

The Year 2018 in Review

This year, there was a continued substantial growth in the extent of the activity undertaken by "Road to Recovery". The total distance travelled was about 1,277,000 km, encompassing 10,100 trips catering to 20,500 patients, mostly children. We took the patients to Rambam hospital in the north; Ichilov, Sheba-Tel Hashomer, Beilinson, Wolfson and Assuta hospitals in the center; and to Alyn, Hadassa, Shaare Zedek, Al Maqassid, Augusta Victoria and St John hospitals in Jerusalem.

We are continuing our regular fortnightly transportation of three babies and their escorts to and from Erez crossing to Shaare Zedek for dialysis treatments.

Our circle of volunteers has also grown. This year we received an additional 375 volunteers. 1900 volunteers are now registered on our mailing list.

In addition, the number of requests for help increased markedly. In the north (for Palestinians from the Western Bank), we were able to meet nearly 100% of the demand for trips, while in the center and south of Hebron we successfully met 98% of the requests. We were also able to respond to 95% of the requests from the Gaza Strip.

This year, all the regional coordinators continued, while two extra coordinators were added to deal with patients returning from hospital: **Inbar Zalesky** coordinates those returning to Tarkumiya, and **Dina Inbar** coordinates those returning to the Erez checkpoint. **Yael Noy**, who commenced coordination of the southern region in 2016, continued in 2018, while **Amalia Wiesel** continues managing special projects related to those exiting Erez. We have been blessed with people who have exceptional organizational abilities as well as unlimited patience, geniality, benevolence and compassion, which have facilitated the regular daily activity and expansion of the organization over the past few years.

Coordination of the central region has been taken over by Palestinian **Naeem Al-Bayda**. This year, Naeem worked full-time coordinating transport to and from the West Bank under the auspices of the Palestinian organization "Greenland", which is situated in Hebron. He served as the official representative of RTR when dealing with the Palestinian Authority, so that a patient receiving permission from the Authority for treatment in Israel was able to receive reliable information about the transport services provided by our organization. Until now, such information was relayed arbitrarily. Naeem's employment was funded by a significant grant to "Greenland", donated by "Project Rozana".

During the course of 2018, RTR representatives met **Ron Finkel**, head of "**Project Rozana**", which aids health services in the Palestinian Authority by enabling qualification of medical teams, funding of medical treatment and supporting the transport services offered by our organization.

Unfortunately, we were saddened by the deaths of girls and boys, as well as teenagers and adults, whom our volunteers had been driving for treatments and medical checks over long periods of time – Ahmad Batran, Haled Abed Al-Rahis, Aboudi Abu-Mustafa, Basl Al-Amla, Hamza Zayin, Almas Musa, Sliman Gibrin, Hamza Dragma, Suleiman

Sweita, Muhamad Sabah, Denis Dudan, Dian Abu-Shaluf. Groups of volunteers went to the homes of the grieving families to extend their condolences. These visits, which highlighted time and again the close web of relationships between the volunteers and the families of the patients, enabled the families to express their great appreciation of the help extended and of the deep significance of the volunteering activity.

We also mourn the passing of four of our devoted volunteers – **Dorit Hopp, Moshe Tenne, Avraham Ronen** and **Arnon Rotbard** – who drove for the organization for many years. Dorit Hopp spoke about our organization to author A.B. Yehoshua, and took him along one of her trips. In his latest book "The Tunnel", which came out in July, A.B. Yehoshua devoted a whole chapter and many references to the organization.

This year we raised NIS 767,000 in aid of RTR, whose expenses amounted to NIS 917,000. Most of the money was spent on reimbursing petrol costs, which increased this year by 30% with respect to 2017. In addition, we continue to cover the cost of a minibus which goes from the Erez checkpoint to hospitals in Jerusalem four times a week, thereby catering for most of the requests for drives from Gaza.

In 2018, we continued to provide support for orthopedic medical equipment to Mary Samar, a 10-year-old girl whose lower body is paralyzed by Spina Bifida. In addition, our organization helped fund the battery for an oxygen generator for Wasim Abu-Lavda from Gaza, as well as further support for Muhamad Elian.

All decisions regarding requests for aid were made by the "Medical Expense Underwriting Committee", which receives applications for financial support from Palestinian patients to cover their medical equipment and medical service expenses. The Committee, headed by RTR volunteer **Dr. Ron Alfendri**, recommends disbursements of available funds based on meritorious causes and expert medical advice provided by RTR volunteer **Dr. Dana Seligman**.

