

A Blog by Lee Lasher

Jewish Federation Past President

Reflections from his experience on an exclusive mission he attended with Jason Shames, Federation CEO. The mission was for Jewish leaders and sponsored by Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) and the Council of Presidents (COP).

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The official COP/JFNA emergency solidarity mission ended on Thurs night. Now I am on the "Lee Lasher mission". I arrived at my apartment in Netanya/Ir Yamim on Fri to spend Shabbat here. The beauty and serenity of this neighborhood and the sea is a paradox to the pain the country is experiencing. I was looking forward to Shabbat after an intense few days and excited to be having meals at good friends, Roni and Yehuda Blinder and Jonathan and Alisa Gellis. I needed the friendship and sense of normalcy. I got to Shul in a somber mood. That quickly changed after a beautiful davening, dancing and Rabbi Mendel Wuensch announcing at the end of davening "a very special welcome to the Katz family who made Aliyah from Cleveland **yesterday**". That's right they made *Aliyah* during the war. *Mi K'Amcha Yisrael.....*

I spent today with the Mandell's (Seth, Sherri, Eliana) of the Koby Mandell Foundation. As you can imagine KMF is inundated with trauma therapy needs in the country. They have added over 10 new therapists and are working on various ways (including hotline, programs, visiting bereaved families and more) to help the victims of the terror attacks. We spent time discussing various strategies and plans (both short term and long term). I also talked to volunteer security personnel in Tekoa. All of the communities in the Gush and surrounding areas including Beitar Ilit, Tzur Hadassa and more have now set up limited entrances, barricades to their communities and added armed security. It is CSS on steroids. They have heightened concerns about attacks from local Palestinians.

We then went to Nokdim to make a shiva visit to Chana and Zev Zafrani. Their daughter, Noy, was murdered at the music festival. See below pic. Noy was 21, beautiful, loved music, singing, acting and had a big heart. Her mother said all she wanted was to help others. Chana (the mother) is an English Teacher in a local school. Ironically when I said I was from Englewood and sending hugs and love from our community she said she was an au pair in Englewood 30 years ago and knew our community. Seth Mandell and I sat with Zev (the father) as well and he asked Seth if you can ever get over something like this and how can he heal and Seth gave him sage, personal advice. Why should two Jewish Fathers have this kind of conversation?

After this emotional and difficult visit we drove to Tzur Hadassa to meet Elad Gershonowitz and Oren Melamed. Two businessmen (Construction Engineer and Real Estate professional) who are now part of an organization called One Heart, Tzur Hadassa branch. They have stopped their regular job and mobilized with other professionals to work solely with the IDF and Gov to get

urgent needed supplies for soldiers. They are insuring they only supply what is actually needed by the soldiers. They state:

“Considering our IDF force, which don’t have no doubt about it even not for a second, and with our gathering soul at difficult times (*kol Israel arevim ze la’ze!!!*), we will win.

As for where we stand, we would much appreciate donations for purchasing the supplies for the soldiers.

For donations and forces together we joined an existing nonprofit organization, Lev Echad (One Heart).

Attached is the link which the *first* *page* (please donate there) is of our “branch” in Tzur Hadassa of Lev Echad.

As we’re working on an every day budget, we would appropriate the donations ASAP.

Thank you and all your friends in advance. Am Israel (and all the rest of the loving side of the world) Chai!!!

<https://www.jgive.com/new/en/ils/donation-targets/110438>

If you want to donate the link is above.

I also saw this very emotional video and was asked to share it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYspKp-F68>

Best Regard,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LL' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Lee Lasher

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