Our three amazing co-chairs, Jain Lauter, Joyce Berlin-Weingarten, and Julie Zussman joyfully greeted our guests. Over three hundred were in attendance, with 89 honorees age 95 and up, and 19 (!) honorees over 100. After a warm welcome from the chairs and thank yous to the agencies that collaborate on this event, Hazzan Gross led the national anthems. Joan Chernoff-Epstein, Cathy Slavik, and their mother, Betty Chernoff, the family of Bessie Spector, who sponsor the event each year in her memory, led us in the Motzi. Rabbis Horwitz and Nosanwisch led guests in a touching blessing of the elders. JFMD President Matt Lester brought heartfelt greetings from Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. And JSL Executive Director of Development, Jo Rosen, honored the centenarians.

I'm not a huge egg salad fan, but I feel compelled to mention that everything Quality Kosher Catering prepared for us, including the egg salad and especially the scones (IMO), was absolutely scrumptious. After lunch, Hazzan Gross took the stage to lead us in Birkat Hamazon and play Name that Tune with classic TV theme songs. So much fun and an utterly delicious dose of nostalgia.

But the real highlight of the day was clearly the opportunity to gather in person. The bon homie in the room was palpable as we shook off the isolation that kept us apart for the last three years and celebrated not only the amazing older adults who built our community, but the opportunity to gather multiple generations of that community together.

Honorees left with a certificate signed by Governor Whitmer and Lieutenant Governor Gilchrist, as well as a goody bag of treats. As the last honorees departed and the dozens of fantastic volunteers gathered centerpieces and bagged leftover scones, I found myself reflecting on how great it is not just to honor our older adults, but to have the opportunity to craft a program completely around the needs and interests of those 95 and older. People always say that Detroit is a special Jewish community, and this event is one of the communal efforts that makes it so very special. Looking forward to next year already!