

Helping Israeli terror victims

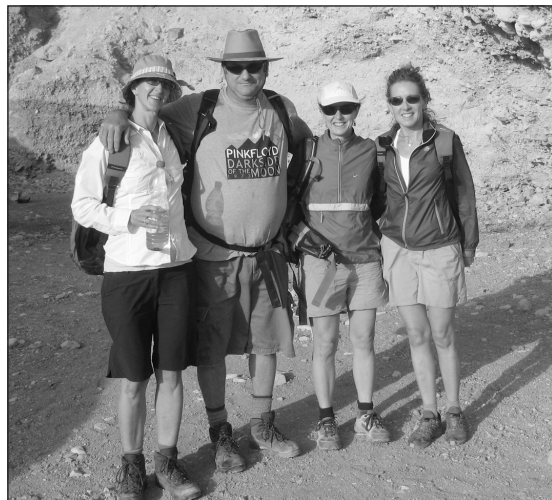
One Family Fund fundraising events actively connect people.

CYNTHIA RAMSAY

Imagine hiking in the southern Negev, beginning in the Schoret Canyon, passing through the Arava Mountains and ending with a swim in the Red Sea, near Eilat. Imagine helping victims of terror attacks by doing so. This is the idea behind One Family Fund Canada's next big event: its Second Annual Cross Israel Hike.

According to its website, the Toronto-based "One Family Fund was founded in 2002 by Marc and Chantal Belzberg of Jerusalem after their daughter, Michal, opted to donate the money to be spent on her bat mitzvah party to benefit those affected by terror attacks in Israel." It was after the Sbarro Pizza bombing in Jerusalem on Aug. 9, 2001, and the Belzbergs "realized that there was no one that was helping the victims, and that someone needed to make this happen," Pam Albert, executive director of the One Family Fund, told the *Independent*.

The nonprofit organization provides short- and long-term assistance to injured and bereaved Israeli victims of terror attacks. Its programs



Left: Ofer, an Israeli guide, with hikers, from left to right, Pam Albert, Shari Silverstein and Cindy Berg.

Right: Pam Albert, executive director of the One Family Fund, climbs a challenging part of the Israeli terrain.

include "camps for kids over Chanukah, Pesach and the summer; retreats for bereaved parents, wounded couples and orphans; support groups and ongoing therapeutic care in our centres in Jerusalem and Ra'anana; ongoing family support and psychotherapy in Sderot; adopt a family, where a family in the Diaspora is matched with a family in Israel; bar and bat

mitzvah twinnings; and educational funding," explained Albert.

According to the One Family Fund website (onefamilyfund.org), the organization has allocated more than \$20 million to more than 3,500 families. The site notes that 1,370 Israelis have been killed in terrorist attacks since September 2000, 964 children aged 19 or under have been left orphaned and more than 10,000 people have been wounded due to terrorism in Israel.

Albert became involved with One Family in 2002, with the Toronto office opening in 2004.

"I started helping families through Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto seven years ago," she said. "We had a small group of volunteers that gathered from different synagogues that wanted to help. We ended up raising a substantial amount of money, helping lots of families, and we were growing. So I decided about five years ago to travel to Israel to meet with different organizations that already helped victims of terror and to align ourselves with an existing organization, instead of re-inventing the wheel.

"I liked One Family Fund, because they are the umbrella organization in Israel, that takes a family unit and looks at all their needs and helps them find a way to get all of their needs met. I also liked that they help everyone that is in an attack. It doesn't matter if they are black or white or Jewish or not. Each person who is an Israeli citizen who is in an attack receives help.

"I like how it sets a living example for my children as to how we need to help others," she continued, about why she is involved with the nonprofit. "I find that to hear how much it means to the victims, to just know that someone far away cares, means so much. If knowing that we are thinking of them each day helps them get up in the morning and move through their day, just by knowing that we



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ONE FAMILY FUND CANADA

are thinking of them, this little bit makes it all worthwhile.

"I like that we really are One Family," concluded Albert. "Our One Family family keeps expanding, as more and more volunteers and donors go to Israel and get connected with the victims, our family keeps growing. I like that we really do change the lives of victims of terror, one family at a time."

To raise money for its work, One Family Fund has held film festivals, bike rides, hikes, golf games and cottage stays for youth. The next event in which people can become involved is the cross-Israel hike, which will take place Oct. 25-29, 2009.

"Fifty hikers ranging in age from 20-65 will join together to show our solidarity and support for victims of terror in Israel," said Albert. "We will hike through challenging terrain, while learning about the area and having lots of fun. We are staying in kibbutz houses and the last night in a gorgeous hotel called the Orchid." Beneficiaries of One Family Fund assistance in Israel will also be participating in the hike or joining the group in the evenings.

The cost of the hike is \$995, which covers all costs of the five days and four nights, including

transportation to and from Jerusalem, accommodation and meals. Each participant is responsible for their own airfare and Albert said that One Family has a group rate of \$1,350 (from Toronto). Each participant also must raise a minimum of \$2,500 in donations supporting the One Family Fund. "We are also looking for hike sponsors," added Albert. "If someone chooses to be a sponsor for the hike, their logo will go on our hike website."

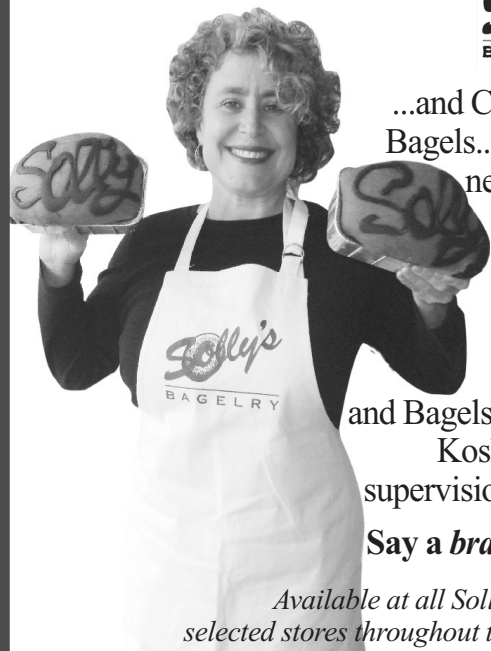
Closer to home, Vancouverites can contribute to the One Family Fund by hosting what the organization calls a Summer Night Dinner.

"Instead of bringing a present to someone's house, we are encouraging everyone to bring \$50 a person to the hostess, and that money will be pooled to go to help victims of terror," said Albert, noting that all donations are tax deductible. For more information about this concept, potential hosts can e-mail sarah@onefamilyfund.ca.

For more information about the October hike, e-mail hike@onefamilyfund.org. Space is limited and participants will be accepted on a first come, first-served basis: at press time, the hike had only 10 spots remaining. ■

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