Stefa Berger was born November 16, 1919, in Warsaw, Poland. A young, studious, vibrant, and energetic person with great hope and ambition for the future, Stefa dreamed of becoming a physician, despite the virtual impossibility of a young Jewish woman living during interwar Poland to realize such a goal.

With the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, Stefa escaped to the Soviet Union with her sister and lived for two years in Lvov, Ukraine. Tragically, she was murdered by the Nazis following their invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Her sister, shipped to Siberia, survived the war but never again heard from Stefa, one victim among millions in the Holocaust. Those in the family who knew Stefa recall a loving, compassionate human being who exhibited enormous courage, resolve, and determination in the face of adversity. May her memory—and this award—spur other young people to similarly live life with courage and fortitude, and to embrace opportunity wherever it may be found.

This award is made possible through the generosity of the late Betty Greenberg, sister of Stefa Berger.