

A Grandmother's Living Legacy

Jay Ruderman
Sharon Shapiro



Jay Ruderman

Three years ago, our family decided the time had come to create a living memorial to our grandmother who had passed away in 1993, in a way that truly reflected the kind of person she was.

In addition to the Ruderman Family Foundation's commitment to Jewish children and adults with disabilities both here and in Israel, our family had already established a needs-based scholarship for Boston area day school students in our grandmother's memory. But we realized that a simple monetary scholarship in her name was somehow missing the point.

Our grandmother Rose was a terrific role model in the way she gave of herself and saw – and brought out – the best in everyone, so we began thinking about a very different kind of scholarship, one that wasn't based on academic achievement, athletic prowess or even on need. Why not recognize and reward those qualities our grandmother lived every day – the way she gave whole-heartedly to her family, her Jewish community and to the elderly even when she was elderly herself?

In a world where, from childhood on, the emphasis is on getting ahead, getting into the best schools and landing the top jobs, what if instead we looked under the surface at what a young person is made of?

Working with Combined Jewish Philanthropies, we devised a fitting way to keep our grandmother's values alive, by awarding scholarships to a graduating student from each of the area's seven Orthodox day schools – a community that was dear to our grandmother's heart. We asked teachers and principals to select students who stand out for their kindness, caring and humility, who always manage to go above and beyond to help out.

Now in its third year, the Rose Ruderman Scholarship has helped more than 20 youngsters take the next step in their educations. We know that our grandmother would heartily approve of this year's winners:



Sharon Shapiro

- Bais Yaakov's Chaya Ochs, who delights area seniors with homemade cookies on Chanukah and Shaloch Manos baskets on Purim.
- Mesivta's Tzvi Baer, who for the last two years has taken charge of setting up Shabbat meals at school.
- Maimonides' Brittani Hirsh, who devotes her free time to those with special needs and children suffering from brain cancer at Children's Hospital in Boston.
- Shaloh House's Ethan Danan, who's always the first to jump up whenever a teacher, peer or younger student needs a hand. New England Hebrew Academy's Miriam Yanofsky, who, during Shabbat services, leads the youngest children in stories, games and songs.
- Striar Hebrew Academy of Sharon's Yonatan Diamond, who is always there to "kindly and gently" help his classmates with their schoolwork.
- Torah Academy's Yaakov Brecher, who cheerfully volunteers to man the school's morning canteen when his fellow students can't cover their shifts.

Next Tuesday, we will recognize these young people at a ceremony where the heads of school will stand up and describe their students' qualities. Each year, it's an inspiring moment, and not just for the parents and siblings who look on with pride, but for all of us who take great hope in a new generation that embodies our grandmother's highest values.

Now the two of us, on behalf of our entire family, want to issue a challenge to all of you: Why not memorialize and keep alive the special qualities of your parents and grandparents by setting up a similar program?

You can be assured it will carry a lasting impact. We know that, though they never met our grandmother, the Rose Ruderman Scholarship winners will always remember what she stood for: a deep loyalty to her family and the Jewish people. They will also know that their own kindnesses have not gone unnoticed and that wherever they go in life, they will be spurred on to even greater heights, keeping our grandmother's values alive for a new generation.

To find out more about the Rose Ruderman Scholarship Program, contact Sloan Kennedy at sloank@cjp.org or 617-457-8542.