

Road to Recovery – The Year 2019 in Review

Road to Recovery Activity

2019 was an extremely active year, and thanks to the response and support of hundreds of volunteers we managed to deal with the high volume of activities.

Considering funding limitation of medical treatment provided by the Palestinian Authority this year, there was no growth in the volume of activities undertaken by Road to Recovery (RTR). The total distance travelled was about 1,260,000 km, encompassing 10,105 trips catering to about 20,000 patients, mostly children.

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 90% of the requests from the Gaza Strip.

We took the patients to Rambam hospital in the north; Ichilov & Dana, Sheba-Tel Hashomer, Beilinson & Schneider, Wolfson and Assuta hospitals in the center; and to Alyn, Hadassa, Shaare Zedek, Al Muqassed, Augusta Victoria, Istishar 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. Another three babies have also been added.

This year we expanded the recreational activities for the patients and their families:

- Amalia Wiesel organized two fun days:

- In March, patients in Sheba hospital were taken to the Safari in Ramat-Gan and to Jaffa.
- In May, patients in Ichilov hospital were taken for an outing on Jaffa beach.
- The annual vacation at the Nehar HaYarden Youth Village took place in January and July of 2019, when two respective groups of 35 children from Gaza with an accompanying parent were taken to the village. As always, the week of the vacation was marked by tension remission. It was an enjoyable experience that will be remembered for a long time.
- At the end of July, we organized a Joy and Health day at the Sdot Yam kibbutz beach near Caesarea for 200 Palestinian patients and their families from the south and centre of the West Bank. "Beach Fun", an organization run by the kibbutz youth, helped us.
- A similar outing to the beach at kibbutz Maagan Michael was held in mid-September for a second group of 200 Palestinian patients and their families from the northern part of the West Bank. The kibbutz members and navy unit once again helped to facilitate this day.
- This year, an additional recreation day was held at Palmahim Beach at the end of September for 200 patients and their families from the Hebron and Bethlehem area. Ehud Danziger, Efrat Levin and Ali Abu-Sh'heita organized the outing.
- Volunteers from kibbutz Hatserim organized an additional recreation day in December. 60 patients and their families who were unable to go to Palmahim beach fun day, were treated to a catered day of activities throughout the kibbutz. It was organized by Irit Inbar, Iri Kessel and Inbar Zalesky, with the support of many devoted kibbutz members.

These recreation days included beach fun activities, boating, various workshops, lunch and beverages, and clowns' performances from the Arab

community. As in previous years, our volunteers received generous support from Arab youth organizations (Giving and Thinking of the Other), from donors and sponsors both in the Israeli Arab sector, and from our own volunteers. These fun days, provide an exceptional opportunity to get to know each other, have always been a great success, leaving everyone with feelings of reconciliation and hope.

The Patients

This year, 15 of the people, whom our volunteers had been driving for treatments and medical checks over long periods of time, passed away:

Majana Kameel 9-years-old from Qabatiya, Jules Fars 5-years-old from Nablus, Jinan Salame 23-years-old from Jenin region, Rosanne Zakriya 23-years-old from the Nablus region, Ahmed Abu Rob 22-years-old from the Jenin region, Sahman Alhush 3-years-old from the Hebron region, Omar Abu Sneena 14-years-old from Hebron region, Dio Abu Shluf 11-years-old from Gaza, Dennis Dudan 6-years-old from the Hebron region, Muhammad Sabah 16-years-old from Tekoa region, Issa Aladraba 75-years-old from the Hebron region, Salaam Tauvta 57-years-old from the Bethlehem region, Joanne Duaikat 14-years-old from Nablus, Nasr Al Erge 1-years-old from Qalqilya, and Mohamad Abu-Moise 15-years-old from Jenin.

Groups of volunteers met with 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. Some of these families expressed their willingness to volunteer within Palestinian society, saying that this was how they interpreted their appreciation and esteem.

The Regional Coordinators

The regional coordinators this year were Yoni Ascher – northern region, Inbar Zalesky – central region, and Dina Inbar – patients returning to Erez crossing. Ahmed Kareem has joined us to coordinate the Shaar Efraim, Eyal, Eliahu and Naalin crossings in the mornings. Yael Noy terminated three years of coordinating trips from Erez crossing this December; she has been replaced by Miri Goldfarb. Amalia Wiesel continues to manage special projects related to those using Erez crossing.

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.

