



# Community Heroes

by Sterling Care Assisted Living

**W**ho is a hero? And what criteria do we use to define a hero? In *Sefer Tehillim* we read, “*Ach tov vachesed yirdefuni kol yemei chai-ai veshavti beveit Hashem l’orech yamim.*” Dovid Hamelech asks for goodness and kindness, and to dwell in Hashem’s house for long days. We ask for long life. We also know that, sometimes, a long life brings with it considerable challenges. But *klal Yisrael* is amazing! There are quiet heroes, individuals who think about seniors, those who may be going through a rough time. Think about an older person that you know. Maybe a family member or a friend. As you read about these heroes, you will hopefully be inspired to reach out and lend a helping hand.

## Miss Eliana Bensimon

Do you remember your bar mitzvah or your bas mitzvah? Did you do anything extra special to celebrate the day? A young lady, Eliana Bensimon, was ready to celebrate her 12th birthday. She decided that in honor of her bas mitzvah, she wanted to share her talents with the elderly in her community. She and her parents arrived at Sterling Care Assisted Living after supper with a huge package: a 38-string lever harp. Her mother introduced her to the residents and said that on this day of her bas mitzvah, Eliana wanted to play the harp for them. As she began to play, the word we would use to describe the crowd’s reaction is “mesmerized,” with jaw-dropping

reactions from the residents and guests. It was an extraordinary evening – all due to a 12-year-old young lady and her wish to share happiness with others.

## Mrs. Esther Pelberg and Ivy Sweetwine

You never know! For several years, Mrs. Pelberg’s children told us that their mother plays the piano. Was it true? We never saw it. Many times we asked her to please play a song for us, but she always smiled and politely declined. We figured maybe the children had meant that she once played a bit but not much. Ivy Sweetwine, an outstanding private aide, had heard enough. One night, she gently, sweetly, and convincingly brought Mrs. Pelberg to the piano. And she started playing! Song after song after song, with her trademark smile. Residents and guests sang along. Her performance ended in rousing applause. This got us thinking. Sometimes we feel stuck; times are hard, and it seems like things just won’t change. How could we possibly get back to where we once were? Last night we learned: It’s possible.

## The Baron Family

We received an urgent phone call. *Mazal tov!* Zaidy Baron became a great-grandfather, and the family wanted to coordinate getting this wheelchair-bound resident to the *bris* the next morning. He would need transportation and a nursing assistant to be with him. *Baruch Hashem*, it worked out, and he was at the shul in Columbia, Maryland, early the next morning. But things got sticky. They wanted him to be the *sandak*, the greatest honor given during the *bris* ceremony. He didn’t want to receive this honor. In his words, “I’m not worthy.” It took some convincing, and eventually, he was persuaded to accept.

The ceremony began. In his wheelchair, he held the baby, while three younger generations sat with him. The joy and pride was palpable, as family and friends celebrated together. *Yirbu smachot b’Yisrael!*

## Congregation Beit Yaakov

The holiday of Sukkos is always a happy time. This past year was no different, as we enjoyed the sukkah, the festive atmosphere, and shaking the *lulav* and *esrog*. The holiday celebrations culminate with Simchas Torah, where those in the synagogue dance joyously while holding the precious Torah scrolls. In previous years, our residents had the honor of joining together with Congregation Beit Yaakov (the synagogue next door), either by visiting them in the synagogue or by watching them dance from our sidewalk and windows. This year presented a challenge, as it was too cold outside for us to attend or even to view. As they began their dancing next door, the rabbi and president of the synagogue noticed our absence. They wanted to know when we were coming to visit, as the holiday was not the same without the residents in attendance. When they were told that it was too cold outside, they made a decision on the spot. The rabbi made an announcement: “We are going next door to celebrate with our neighbors.” Men, women, and children, accompanied by flags and the Torah scrolls, exited their synagogue and danced for about 10 minutes at Sterling Care Assisted Living. They were so happy to be together with the residents, and their joy was contagious. The symbolism was striking. They danced around and around the room, encircling the seniors of our community, each one a true treasure. ♦