

Around the community

ADULT MARCH OF THE LIVING REUNION

From Birkenau to October 7

AJN STAFF

TWENTY years after walking through the gates of Birkenau, Holocaust survivor George Halasz reunited with 30 fellow participants from the 2005 Adult March of the Living, reflecting on how their shared experience continues to guide them through today's challenges. The reunion brought together less than half of the original 70 participants, as some have since sadly passed away.

"Twenty years ago, we stood at the gates of Birkenau, bound together by history, memory and grief," Halasz said.

"Over 70 survivors, their children, grandchildren and supporters, each of us carried our own stories, yet we walked as one."

The 2005 march brought together around 20,000 Jews from across the world, including survivors

who shared testimony on the very ground where their families were torn apart. For Halasz, whose mother Alice was also a survivor, the experience was transformative.

"My mother, Alice, said to me before the march, 'The last time I was here, I breathed the air alone. Now I want to breathe the air with you,'" Halasz said.

"I went there living my mother's memories, I left there owning my own."

The reunion came at a particularly poignant time, with antisemitism surging since October 7, 2023. Halasz believes the lessons learnt two decades ago remain more relevant than ever.

"The venomous resurgence of antisemitism since October 7, 2023, has shaken Jewish communities worldwide. But the lessons we learnt in 2005, and the connections we have sustained since,



Survivors and others who attended March of the Living in 2005 recently reunited after 20 years.

continue to guide us," he said.

Central to those lessons was the power of testimony. Halasz described how survivors spoke words they had carried in silence for decades, creating profound

connections within the group.

The march also taught participants about intergenerational trauma and healing.

"Second- and third-generation participants were confronted by

the nightmares of their parents and grandchildren," Halasz said.

"We shared our lessons, lessons that still bind us: trauma must be transformed, not transmitted.

"We learnt in 2005 that people could only face unbearable truths when they felt safe. One participant dared to cry because he knew someone would honour his tears."

Looking ahead, Halasz said it is important that memory must translate into action.

"In 2025, with antisemitism surging, memory must lead to action: teaching, writing, speaking, and challenging lies wherever they appear. Every story told is an act of defiance," he said.

The bonds forged 20 years ago remain strong, providing what Halasz calls "a template for living with courage" in an era when hatred continues to resurface but so too does resilience.

JNF AUSTRALIA BLUE BOX CAMPAIGN

Healing through environmental rehabilitation

AJN STAFF

AS the Jewish community prepares to welcome Rosh Hashanah, JNF Australia has launched its annual Blue Box campaign focusing on two transformative projects in Israel that embody a profound truth: environmental rehabilitation is human rehabilitation.

Since 1901, the JNF Blue Box has been a symbol of Jewish peoplehood and collective responsibility. This year's campaign supports initiatives in communities devas-

tated by trauma and displacement, where tending to the land proves vital for healing and rebuilding hope.

For decades, Kibbutz Malkiya's 400 residents have lived under constant threat on the northern border of Israel. As families return after forced evacuation, JNF Australia is supporting three projects designed to restore both land and community.

The Community Greenhouse will provide a therapeutic environment where residents can process trauma through cultivation while producing sustainable food and creating an intergenerational gathering space.

Animals Heal combines an advanced dog park with meeting areas for animal-assisted therapy, promoting social connection and emotional healing whilst expanding green space within the kibbutz.

The Bringing Back to Life recy-

cling centre will reduce landfill waste, generate green income and provide educational programs while improving regional soil and water quality.

"We recognise that true rehabilitation begins with returning to routine, creating new spaces of hope and strengthening our environmental and community fabric," said Itai Kroitz, community coordinator from Malkiya.

"This project is not just about rehabilitating buildings – it's about rehabilitating hope. Every plant we grow, every bottle we recycle, every dog that enjoys the new space – these are essentially declarations about our future here, about our determination to continue building, creating and rehabilitating."

On the Gaza border, Netiv Ha'Asara was devastated by the October 7, 2023 attacks. A neglected area is being trans-



Netiv Ha'Asara.

formed into Between the Olive Trees, a communal healing garden with fruit trees, native plants and shaded seating for quiet reflection.

"This is an environmental development project rooted in a desert landscape – one that respects its natural character while cultivating new life," said Yoni Shaked, Netiv

Ha'Asara community foundation spokesperson.

"Between the Olive Trees will welcome returning families, guests and volunteers, offering a moment of breath and connection."

This Rosh Hashanah, JNF Australia invites the community to support the Blue Box campaign by visiting jnf.org.au



Kibbutz Malkiya.



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