

Shelly Weiner

One of the Jewish values I prize most is the idea that we should leave this world better than we came into it. We must appreciate others and speak out against wrongs; we each have to take responsibility for that.

I know what it is to be dependent on the good deeds of others. When the Nazis came in 1941 to terrorize my hometown of Ravana, Poland, we fled to Ukraine. There, a farmer's son convinced his father to hide us, first in the cramped attic of his barn, then in a hole underground. In 1949 we again received help, this time from my father's uncle, who brought us to Philadelphia.

We had only brought **two hundred fifty dollars**, but we were determined not to receive handouts, even though it meant my parents taking jobs in factories and subways. Though our lives gradually became more stable, we still didn't have much. But as little as we had, there was always sharing. My parents frequently took in guests; I never knew who would be sleeping in the dining room, who would be sleeping in the kitchen. There was always an extra two dollars to give somebody for the bus ride to look for a job, and if somebody needed a coat, my mother would go in the closet and say, "Let's see what we have."

In this new place we relied on familiar Jewish traditions for comfort, keeping kosher and observing all the rules of rest on Shabbos. Even after all the horrors, being Jewish was who we were; that's all there was to it.

Years later when I moved to Greensboro, I became active in the community here. I was involved with B'nai Shalom as well as the Federation, where I served as Campaign Chair. I've helped begin several programs in Greensboro, like the Hadassah Walk, and the Russian resettlement efforts here. I felt a responsibility to bring other Jews to the U.S. as I'd been brought here; I had already brought my cousin and aunt over and wanted to do the same for others. I also established the Greensboro-Beltsy Partnership, feeling that, because of my history, I could understand the people of Moldova who had been cut off from Judaism for so long.

My concern for the future is that Judaism doesn't have the same meaning to the younger generation that it did to ours, and we don't know how to make it important to them. Nobody wants to use the Holocaust as the tool, so this generation needs to find something that's meaningful enough to make them want to want to stay Jewish. I feel that the values Judaism perpetuates are good values. I'm proud of them, and I hope my children and grandchildren are, too.