

Growing up, Rizy was fascinated by the Holocaust, a subject about which she knew almost nothing. Her mother is a survivor, but like so many others during that era, she never discussed her experiences. "She was never truly happy, and I never understood why," reflects Rizy. "But no one spoke back then. I went to Bais Yaakov of Williamsburg, and all our parents were survivors, but it was like a big, dark secret that no one mentioned. My father was a Canadian, so on his side of the family we had uncles, aunts, and cousins, which was a rarity. Almost no one had extended family. Everyone used to tell me, 'You're so lucky.'"

One day, Rizy found her mother's papers from [Wiedergutmachung](#) and read her report. It was her first real window into her mother's life, something that had always been a mystery to her. As her awareness grew, so did her desire to help.

"It's become an obsession to do whatever I can for survivors," said Rizy. "They are all family. I try to make Nachas their second home."

Twice a week, Nachas offers exercise classes. There is also a regular *shiur* and a pizza party. Thanks to the generosity of another organization, Nachas has been able to send a group of survivors on a four day, five night vacation to Oppenheimer's Hotel in Fleischmanns, New York. "One man cried like a baby when I told him about the vacation," Rizy says. "He told me that since he lost his wife, he spent every day just sitting by the window."

Before Rosh Hashanah, Nachas arranged for groups of survivors to visit the Lubavitch Rebbe's Ohel and also to do *tashlich*, as per their request.

Whether it's a winter coat, a problem with the bank, or an empty refrigerator, Rizy and her team will do whatever it takes to take care of the survivors who are part of their network. One woman had unsuccessful eye surgery that left her blind. A sponsor was arranged, and she received a pair of computerized glasses that are able to vocally identify the items pointed to by the wearer.

Then there was the woman – dignified, beautiful, yet impoverished – who was found digging through garbage cans for food. Rizy went door-to-door to collect money for her.

In the spring, when Hungarian survivors have *yahrtzeit* for those who were deported, Nachas hosts a Day of Remembrance, an event that has been covered by *Channel 12 News* and the *New York Post*. Each year, they honor various people who made a difference during the war, such as Raoul Wallenberg and Mike Tress, along with diplomats representing

surrounded by memories when he sings there," says Rizy.



Dealing with Survivors

Many of the survivors Rizy works with have incredible energy. "When we do parties, they yell that there's not enough room to dance," she says. "They all look out for each other, and rally around each other when a problem arises."

Their *emunah* inspires her on a daily basis. "I ask them sometimes, why did you remain a Jew after all you went through? They all answer the same thing: that the last thing their parents told them was to remember who they are and where they came from. This stays with them for life."

Food, something they were severely deprived of during the war years, is a hot-button issue with survivors. "It's a very important part of their lives," says Rizy, who once opened the refrigerator of a survivor and found that it was packed with spoiled food. "We got a grant from the Eli Weisel Foundation that allows us to serve supper three times a week. Those suppers are very popular around here."

For the children of survivors, the many levels of additional support offered by Nachas for their parents can be a lifeline. "Holocaust survivors never had the opportunity to watch a parent grow old," says Rizy. "They are challenged generationally, and this manifests itself into neediness as they grow old. They don't realize what they are doing to their children. One woman - a mother and wife - told me that her mother expected her to sleep with her every night, and she just couldn't manage."

What's it like working daily with members of the generation that is simultaneously strong and fragile, one that we hope will be here forever but recognize that impossibility? "I take it one day at a time," says Rizy. "I

any more. I tell myself that they're on vacation.

She adds, "You can't think about the fact that they won't be around forever. One survivor told me, 'We'll dance together before Moshiach.' And that's what I tell myself as well."

Telling the World

In an age when the unthinkable denial of the Holocaust is happening, Rizi doesn't have to protest. She just has to *show*.

Rizi went with Dov Hikind a few months ago to a protest that preceded the deportation of Jakiw Palij, the Polish Nazi camp guard. "I met a guy there from AP who asked me, 'What is in Auschwitz?' He had no clue. I asked another guy, 'Did you see the film *Schindler's List*?' He said, 'Yeah, what a story.' I said, 'It's not a story! It's real! There's a member of our organization who was in that factory during the war.'"

When an insurance company sent a group of agents down to Nachas to meet firsthand with survivors and become familiar with the history of the Holocaust, Rizi showed them a book containing photos of Dachau when it was liberated by the Americans. They were all crying.

"Wherever I go, I say, 'I have all the proof that the Holocaust happened,'" Rizi says.

But for all her efforts, it never feels like enough.

When Rizi expressed this to one survivor, he said words that remain with her as she tries her best, day after day, to do whatever she can to help.

"When we go up to *Shamayim*," he said, "we will tell Hashem that you tried to help us. We will bear witness for you."

