

Volunteer Opportunity

The Road to Recovery

by Anita Steiner

A friend of a friend was hospitalized, and asked me to fill in for her the next morning and drive several people needing medical treatment from the Gaza border crossing at Erez, just south of Ashkelon, to Soroka Hospital in Beer Sheva. I agreed and not knowingly set out on a new path. I began volunteering with the Israeli NGO **בדרך להחלמה** - The Road to Recovery.

Five days a week, Israeli volunteers pick up Palestinians from the Occupied Territories and Gaza and drive them to hospitals all over Israel and East Jerusalem for treatments, hospitalizations and checkups. The medical care is either not available or prohibitively expensive in the West Bank or Gaza. The Palestinian Authority pays for the medical care.

With its double (or more) meanings The Road to Recovery is also hopefully repairing the trust and respect between the two peoples.

Yuval Roth founded The Road to Recovery instead of revenge, a few years after his brother was killed by Hamas in 1993. Recently Yuval was honored around the world by being selected to be one of CNN's HEROS.

Many of those needing care are children who travel for chemotherapy. Recently I drove two men, brothers, both going for treatments for the same cancer.

The women, older and younger dress in traditional garb and never travel alone. Either a male or female relative will accompany them. Sometimes driving, there is no common language between us, and we sit in silence. At other times a middle aged man who formerly worked in Israel when that was allowed, and can speak Hebrew will carry on a lively conversation. Occasionally we speak in English.

When I drive, I drive one way and another driver will drive them back to the border crossing at Erez that day or when their hospitalization ends. This requires a huge amount of organization and extensive contacts and cooperation between the organizers on both sides. The Road to Recovery reimburses you for your kilometers travelled.

In addition to Beer Sheva, I have had the privilege of driving people to Tel Hashomer outside Tel Aviv and Hadassah Ein Kerem and Augusta Victoria on Har Zaitim in Jerusalem.

No politics are involved, just human acts of kindness. In a small way this is also a road to reconciliation and peace.

You can get further information on their website <http://www.roadtorecovery.org.il/>

You can volunteer directly by calling Amalia who organizes the trips to and from Erez at 050-7707874. Best to call in the evening.

Please feel free to get in touch with me for further questions 050 78 55 348 or by email anita_st@netvision.net.il