2018 was extremely active, and we only managed to deal with the large volume of activities thanks to the aid and recruitment of hundreds of volunteers.

The "Special Events" team headed by **Alona Abt** initiated another Fun Day for patients and their families from the Western Bank (see details further on), and orientation meetings for new volunteers. In addition, an orientation meeting for new volunteers was organized in Kibbutz Shefayim with the help of **Adi Rosenthal**.

The "Fundraising" team, headed by **Eli Sahar** and **Alona Abt**, is responsible for funding all the activities carried out by "Road to Recovery". **Johnny Eytan** and **Shuli Dichter** joined the team. Thanks to Johnny Eytan, we have received recognition as a "public transport dispatcher", thereby enabling the organization to insure its volunteer drivers. Johnny has also arranged for the organization to receive the "Midot Seal of Effectiveness" and to be included in "Round-Up for Good", whereby credit-card transactions are rounded up to the nearest shekel with the change going to nominated charities. This promises to be a significant fund-raising opportunity, which only involves a few shekalim per month by the donor. Shuli Dichter's ties with the Arab community of Wadi Ara have resulted in a new channel for donations: significant sums have already been contributed with the possibility of widening the circle of donations even further.

Lauren Agbaria was instrumental in organizing an evening of appreciation for the donors at the "King of the Grill" restaurant (courtesy of Chef Majd) in Baka Al-Gharbia.

In addition, thanks to volunteer **Nurit Tsafir**, the Arabic Language Academy, headed by **Professor Mahmud Genaim**, will fund translation of our website into Arabic.

Naama Gorali deals with monthly reimbursement of petrol costs incurred by volunteer drivers. Beginning last month, thanks to the initiative by Johnny Eytan and with the assistance of Amir Adar, we now pay petrol costs by means of direct bank transfer to the accounts of the volunteers ("Masav"). This step significantly facilitates transactions and ensures that the money will be deposited on time.

Tsvi Goren continues to deal with green invoices and thank-you notes for all donations.

Shelly Barlev deals with distribution of safety seats, and makes sure that all volunteer drivers are equipped with seats.

Another volunteer, **Hela Yaniv**, has taken responsibility for communications and public relations. She is in touch with journalists and media producers who are interested in publicizing the organization or individual volunteers.

Regarding publicity: There was a report by **Ohad Hamu** on Channel 12 concerning volunteer **Reuven Chazak**, who drives patients from Gaza, and a report about RTR by **Chedva Galili-Smolenski** on Channel 11's "Living with Co-existence". Thanks to **Idit Samet**, there was an article on the German television channel regarding the beach recreation day which RTR organizes for the families of sick children, and about how one teenage patient is driven to hospital by a volunteer driver. Articles were also written about the organization in English, French and German. All the publicity appears on the website.

Hadassa Tron has volunteered to take care of RTR projects. The first one involved organizing a three-day course for the staff of "Basmat Al Amal" in Israel. Hadassa also organized get-togethers of volunteers in the north, center and south, and is planning an evening of the songs of Rachel Shapira in recognition of the volunteers to take place in April 2019.

A team of industrious volunteers takes care of translation requirements – articles on the social media, letters of appreciation to donors, and publication of activities: **Batya Fonda** – into English, **Dan Weinblum** – into French, **Maurice Tzoureff** and **Adam Ron** – into German, and **Sergio Koussevitsky** – into Spanish.

A "Branding and Graphic Design" team headed by **Ayelet Sadeh** and **Tovi Peled** continues to deal with all the organization's graphic requirements. This year, they designed our promotional cards, thank-you letters to donors, posters for meetings, calling cards, shirts, envelopes and stationery.

An "Applications" team headed by volunteers **Amir Adar** and **Benny Bornfeld** has reached the advanced stages of optimizing a system to be used for trip scheduling, routing and assignment. Dr Bornfeld, a lecturer in Computer Sciences at Rupin College,

has recruited students to help in development of the app. This will assist the regional coordinators and make a significant difference to the efficiency of trip coordination.

Volunteer **Ronny Alfendri**, clinical social worker, has organized a group of volunteers who work in the field of therapy to offer drivers in the north and Jerusalem areas the opportunity to share feelings and experiences regarding the volunteering, which can be an individual and solitary experience.

