

Beat: Health

ISRAELI DOCTORS & ROTARIANS UNITE TO SAVE AFGHAN BABY

A HEARTBEAT TRANSCENDS BORDERS

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USPA NEWS - Every 29 hours doctors save a child's life at SACH's medical facilities in Holon, Israel or in partner facilities around the world. Nobody is turned away. All children, regardless of race, religion, sex, color, or financial status receive the best possible care that modern medicine has to offer.

Thousands of children are alive today because of a small group of medical professionals who volunteer their time and expertise to perform life-saving cardiac surgery and train local medical personnel.

Save A Child's Heart (SACH) is one of the largest undertakings in the world, providing urgently needed pediatric heart surgery and follow-up care for indigent children from developing countries. Based in Israel, its mission is to improve the quality of pediatric cardiac care for children from countries where the heart surgery is unobtainable. Since 1995 pediatric cardiologists have repaired the hearts of more than 4,000 children suffering from congenital and rheumatic heart disease, from infancy to 18 years of age. The annual number of children treated has grown dramatically from 48 cases in 1996 to over 260 in 2015 from.

Children from 51 countries are being treated here at no charge. About half these children are Palestinian Arabs from the West Bank and Gaza. Others, live in countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel, including Iraq and Syria. The SACH staff also continuously trains cardiology teams from other countries- including from Palestinian Authority territories-more than 100 people who are now saving children in their own countries. Their humanitarian spirit overcomes the highest and longest borders in the world.

Baby Yaya Shinwari's transcontinental story is an amazing example of cooperation, willingness to help and love for strangers. His road to a new lease on life in the Holy Land was marked by many roadblocks and challenges, almost insurmountable ten years ago. The lack of diplomatic relationships between Israel and Afghanistan, language challenges, the fact that his mother could not accompany him due to another pregnancy are only some of the difficulties needed to be overcome.

Thanks to major advances in technology and social media, a Shinwari family friend in Afghanistan was able to contact Rotarian Ms. Anna Mussman, a former Department of State employee now living in Haifa, Israel through Facebook, sharing baby Yaya's immediate need for a heart operation. She in turn reached out to her friend Ms. Fary Moini, a former cardiac nurse from Iran, member of the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club in La Jolla, California, USA, asking for help.

Ms. Fary Moini was an excellent choice as Ms. Mussman well knew. Fary, an extremely compassionate, dedicated and seasoned Rotarian, has been working since 2002 on complex relief projects worldwide, including training of Afghani doctors on the use of various medical devices. Her portfolio includes the successful completion of many international Rotary projects in Pakistan and Afghanistan including work with the Peshawar Rotary Foundation and the Jalalabad Rotary Foundation.

Unable to find volunteers to transport little Yaya to Israel, Ms. Moini immediately sprung into action. In traditional Rotarian fashion, putting service above herself Fary embarked on a very demanding, strenuous and sometimes dangerous journey from San Diego, USA, to Kabul, Afghanistan, to Istanbul, Turkey to Holon, Israel.

The trio, Yaya's father accompanied them, reached the Wolfson Medical Center in Holon despite language barriers, diplomatic and cultural roadblocks and medical challenges. On July 31st 2016, armed with hope, determination, good will and a lot of love for Yaya, Fary stood by his side throughout an eight hour, touch and go, very complex cardiac surgery. Ethiopian surgeon, Yaya Mekonnen, M.D., part of Lior Sasson's M.D. pediatric cardiology team, performed the life saving surgery.

The little, miracle Afghan warrior, beat all odds, made a rapid recovery and is off discovering life again. "I'm just in love with this child; his beautiful brown eyes and great smile. He is so healthy and happy, just like any other kid" says joyful La Jolla Golend Triangle Rotarian Fary who has made many new friends around.

Rotary, an international volunteer organization, fosters understanding and provides communities with the skills to resolve conflicts underlying causes of conflict, including poverty, inequality, ethnic tension, lack of access to education, and unequal distribution of resources. Fary's home club, La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary in La Jolla California, a leader in international humanitarian service, has successfully completed more than 141 world wide projects helping those in need.

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