Naeem Al-Bayda continues to serve as the official representative of RTR in dealing with the Palestinian Authority, and he oversees coordinating all trips to and from the West Bank. Subject to his management, Heba coordinates trips in the Hebron area. Sana coordinated trips in the center and was replaced by Vissam and Kamal in November of this year.

The Volunteers

Our circle of volunteers has grown. This year we welcomed an additional 310 volunteers. 2200 volunteers are now registered on our mailing list.

We mourn the passing of four of our devoted volunteer drivers: Yosi Hassin, Sarit Ramati, Oded Vinkler and David Shamgar.

This year, many activities focused on bonding the volunteers and show appreciation of their contribution:

- At the beginning of February, a get-together for volunteers of the southern region was held in the pub at kibbutz Be'eri. The meeting included talks given by Yuval Roth, Yael Noy (co-ordinator of the region), and by Dr

Tikva Meron, a volunteer who described supportive treatment given to cancer patients. A talk was also given by kibbutz member Rami Harouvi about his book "Gaza is Here."

- In April, an evening featuring the songs of Rachel Shapira was held in honor of the volunteers. The evening was led by Rachel Shapira herself, brimming full of light, charm and benevolence, whose songs were performed by the volunteer singing group conducted by Hadass Shturman. "What my heart asks for will surely come about ...": We left the hall with a feeling of spiritual elevation and strong belief in good will!
- At the beginning of June, a dinner was held at the Tron family home in kibbutz Shefayim for the coordinators and activists of the organization. Chef Hila Alpert generously prepared it.

Nine orientation meetings were held this year in order to recruit new volunteers. These were organized by the experienced volunteers of the organization:

- In January, meetings were organized in kibbutz Erez by Yael Lahav and in kibbutz Dvir by Iri Kessel.
- In February, meetings were organized by Amnon Elenko in kibbutz Beit Nir, and by Gidi Peleg in kibbutz Sdot Yam.
- In July, meetings were organized by Avital Argaman in kibbutz Miflasim, and in Tsur Moshe by Iri Kessel.
- In August, meetings were organized in Srigim by Linda Galant and Amnon Elenko, and in kibbutz Tsor'a by Moulik Rivlin.
- In October, a meeting was organized in kibbutz Givat Brenner by Yoram Cohen.

Additional meetings at which Yuval spoke about RTR were held at on Tish'a be'Av (in August) in Beit Daniel, Tel Aviv, home of the Reform congregation,

and in Hanukka (in December) for the Reform congregation at "Ma'alot Tiv'on" in Kiryat Tiv'on.

The Volunteers' Activity

The fundraising team, comprising Eli Sahar, Alona Abet, Johnny Eytan, Shuli Dichter, Amnon Elenko and Idit Nuslevich, continues to work towards funding all the activities carried out by Road to Recovery. This year we have already benefited by the Round-Up for Good initiative, and effort is being put into broadening the circle of contributors. Credit-card transactions are rounded up to the nearest shekel, with the change routing to selected charities: "Small change means a big help!". The donation channel opened last year by Shuli Dichter, in cooperation with The Solidarity Triangle organization headed by Muhammad Masarve and Khaled Abu Rakiya, has yielded significant contributions from the Arabs of Wadi Ara.

Na'ama Gorali devotedly continues to deal with monthly reimbursement of gasoline costs incurred by the volunteer drivers. We now reimburse petrol costs by means of direct bank transfers to the volunteers' accounts. This mechanism significantly facilitates transactions and ensures that the money is 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 ensures that all volunteer drivers are equipped with seats.

Hela Yaniv is responsible for communications and public relations. She is in touch with journalists and media producers who are interested in publicizing the organization and/or individual volunteer's activity. Regarding publicity: Channel 11 (Kan) series, "Living with Co-existence" included a report about

RTR by Chedva Galili-Smolenski. This channel also aired a film by Ruth Volk, "The Border of Pain", which was originally shown at the annual Jerusalem Film Festival, describing the roads to recovery taken by Palestinian patients in Israel. The article "Giving Without Limits", about the volunteer Yair Noy and his relationship with a patient from Gaza, was published in the "Israel Today" daily newspaper. Articles were also written about the organization in English, French and German. All the publicity appears on the RTR website.

Hadassa Tron, acting as RTR projects coordinator, has organized meetings as well as appreciation and fundraising events. In October, she also organized a three-day course in Israel for the Gaza-based staff of Basmat Al Amal, the Gazan organization that coordinates Palestinian patients' treatment in Israel. The group visited Umm Al-Fahm, Nazareth and Jaffa. The visit was facilitated by the generous financial support of Salah Shirkavi from Musmus and Amana M.