“**Nice to meet you**” (“Naeem lehakir”) is a project which has been running since 2017. Once a month, groups of volunteers with family and friends are taken by **Naeem Al-Bayda**, coordinator of the central region, on a short trip followed by lunch at his house in the village of Jayyous, near the separation fence. The aim of the initiative is to meet the Palestinians face-to-face in the hope that getting to know each other will counteract the fear that underlies the conflict between the two sides. As a result, a close relationship has been forged between Naeem and the volunteers.

In January and July of 2018, two respective groups of 35 children from Gaza with an accompanying parent were taken for a holiday at **Nehar HaYarden Youth Village**. This has become an annual tradition. As always, the week of the vacation was marked by a remission of tension, an enjoyable treat that will be remembered for a long time.

At the end of July, we organized a “Joy and Health” day outing at the **Sdot Yam Kibbutz Beach** near Caesarea for 200 Palestinian patients and their families from the south and center of the West Bank. We were helped by “Beach Fun”, an organization run by the kibbutz youth. A similar outing to the beach at Kibbutz **Ma’agan Michael** was held at the end of August for a second group of 200 Palestinian patients and their families from the northern part of the West Bank. Activities included rowing on the kibbutz lake, beach and recreational activities, as well as lunch, all facilitated by members of the kibbutz. Clowns Naama and Rasha Hiskiyya entertained the children. As in previous years, our volunteers received generous support from Arab youth organizations (“**Giving**” and “**Thinking of the Other**”), from donors and benefactors in the Israeli Arab sector, and from our own volunteers. These fun days have been a great success, leaving everyone with feelings of reconciliation and hope.

In February, **Amalia Wiesel** organized a group of 80 patients and escorts to be taken to Jerusalem for prayers at the Al Aqsa mosque. It was heartwarming to see the happiness and excitement of the children and their parents. They said that it was a very special experience, and wished to thank the volunteers who drove them to the mosque.

Volunteers in the southern region met in February. They were taken on a tour and explanation of the Erez checkpoint by manager **Shlomo Saban**, and afterwards dialog circles were held in the clubroom of Netiv Ha'Asara.

A meeting of volunteers from the north was held in November at the Kfar Kara community center, and volunteers from the central region met in December at the Veteran Center of Kibbutz Shefayim. The northern and southern meetings, which were organized by **Hadassa Tron** (RTR project manager) with the assistance of **Danny Nahav**, included a quiz about the organization, an interview with Yuval and the regional coordinator, and stories shared by the volunteers about their personal lives. The stories

were fascinating and extremely moving, and events such as this one emphasized the need for members of the organization to meet and get to know each other.

In March, a memorial service and exhibition was held in memory of **Jimmy Rabinowitz**, z"l, one of our earliest volunteers, who died a year ago. All revenues from the sale of Jimmy's paintings were donated to RTR by his widow.

Another exhibition of paintings, by **Rina Vardi** z"l, was held in August at the clubhouse of Kibbutz Nir Eliahu. All revenues from sale of the paintings were donated to RTR by the painter's daughter, **Racheli Vardi Granot**, a volunteer in the organization.

Thanks to volunteer **Dubi Shwarz**, RTR was included in "ALLMEP" (Alliance for Middle East Peace), which this year was awarded recognition by the UN. In August, RTR was mentioned in the UN Assembly as an organization encompassing efforts by Palestinians and Israelis to advance peace in a situation of political standstill.

In April, **Naeem Al-Bayda** (central region coordinator) and **Eli Sahar** (chairman of the finance committee) represented RTR in Italy. They were invited by the "Confronti" organization – an Italian magazine whose mission is to raise awareness of peace organizations working in areas of conflict.

At the beginning of September, members of "Basmat Al-Amal", a Gaza-based organization which assists in coordinating exit permits for patients from Gaza, were invited for a few days of respite and learning in Israel. They visited Umm El-Fahm, Nazareth, Baka Al-Gharbia, and prayed at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. The visit was organized by members of RTR with generous donations from the Arab community of Israel.

In November, RTR won second place in the Dror Prize, in memory of Dror Shternshus, which is awarded annually to people or organizations that promote joint activity and commitment to human rights, equality and social justice.

