

## Evgenia Gendler With Her Friends



This photograph was taken during literature party in Hesed. I am sitting at the end of the table wearing a blue blouse. My new friends that I met in Hesed are sitting at the table with me. Uzhhorod, 2003. I worked before 1997 and quit when my husband fell seriously ill. He died in 1998. Since then I've lived alone. My son calls me few times a day and comes to see me. I also understand that he has a family and has to take care of them. When Ukraine became independent Jewish life here revived. Jews couldn't openly talk about their nationality before. Now they have united to help and support each other. Hesed was organized in Uzhhorod in 1999. It supports and provides assistance to older Jews. It's no secret that it is impossible to live on our pension: we have to pay our monthly utilities that are high and medications are expensive. Patients also have to pay for surgeries. Now doctors are not shy asking their patients whether they can pay for a surgery that that is necessary for them. Many people are ill and die since they cannot afford to get medical treatment. I don't know what would happen to us if there were not Hesed. They give us food packages every month. We can also have meals at the canteen. They say the food is delicious there. Besides it helps us old people to forget our loneliness. We attend clubs and cultural events. Hesed has moved into a beautiful building, though the old one was all right with us, too. I visit Hesed almost every day. They invite me. Since Hesed was organized in Uzhhorod it became easier for me to cope with my loneliness. When I feel all right I go there to see my friends. I like it there. People are friendly. They've returned elderly people back to life. I enjoy going there. Nobody waits for me at home. I do my hair and face to go to Hesed. Hesed filled my life and gave me new friends.