A team of highly motivated volunteers took care of translations required once in a while in the social media, thank-you letters to donors, and publication of activities: Batya Fonda – translating to English, Dan Weinblum – translating to French, Maurice Tzoureff and Adam Ron – translating to German, and Sergio Koussevitsky – translating to 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 and business cards.

The applications team, headed by volunteers Amir Adar and Benny Bornfeld, have developed a trial run of the new mobile application, planned to be released in the beginning of 2020.

Thanks to volunteer Dubi Schwarz, RTR was affiliated with ALLMEP (Alliance for Middle East Peace), an umbrella organization which encompasses all the peace organizations in the Middle East. This year, leading members came to Israel to advise our organization about options regarding support and help from overseas funds and organizations.

In March, Yael Noy (coordinator of trips from Gaza) and Rima Abu Katish (representing Salametcom – an organization providing support for Arab patients in hospitals) were invited to Italy by *Confronti*, an Italian magazine whose mission is to raise awareness of peace organizations working in areas of conflict.

RTR responded to a request for financial aid needed by a patient from Gaza, whose funding for the duration of his stay in Beilinson hospital was terminated. Since he needed daily treatment, he had to stay in the vicinity of the hospital. Volunteer May Badir engaged family and friends from Kfar Qasim to locate accommodation and care for his needs, while undergoing the radiation therapy.

An organized system of support for new drivers has been put together by volunteer Micky Lapid, who took on the job of initiating, tutoring and accompanying drivers as they set out on their volunteering journey.

kibbutzim Nir Oz, Magen, Hatserim, Maagan Michael, Gan Shmuel, Mishmar HaEmek, Yizre'el, Tzuba, and Be'eri continued to cover the gasoline costs of their members who regularly volunteer to provide transport for the needed patients.

The newsletter continued to be published on a weekly base via emails to update volunteers about the various activities and news regarding our organization. We thank Roi Gold for technical support, advice and help in

everything related to the circulation of the newsletter. We also thank Bruria Sela for acknowledgement of the drivers and documentation of the trips carried out each week. A new column has been added, *Volunteering from a Different Point of View*, which presents another way for the volunteers to get to know each other.

Warm thanks, once again, are extended to Yoni Ascher, Naeem Al-Bayda, Inbar Zalesky, Ahmed Kareem Dina Inbar and Miri Goldfarb, our dedicated coordinators who work day and night on the demanding and complex job of aligning patients with drivers, and to Basmat Al-Amal, the organization which coordinates trips in Gaza. We also warmly thank volunteers Heba, Sanaa, Vissam and Kamal for help in coordinating trips on the Palestinian side.

A special thank-you is relayed to Yael Noy, who coordinated trips via Erez crossing for three years with great devotion and commitment. The personal connections that she established with the volunteers and patients, her excellent working ties with Basmat Al-Amal, and her unfailing care and professionalism are all constitute source of inspiration and esteem.

In addition, we wish to thank volunteers Sarit Hasidim, Beatrice Shatil and Moti Brandeis for helping us type the lists of patients from Gaza onto the app – they're always ready to help.

The Coordinating System

In April of this year, we began a trial run of the coordinating system which assists the regional coordinators. It was first deployed in the central area, with the help of coordinator Inbar Zalesky. Development of this application was enabled thanks to a significant contribution by Gadi Keyni. Dr Benny Bornfeld, lecturer of computer science at Rupin College, once again conscripted students to help with the development of the application, and

Johnny Eitan raised funds to cover student scholarships. Volunteer Amir Adar, who has specified the requirements of the system, helped throughout the process of adjusting the application to the conditions. The system is due to begin full operation in 2020. In March, an event was held at kibbutz Shefayim in appreciation of the efforts of all those involved in the development of the application.

Road to Recovery Vision

In January, after lengthy discussion, the vision of the organization was formulated, according to which:

"The volunteers' driving of patients in need of medical help enables a meeting which is simple, immediate and unmediated. It is an opportunity to discover and see different faces and to advance the reconciliation, which we hope for. The organization is guided by human values and love of humankind, regardless of religious faith, political opinion or social background. It encourages the spirit of volunteerism and willingly accepts those who volunteer to achieve this vision."

The various teams of the organization are committed to develop and promote strategies, which will implement principles embodied in the Vision.