Our volunteers were concerned about 15-year-old Ahmad Darduna, whose lungs were badly damaged while undergoing treatment for cancer. With the help of donations from volunteers, Ahmad did all the necessary medical tests at Beilinson Hospital and, with the assistance of **Rima Abu Katish** of "Salamatcom", flew to India in November for a lung transplant.

In December, RTR volunteer **Alona Abt** was one of three women chosen to represent the human rights organizations they work for at an event marking international Human Rights Day, which was held at the Dutch embassy.

The "Vision" of RTR was formulated in December, which will help the various teams of our organization develop and promote implementation strategies.

RTR responded to a request for aid by a patient from Gaza, whose funding for the duration of his stay at "Beilinson" hospital was terminated. Because he needed daily treatment, he had to stay in the vicinity of the hospital. Volunteer **May Badir** recruited family and friends to find him accommodation and care for his needs while undergoing the radiation therapy.

We are continuing our effort to spread the message of our organization in the west of the US. We thank members **Smadar Shiffman**, and **Revital and Ran Katznelson**, who have featured our activities at a number of events in the US. This year, membership drives were also conducted at Kochav Yair, Even Yehuda, Kibbutz Maabarot, Kibbutz Gal'on, Kibbutz Na'an, Benei Shimon regional council, Mishkei Hadarom, and Kibbutz Eyal. Following up the meeting at Even Yehuda, volunteer **Micky Lapid** undertook the job of tutoring, supporting and accompanying new volunteer drivers.

Kibbutzim Nir Oz, Magen, Hatzerim, Maagan Michael, Gan Shmuel, Mishmar HaEmek, Yizre'el, Tzuba, and Be'eri continue to cover the petrol costs of their members who volunteer to transport patients regularly.

This year, too, a newsletter is sent out weekly to let people know about the activities of our organization. We thank **Roi Gold** for technical support, advice and help in everything related to the circulation of the newsletter. We also thank **Yael and Danny Noam** for acknowledgement of the drivers and backup of information regarding the trips carried out each week. This year we added two new columns: "Articles about the Organization", a roundup of all mentions in the media, and "Wanted", which recruits volunteers for the various activities which continue to multiply.

Warm thanks, once again, are conveyed to **Yoni Ascher**, **Naeem Al-Bayda**, **Yael Noy**, **Inbar Zalesky** and **Dina Inbar**, our dedicated coordinators who work day and night on aligning patients with drivers, and to the "**Basmat Al-Amal**" organization, which coordinates trips in Gaza. We also warmly thank volunteers **Miriam Shayish**, **Esti Ben-Aharon** and **Gal Yaakobi** for helping **Naeem** in coordinating the central region trips.

In addition, we thank volunteers **Sna'it Ayalon** and **Itsik Aloni**, who labored on updating the list of volunteers in the north.

Many thanks to all those who have donated towards the organization: to the volunteer drivers who have covered their own petrol and associated costs, and to generous individuals who have chosen to donate anonymously.

We gratefully acknowledge the following organizations: **Friends of Israel from Germany** (via **Danny Walter**), the **Tolkien Foundation** in England (via **Miri Karchi**), **Project Rozana** in Australia, headed by **Ron Finkel**, and the **Schoken Fund** (via Lili Shtern). We thank the following organizations for significant donations: **Heritage Legacy Fund**, the **Jewish Federation of St Louis**, **Kibbutz Hazorea**, **Kibbutz Maagan Michael**, **Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek**, the Italian "**Confronti**" organization, and "**Argo Films**".

Special thanks are due to services rendered charitably by our volunteers **Ohad Richmond**, Esq. for legal services, accountant **Ofer Davidowitz** for accounting services, **Amir Cohen-Dreman** for media and social-network management, **Kulu Orr** for maintaining our website and managing our email communications, **Rotem Gur** for her general assistance, and **Eyal Ofek**, advisor for Arabic language and culture.

We also wish to thank and acknowledge the invaluable cooperation of the following organizations: **El Shafaa el Rahma** for loaning medical equipment; **Salamatcom** of Abu Gosh for their in-hospital patient support; **Jamal Knaani** for maintaining

communications with donors in the Wadi Ara region; and to the women of **Machsom Watch** for their dedicated support and availability to help patient families.

And, of course, to you, the volunteers, warm thanks for your dedication and for spreading goodness!

The families of the patients repeatedly express their appreciation of your help in driving them to the hospitals for treatment.

We believe that this activity brings neighbors together and leads to mutual reconciliation.