

David Balto is a mensch. He is a generous man with a big heart.

I met David at Ohev Sholom and for years, I've witnessed the wonderful work he has done for our community and many others.

He has always been available to help people in need. David visited many members of Ohev that were housebound.

When Alexander Tscherny, a 94 year old Holocaust survivor couldn't come to shul anymore, David visited Alexander and his wife Elena at their home. David read to Alexander, chatted with him about music and Judaism. During Purim, David brought them a gift of shlachmones that they enjoyed, and sang Alex's childhood Purim songs. David visited Alexander until the end of his life.

He often visited with Anna Yuter, one of our oldest members who resided at the Hebrew Home, to celebrate her birthdays or just to catch up. They talked about her old neighborhood in DC and how she and her sister would go to the Tidal Basin to swim when it got hot. When Anna passed away, David worked on getting an inscribed monument for her grave. A very important act of chesed since she didn't have any close relatives remaining.

When Gerry Steinkeller, a 94 years old member of our community, and a Holocaust survivor, found himself a widow and soon to be without a place to live, David immediately went into action, advocating for Gerry in quickly securing safe and adequate housing. When in the area, he makes sure to stop by and say hello to Gerry, now a happy and healthy 96 year old.

The Ohev community learned of David's work at the prison through the D'var's Torah and emails he shared with us. For 7 years he taught inmates Torah and helped them embrace and cherish their Judaism. He organized prisoners to perform mitzvahs and give tzedaka for worthwhile causes such as supporting a synagogue in Uganda. At the same time, David connected the Ohev community with his prison work through bar mitzvah projects for prayer books, donations and letter writing.

This is well-deserved recognition. I feel honored to know and work with David. There is no shortage of people who need help in our community and David always seems nearby and involved when they do.

Well done and Mazel Tov Rabbi David.

Juana Lutzky