Nice to Meet You Initiative

The **Nice to meet you** (Naeem lehakir) initiative continued in 2019. Once a month, groups of volunteers with families and friends are taken by Naeem Al-Bayda, the Palestinian coordinator of the central region, on a short trip followed by lunch at his house in the village of Jayous, near the separation fence. The purpose 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 established between Naeem and the volunteers. A group of

volunteers visited the Al-Bayda family at the beginning and end of August to participate in two celebrations: a "hafla" (feast) for the release of Naeem's son Fuad, and another hafla for the wedding of his son Hamoudi.

Finance

This year, the sum of 1,400,000 NIS was raised in for the organization.

Expenses totalled 1,100,000 NIS. Most of the money was spent on reimbursing gasoline costs, which increased this year by 20% with respect to 2018. In addition, we continue to cover the cost of a minibus, which runs from Erez checkpoint to hospitals in Jerusalem four times a week, thereby catering for most of the requests for drives from Gaza.

In 2019, RTR continued to provide support for orthopedic medical equipment to Mary Samar, an 11-year-old girl whose lower body is paralyzed by Spina Bifida. In addition, the organization supports funding for treatment, medicine and equipment for patients who have not been covered for these expenses by the Palestine Authority. 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 payments of available funds based on meritorious causes and expert medical advice provided by RTR volunteer Dr. Dana Seligman.

Fund Raising Events

Five fundraising events were held for the organization:

- At the beginning of March, a dinner was held in honour of RTR at Mees Al-Reem in Wadi Ara. All proceeds were donated to the organization. The benefactors of the Wadi Ara area and members of the Northern Triangle Solidarity organization were responsible for the generous contributions.

They praised RTR and noted the importance of supporting it, the significance of strengthening the bonds, while supporting their brothers on the other side of the separation fence.

- In the middle of April, a fund-raising circus event was held at the Florentine Circus, featuring the Piti Peta Hofen theatrical jugglers. Other juggling acts by Uri and Noa Weiss, Lucas Zilri, Ron Beer, were led by the one and only Uri Weiss. Proceeds were donated to RTR.
- In the middle of May, an exhibition of the work of Yossi Novak, an RTR volunteer, was held at Beit Kandinof in Jaffa. Proceeds were donated to RTR organization.
- In September, a performance by composer and singer Yonatan Shapira was held at the home of Ruthi and Gideon Weinstein. Proceeds were donated to RTR organization.
- At the end of November, a fund-raising event was organized in Gan Ha'Ir, including a lecture by Professor Rafi Walden (chairman of the "Doctors for Human Rights" organization), a presentation by artist Hanan Abu-Hussein, and a concert by the Israeli Philharmonic chamber quartet led by Assaf Ma'oz.

Appreciation

In June of this year, Yuval Roth and Naeem Al-Bayda were joint recipients of the "Victor J. Goldberg Prize for Peace in the Middle East". This prize is annually awarded to two persons, a Jew and an Arab, who jointly work to advance the peace in the Middle East. That is for the benefit of both Jews and Arabs and thereby help to break down barriers of hatred towards "the other". The awards committee includes leading academics as well as government and non-governmental international organizations. The prize was awarded in the educational institution of the American Embassy in Jerusalem. Many thanks

to US members of the "Project Rozana" for their recommendation of Yuval and Naeem.

Thanks

Many thanks to all those who have made a significant contribution to RTR:

- First and foremost, to the volunteer drivers who cover their own gasoline and associated costs, and to generous individuals who have chosen to donate anonymously.
- "Project Rozana" in Australia, headed by Ron Finkel – an organization that support the Palestinian health system by training medical teams, funding medical treatment, while supporting the trips made by RTR volunteers/
- "Friends of Israel" from Germany (via Danny Walter).
- "Tolkien Foundation" in England (via Miri Karchi).
- "Heritage Legacy".
- "Jewish Federation of St Louis".
- "Ets HaRimon" (the pomegranate tree) Foundation.
- "Galileo Fund" (via Avigdor Vilinitz).
- "Schirmer Aluminium" (1993) Ltd.
- Penina and Brad Young.
- Thelma and Yossi Vardi.
- Effi and Yoni Goldstein.
- Yitshak Aloni.
- Etti Firk.
- "Good People" organization.
- "B8 of Hope" organization.
- kibbutzim Maagan Michael, Bar'am, and Mishmar HaEmek.

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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 leads to mutual reconciliation and a feeling of closeness with our neighbors.