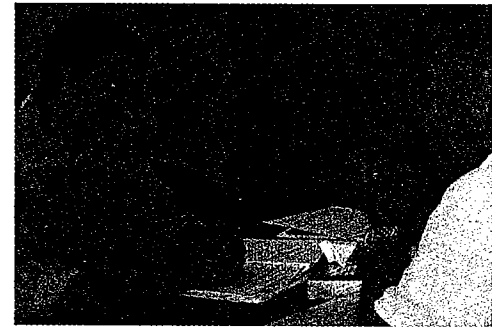


JFS offers Pro Bono Legal Assistance for Survivor Claims

A new fund was recently established for the German government to pay Holocaust Survivors for "voluntary" work done in ghettos. JFS case managers have already assisted more than 100 Survivors in filling out applications. To assist a greater number of Survivors, a new program arranged with the Bet Tzedek Legal Services Network in Los Angeles is providing training in completing these applications to area attorneys who are willing to volunteer their time.

Local firms Honigman, Miller, Schwartz and Cohn, LLP, Barris, Sott, Denn and Driker, PLLC, Bodman, LLP, and Steinhardt, Pesick and Cohen, have made attorneys available to complete this training and help Survivors at no charge. To date, 40 attorneys have been trained. Survivors seeking legal assistance do not need to be current JFS clients.

The letter below is from one of the attorneys who has volunteered his time.



Volunteer Attorney Josh Moss assists a JFS client.

A volunteer's perspective...



Todd R. Mendel

I, along with three other local lawyers--Doug Salzenstein, Josh Moss and Adam Cohen-- recently volunteered to staff a clinic for the purpose of helping local Holocaust survivors complete applications for compensation from the German government for work that they performed in any ghetto during WWII. It was felt that given the overwhelming denial rate of compensation claims for similar German government programs, that assistance from lawyers in completing these applications would increase the success rate on the claims. The most that these survivors could receive is 2,000 Euros, or about \$3,000, and they must verify that the ghetto work was "voluntary". I had some very serious personal reservations about doing this. I thought, "What an absolute insult to these people to give them only \$3,000 for what they went through, and for them to have to state that it was voluntary work". I did not want to assist in this final disrespect to these people. Moreover, the German government has records that they use to compare against these applications and any discrepancies could cause the application to be denied. I can't remember what I had for lunch yesterday, and these people are expected to remember dates and places from 65 years ago while they were enduring the worst inhumanities ever perpetrated in the history of the world.

Some inner feeling that guides me through just about everything in life and that defies explanation led me to do this anyway. After meeting with several survivors and filling out their applications, I can wholeheartedly say that this has been one of the most important services I have ever provided in my 18-year career as a lawyer, and as a Jew in this community. It is not about the \$3,000. It is not my decision or right to determine for any Holocaust Survivor whether he or she should apply for this money. What I failed to comprehend before I did this was the benefit of meeting with these Survivors and hearing their stories. It was good for them to just tell someone what happened, and it was something I needed to hear. In this setting, the whole purpose of the meeting is to hear what happened to them during the Holocaust, and to dig into some of the details as best as possible so that the applications can be thoroughly completed. I came to realize that being in a ghetto was consistently the mildest part of their experience.

I have read about the Holocaust a lot. But this was different. As I watched their eyes and facial expressions, I could see them go back to these places in their minds to describe them to me. Each person had particular facts stick with them and was able to describe them so clearly as if they happened yesterday. Their feelings about what they told me still showed as raw and fresh as ever. As they are telling me, I imagine whether I could have lived through this as they did, and what it would have been like to have my spouse, children, parents and siblings torn away from me in an instant, with people threatening me in screamed foreign languages with rifles.

I couldn't possibly have a bad day since I started doing this. Any problem I have pales in comparison to what these survivors endured. While I initially set out to hopefully provide a little benefit to some Holocaust survivors, this turned out to be one of the most valuable experiences in my life.

Todd R. Mendel

Barris, Sott, Denn & Driker, P.L.L.C.

Mentor Connection Hosts First Summer BBQ

On August 24th, 150 mentors, youth, friends and family had a fun-filled day at Kensington Park. This was an event for the mentors and youth to hang out and have fun together with their families. The day included a moonwalk, caricature artist, face painting and tattoos, watermelon eating contest, raffle prizes and lots of BBQ! At the end of the day everyone had a great time, and Mentor Connection plans to make this an annual event. Special thanks goes to event sponsors

Amanda Warner, Rick and Mary Jane Larson, Gary Plasko, and Judy Stern.

Mentor Connection participants enjoy group activities throughout the year, such as Tigers games, bowling parties, seasonal festivals and fairs, and even a yoga/spa day. For more information about Mentor Connection, please contact Jennifer Brubaker at 248-592-2317, or e-mail at jbrubaker@jfsdetroit.org, and visit www.mentorconnect.org.



Mentor program participants (from left) Andrew and Jacob had fun on the giant slide at the BBQ.