



Parents Of Terrorist Victim Comfort Others

By: Elliot Resnick, *Jewish Press Staff Reporter* Wednesday, December 5, 2007

Bureaucracy? Red tape? Fighting the system?

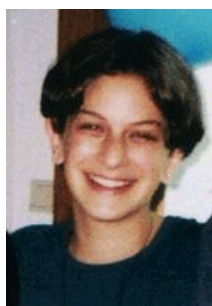
The Roth family, *olim* from Australia, know all about it. The parents of Chaya Elisheva, 12, who suffers from blindness and profound brain damage, the Roths spent many years attempting to receive government help for their child's homecare.

"It took the spirit out of us," Arnold Roth recalls.

And then on August 9, 2001, the Roths lost their 15-year-old daughter Malki in the Jerusalem Sbarro Pizzeria suicide bomb attack. By the end of the traditional seven-day mourning period, the Roths vowed to honor their daughter's memory by starting an organization that would help parents like themselves who wish to provide homecare for their severely disabled child.

"Malki really loved Chaya, and Chaya was drawn to her in a special way," her mother, Frimet Roth, said.

What resulted from that vow was Keren Malki (and kerenmalki.org), which today services 2,000 families of children with special needs. Under its Therapies in the Home program, Keren Malki reimburses families for 75-80 percent of every therapy session a special needs child receives at home. In conjunction with Yad Sarah, Keren Malki also provides expensive specialized equipment on long-term loans.



Malki Roth on the night before her murder

According to Arnold Roth, the number of people in the programs has doubled each year since they began. The organization receives roughly ten applications a week (most of which are accepted), and just last month paid for its 20,000th therapy session.

Yet, Roth said, "we have barely begun to scratch the surface." The number of severely disabled Israeli children tops 65,000, he said.

Approximately a third of Keren Malki beneficiaries are Arabs, reflecting, Roth said, other Israeli institutions such as hospitals that service all citizens. "It's not political, it's just *chesed*, helping people."

Roth does not denigrate parents who institutionalize their disabled children. Rather, he said, parents who wish "to exercise the right they have to look after their child" should be able to do so "without having to beg some public official or insurance clerk for support."

One very grateful woman, who asked to remain anonymous, told The Jewish Press that when her three-year-old son was born with cerebral palsy "everyone in the hospital said he would be a vegetable. Later they said he would be wheelchair-bound, blind, severe mental retardation, everything."

Against the odds, she and her husband commenced therapy. "We started seeing improvement," she said, but "then we ran out of money... It was totally beyond me and my husbands' salaries."

Which is when she discovered Keren Malki. "My child now walks with a walker, and they say within two years he's going to walk independently. On all his cognitive tests he's completely normal; he speaks above his age."

According to Roth, Keren Malki's budget is \$750,000, most of which comes from private donations. He fundraises himself

when he travels to speak about the nature of terrorism (“a cancer that will only be defeated by an uncompromising will”) and his experience as a family member of a terrorist victim.

Keren Malki’s benevolent work, Roth said, does not comfort him for his daughter’s loss. “But it does better prepare you to deal with the challenges that come with life after the murder of your child.”