity partner

The Blue Card
To all the wonderful staff at The Blue Card who make it possible for our survivors to live with dignity and kindness.

*Leora Kahn and Nathan Kravis*
The Liebling Family
We applaud the wonderful life-affirming work done by The Blue Card organization.

Madelaine Haberman and Michael Sprung
Congratulations to all our inspiring honorees:

Seth Klarman

Ambassador Thomas Pickering

Amanda Bilski

with special thanks to our extraordinary Blue Card Staff and with love to all our cherished clients.

From Mimi Lieber and Dan Sullivan

In loving memory of Coleman Lieber and Nicky Engelman who fought the good fight and Rivke and Ephraim Gerson who won by living.

Mimi Lieber
Moishe House is proud to support The Blue Card

Moishe House, a pluralistic international organization, provides meaningful Jewish experiences to young adults in their 20s. Our innovative model trains, supports and sponsors young Jewish leaders as they create vibrant home-based communities for themselves and their peers.

To learn more, please visit www.moishehouse.org
In recognition of the fine work of Elie Rubinstein and Harriet Abramson in support of The Blue Card

David and Nancy Gavrin
In appreciation of Masha Pearl for all her hard work and dedication to The Blue Card

Nancy & Allan Pearl
New York Foundation for Eldercare is pleased to support The Blue Card and congratulates this year’s Honorees:

Seth A. Klarman

Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering

Amanda Bilski

Michael Tietz
President

Tanya Figelman
Executive Director
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Seed the Dream Foundation
Marcy Gringlas and Joel Greenberg
are proud to support the important work of:

The Blue Card, Inc.

and congratulate

Seth A. Klarman
Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering
and Amanda Bilski

For their commitment to honor and assist the survivors of the Holocaust.
In tribute to their extraordinary bravery and resilience, and in loving memory of our parents,

Jenny and Sol Chinitz

and in memory of their parents and siblings.

Susan and Larry Chinitz and family
In honor of Orit’s great work with

The Blue Card

In memory of Vitaly Gregory Raevsky
a Zionist and a staunch supporter of
Jewish causes.

The Shender Family
Congratulations to The Blue Card for the wonderful services they provide.

Tom and Madeline Elghanayan
Exclusive for friends of the Blue Card

The Blue Button, a truly mobile emergency response system. Press the button and we know who you are, where you are, we hear you, you hear us, and we send help fast.

Purchase the Button get a year of free service, rent it for a year and get three months free.

We are once again so very pleased to be a part of the good works performed by The Blue Card and its wonderful staff.

The Rosenfeld Family
Amcest Corp. Roselle, NJ 800-631-7370
We salute all of the kind and dedicated people at the Blue Card organization. You help us reach so many and find smart, impactful ways to improve lives. To all of the honorees – you do amazing work. It is so good to have you a part of this.

I dedicate this in memory of my father, Vitaly Raevsky, great father, scientist, philanthropist, human being and a survivor of Nazi Persecution.

Orít and Alex Hodarkovsky
Congratulations to all of the honorees. Special thanks to Masha Pearl and all of the remarkable staff at Blue Card.

Hillel at Baruch College
We congratulate the wonderful honorees of The Blue Card Gala and applaud their commitment to making the world a better place.

Zeva Oelbaum and John Reichman
Congratulations to Amanda Bilski, J-Teen Leadership Co-Founder, for serving as a role model to us and continuing to make a difference in the world.

J-Teen Leadership
In fond memory of David Heller

*Albert Wojnilower*

Congratualtions, Amanda Bilski, on this very special honor.

*Grandparents Sandy and Allen Dickerman*
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Farrell Fritz proudly supports
The Blue Card Annual Dinner.

Congratulations to award recipients,
Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering (Retired),
Seth A. Klarman and Amanda Bilski.
We wish continued success in all your endeavors

Helen and William Kober
EcoPlum.com is Proud to Support
The Blue Card

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Non-Profit Organizations by Charity Navigator
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• Michael Stalonas
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• Renee Kotler Krieger and Abraham Krieger
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• Ellen Pogos
• Dorien Grunbaum
• Theodor Lichtmann
• Daniella Schwartz
• Nathan and Beth Greenbaum
• Richard T. Quigley and Hillary B. Kahn
• Denise Benmosche
Dear Masha and the Board Of Directors,

We stand at crossroads. The conflict between Hamas and Israel has galvanized people all over the world to take sides. Particularly upsetting has been the resurgence of Jewish hatred everywhere. These days are reminiscent of the 1930s in Nazi Germany.

I admit that I am scared and others may be as well. I thank you for the many years of support to give me a quality life.

My fervent wish for Rosh Hashanah is that we merit a year of peace and security for the state of Israel, good tidings for the Jewish people and may all good people throughout the world be blessed.

(30/9/05)
Dear Blue Card
Thank you so very very much for the help you are giving me. I am so grateful. I wish you happy healthy years.
A very grateful
Ruth

Please accept my sincere thanks for your generous Chandra gift. It was such a help to me and very good to keep good use.
I would very much appreciate if you can think of me in the future to help me make life easier, since my income is very limited.
Sincerely yours

Thank You so much for the Birthday gift and card. It has brought tears in my eyes and love in my heart.
Love
Georgette

We are very grateful for everything you did for us. We thank you for your kindness; with your help and hard work you’ve made things easier for us.
Thank you.
Sincerely
Rohit, Nomi
In Loving Tribute to
The Founders of the Blue Card:
Dr. Richard Jung,
Hans & Hella Hammelbacher,
Martin Schwarzchild,
Stephan Rosskamm, & others.

