



THEA ASCHKENASE ENDOWMENT
An Endowment to Support Food For Thought
Established December 16, 2020

Food for Thought Initiative was created by Lea Aschkenase to honor her mother Thea, a Holocaust survivor who was liberated from Auschwitz concentration camp in 1945. Thea's entire family, except for her mother, perished in the Holocaust. Instead of turning her losses into bitterness and anger, Thea chose to focus her life on serving others.

As a Holocaust survivor Thea experienced extreme hunger. During her 12 years as an undergraduate in Worcester State University's Intergenerational Urban Studies Program, and as a long-term member of the Worcester Hunger Outreach Team, Thea worked tirelessly to advocate against hunger, creating a program within the Worcester schools to make breakfast available to all students every school day, and a program named "Thea's Table", where unused food from breakfast and lunch was placed for students to take throughout the school day.



At age 92, Thea published her memoir, *Remembering: A Holocaust Survivor Shares Her Life*. All proceeds from the sale of her book supports the food pantry at Worcester State University, named Thea's Pantry that opened in April 2019. For more than 30 years, Thea visited schools in Massachusetts to talk about her experiences during the Holocaust. Her only request was that the school children and staff collect food items and donate the food to a local pantry of their choice.

As Thea's daughter, Lea wanted to honor what was important in her mother's life. She reached out to the Madison school district, and once she began to understand the magnitude of the problem of food insecurity in Madison, and once she came face to face with the children and families who are struggling with hunger, she realized the gift that Thea gave to all of us.

Thea had seeded the idea, and now Lea truly understood the meaning of Thea's life's work. Thea's passion had become Lea's passion. Thea died in March 2019 at age 95 but her life story, her passion and her spirit live on through this Endowment.