

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Israeli and Arab Children with Cancer Coming to Los Angeles

16th annual Dream Trip offers a break from treatment, new friendships

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When a child is sick, political and cultural differences vanish. Jews and Arabs who have been locked in bitter conflict for many years bond over their mutual enemy – cancer.

This fall, 38 children battling cancer – Jews and Arabs, ages 9 to 19 – are coming to Los Angeles for a twelve-day respite from relentless medical treatments, anxious parents, and frightening prognoses. *Larger than Life – L.A. Family*, a charitable organization, offers the Dream Trip to any child with cancer in Israel *regardless of religion, race or ethnicity*.

This year, the delegation includes 11 Arabs, Moslems, Christians and Druze. The children are accompanied by two oncologists, three nurses, social workers, and two counselors who are themselves alumni of the Dream Trip, serving as role models for the young children.

During their stay in Southern California, the children tour all of the obligatory sites: Venice Beach and Third Street Promenade, Universal Studios, Magic Mountain, Disneyland and Hollywood. They ride helicopters, speedboats and ATVs, and party on a yacht in the marina. Each evening, a different family hosts the delegation for dinner and entertainment.

Near the end of their visit, the children are the stars of the Larger than Life Gala where funds are raised to support this and other programs for cancer-stricken children in Israel. This year, the sold-out Gala will take place at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on September 22nd.

“This is truly a dream come true for these children and their families,” says Rakefet Aharon co-founder of Larger than Life – L.A. Family. Sixteen years ago, Rakefet and her husband Arie, began the non-profit at their Tarzana home. “About 90% of the children survive their cancer. But even the most severely ill among them, the ones who don’t eventually make it, enjoy every moment of the trip. They are allowed to be children who have pure fun, not patients in hospital beds.”

Yair Gavrielli, the organization’s President, has witnessed amazing outcomes from the children’s L.A. vacations. “The trip gives them the strength to continue the battle against cancer. It opens their eyes to find the beauty in every moment, and to embrace the warmth of total strangers, people who care about them deeply.”

The group this year includes five Arab children from the north of Israel, three from the center, two from Jerusalem and one from the south. Previous delegations have included Christian, Moslem and Druze children, a Jordanian boy and a Somali refugee. When the children share stories of their months or years of treatment, it simply doesn’t matter whether they are Jews or Arabs. “The kids watch out for each other and make sure they are well enough to join the activities,” says Eri Kroh, Chairman of the Board of the organization. “Cancer builds bridges between human beings.”

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Larger than Life – L.A. Family aims to improve the quality of life of Israeli families facing pediatric cancer on the path from diagnosis to recovery, regardless of religion, race, gender, ethnicity or nationality. They help fund medications not covered by health insurance, provide psychological support, and create joyful and carefree experiences that revitalize the families’ spirits and enable them to persist in their battle and succeed in beating cancer.

Contact/Donations:
info@LargerThanLifeLA.com
(818) 887-7640

Interesting statistics:

- *Of 478 kids who came on the West Coast Dream Trips to date, 108 were Arabs. This is roughly equal to their proportion in the population of Israel.*
- *There were only 205 girls vs. 278 boys.*