Frank & Beri Harris’
NBG-Ft’s Five Generations
Lee Daniel Fund,
Honor the Heroes of
The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
Yasher Koach to Amanda Bilski, an amazing Young Leader!

You inspire us all!

Love,
*The Slone–Goldstein and Wexler Families*

In memory of Jakob Mogilnik

*Wendi and Stephen Trilling*
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Nei Yasnogorodsky
November 3, 2014

Dear Friends:

It gives me great pleasure to send greeting to all those gathered at Avery Fisher Hall for The Blue Card’s 2014 Annual Benefit Dinner.

I am especially delighted to have the opportunity to congratulate my colleague Ambassador Tom Pickering as he receives the Richard C. Holbrooke Award for Social Justice. This honor is a fitting tribute to Ambassador Pickering’s remarkable career advancing our shared values and his dedicated service to our country. Allow me to also congratulate his fellow awardees.

Since the 1930s, The Blue Card has been at forefront of helping persecuted Jews, and today is the only national organization in the United States whose sole mission is to help Holocaust survivors who are in need. I commend the Blue Card for its extraordinary work and commitment to this community. While I regret that I cannot be with you on this special occasion, please know you have my best wishes for a wonderful evening and for continued success in your mission to give Holocaust survivors the assistance and dignity they so richly deserve.

With appreciation and warm regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Hillary Rodham Clinton
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BLUE CARD AND ALL HONOREES

INTERNATIONAL March of the Living

The March of the Living is an international educational program which brings Jewish youth and adults from all over the world to Poland and Israel in order to learn about the history of the Holocaust and the State of Israel. The program is unique in that it revolves around the most important days in recent Jewish history – participants are in Poland for Yom Hashoah and in Israel for Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut. As a program which has been operating for over 27 years, with over 200,000 participants, the March of the Living experience is one that changes lives. The 2015 March begins April 12/13, 2015.

www.motl.org motl@motlmail.org
Boeing applauds The Blue Card and former Ambassador Thomas Pickering, recipient of the Richard C. Holbrooke Award for Social Justice, in their work to assist Holocaust survivors in the United States.
A 97-YEAR-OLD HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR IS ABOUT TO PLAY HER FIRST CONCERT AT LINCOLN CENTER

By Geoffrey Gray and Abraham Riesman

Emily Kessler, a 97-year-old Holocaust survivor from Ukraine, plays music for herself. From inside her apartment on the Upper West Side, she practices her mandolin and sings folk songs as a means to bring herself joy and remember a time before the war, when she was with her family.

“We were singing,” she says of her childhood. “My mother, my father. My mother had a voice that when someone heard [it], they thought the radio was playing.”
Kessler is her own humble talent, a soulful voice packed in her petite frame. When she plays for audiences, they’ve typically been adult groups at community centers. But on Monday night, Kessler is slated to make her debut at Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall, giving a solo performance to coincide with a fund-raising dinner held by the Blue Card, a nonprofit that offers aid to Holocaust survivors.

The performance is part of her incredible odyssey that started when she was a widowed teenager, running and hiding from the Nazis with a baby son and adopted daughter. Masha Pearl, executive director of Blue Card, says the group chose Kessler because her display of personal strength and commitment to music has been an inspiration for the group. "She’s able to channel something very painful and deep," Pearl said.

When the Nazis invaded Ukraine in the summer of 1941, Kessler’s husband, a journalist, went to fight them and never came home. Before her family was rounded up and taken to concentration camps, Kessler says she watched the Nazis shoot her brother and later watched S.S. soldiers kill her mother and father. Widowed with a young child, Kessler survived the war through a combination of extraordinary grit, the kindness of strangers, fake documentation papers, and several years roaming between homes and sleeping in attics and parks to avoid the police or S.S. officers. Back then, she had blonde hair, the bluest eyes, a Ukrainian surname, and lied about her Jewish roots to survive.

“They ask me, ‘Are you Jewish? Are you Juden?’ I say I am not,” Kessler recalls of one of many encounters with Nazi soldiers. Many memories are so disturbing, she prefers to keep them to herself.

“I lost my mind,” she says. “I didn’t understand [anything]. My fear took away my mind. I wanted to go only home. Until now, I don’t how I survived with children, without food.”

Through fake papers, Kessler was able to avoid the camps. Eventually, she made her way with scores of other refugees to New York, where she has rediscovered the mandolin. She sings in Yiddish and Russian and plays scores of ballads and folk songs. Her typical audiences are small groups of seniors. Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall, home of the New York Philharmonic, has nearly 3,000 seats.

Kessler is not nervous. She has her outfit, a black blouse and skirt, prepared. She’s also packed wooden blocks she uses as foot rests and to support her mandolin on her lap. She has six songs prepared, and she’s been practicing, but she’s also brought lyrics to a few more of her favorites, just in case the crowd at Lincoln Center asks to hear more of her music.

“It makes you forget the bitterness of the life, the unfairness, and the cruelty of everything,” she says of music. “Music is not cruel. It’s always peace and love.”
Congratulations to The Blue Card and the 2014 Honorees
Seth Klarman
Ambassador Thomas Pickering
Amanda Bilski

Liz & Aby Shamir