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Runners raise money for Holocaust survivors at Miami Marathon



The JCS Alliance Team Blue Card raised money for local Holocaust survivors at the Miami Marathon. (Jewish Community Services/Courtesy)



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Runners ran for a great cause of supporting South Florida Holocaust survivors during the recent Fitbit **Miami** Marathon and Half Marathon 2019.

Since 2013, Jewish Community Services of South Florida's JCS Alliance, the organization's young professionals group, has teamed up with The Blue Card, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to providing ongoing, direct financial aid and support to Holocaust survivors in the United States, for the JCS Alliance Team Blue Card for this annual marathon.

This year's team raised more than \$54,000 to provide support for Holocaust survivors living in poverty in Miami-Dade County. With a Claims Conference match of 20-to-1, the team's impact is more than \$1 million.

Adam Schwartzbaum, who founded Team Blue Card, said this year's team raised more money than ever before. Schwartzbaum, who is an attorney, said his inspiration for this team began while working on legal cases representing Holocaust survivors seeking benefits from the German government and from various funds.

"It always gives me tremendous pride knowing that we're supporting these survivors who are in the most deserving of help," he said. "It makes me proud, it makes me very satisfied and I feel inspired by these survivors. When I think of what they've been through and their stories, it makes me believe that if they can overcome what they've been through, then the problems I have in my life pale in comparison. I'm proud to be able to do this work and I'm very inspired by these individuals who we have the honor to be able to serve."

Participant Gloria Garces said running with Team Blue Card for the first time this year was an inspiring experience for her.

"I have run the marathon before, but this is the first time that I felt I ran with such an important cause in my mind. It was a beautiful experience."

Garces said that aside from the satisfaction of knowing that she was instrumental in helping the survivors in the community, she thought being part of a team of people who have the same goals and similar interests to help people in need was a beautiful thing.

"I was able to connect with them and meet new people who also feel that same way as I do in terms of needing to step up as a community and help those more than 600 Holocaust survivors who live in our community at the poverty level or below the poverty level."

Abe Rudman, JCS' board chair, emphasized that "it is critically important that the community be involved and takes responsibility for this population, who have already suffered so much, so that they can live with dignity in what remains of their golden years."

The marathon fittingly took place on International Holocaust Remembrance Day this year. A few days before the marathon, the runners met for a team orientation dinner where they also met and heard a story by Holocaust survivor Aranka Siegal of Aventura.

At age 13, Siegal was sent to Auschwitz with her entire family, and only she and her older sister survived. She praised the runners she spoke to and met.

"These are wonderful people that I spoke to. I was really very impressed. Most of them are very young people, and they are a very lovely group of people. I was very pleased and proud of them."

Garces, said, "I think being able to meet with a Holocaust survivor a few days before the race was a very memorable moment."

"We got to hear her story and how she is helped by JCS. I think that was beautiful because the stories come to life. One thing is to hear that this happened, and another thing is to hear the testimony from someone who has gone through it and is getting the help that we're working to get."

Schwartzbaum said that Siegal was very inspiration, uplifting and heart-warming."

"She has real optimism and a positive outlook on life. The fact that she has found so much joy and meaning after everything's she's been through was so inspiration and uplifting."

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