

A ‘mensch’ remembered at Rutgers



A tribute to the late Herbert Stolzer was held before the annual program he endowed at the Bildner Center. Surrounded by his children, their spouses, and his grandchildren are, from left, Bildner executive director Yael Zerubavel; his widow, Toby; and Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County executive director Gerrie Bamira.

Photo by Debra Rubin

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Herbert Stolzer was remembered as always willing to lend his support to the Jewish community, from assisting special-needs children to helping launch Rutgers University’s Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life.

The longtime East Brunswick resident, who died Jan. 25 at age 87, was recalled as a “mensch” in a tribute held before Bildner’s annual Toby and Herbert Stolzer Endowed Program.

Executive director Yael Zerubavel recalled that Stolzer was “very supportive” of the center, which opened in 1999, during its “critical” first year. His “enthusiasm and kindness” manifested itself in many ways, she said, including the annual lecture he and his wife, Toby, endowed.

With Toby and his children and grandchildren looking on, Gerrie Bamira, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County, recounted Stolzer’s accomplishments in business, philanthropy, and the community.

“In 1998 Herb asked us at the federation to help him identify an unmet need,” said Bamira. “Together we decided that he would spearhead our efforts to serve the special-needs population.”

The Stolzer Family Fund for Special Needs Children, which he established at federation, has awarded \$268,000 for 168 camp scholarships since its inception 14 years ago.

Prior to his retirement, Stolzer served on the board of Johnson & Johnson and held several top corporate posts, including assistant to the chairman of the board.

A life federation board member, Stolzer also served on the boards of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and Foundation, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Middlesex County Community College in Edison, University Health System New Jersey, and the New Brunswick Cultural Center, where he was chair from 1993 to 1996.

He received the Scopus Award from the American Friends of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Partners in Caring Award from the American Cancer Society, NJ Division, for his fund-raising efforts. In 1998, he founded the Yvette J. and Herbert G. Stolzer Foundation (honoring his first wife, who died in 1997) to support institutions and organizations focusing on health care, education, and the arts.

Bamira said Stolzer's legacy can be summed up through the experience of a 24-year-old Highland Park woman named Karen, who was one of the first to receive a special-needs campership.

"She went to camp year after year because of Herb Stolzer, having wonderful and memorable summers," she said.

Karen developed such a strong bond to her Jewish heritage that her greatest wish was to go to Israel. Four years ago, she realized her dream and "had the summer of her life" in the Jewish state.

"Today Karen is a volunteer staff member at federation," said Bamira. "The smile on her face and her cheerful disposition inspire and encourage us all to live the federation mission. Whenever any member of the staff has a particularly bad day, all they have to do is talk to Karen to feel better."

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