

LARGER THAN LIFE

An Overview of Adjusted Responses during Covid-19 Crisis

Each year, more than 1,500 children in Israel treated in pediatric oncology fighting cancer . Due to the grim diagnosis of this disease, hospitalization and treatments, the children and their families face a nightmarish scenario of emotional, functional, and economic challenges including anxiety, despair, confusion, ability to purchase life-saving medications, and finding financial support when the parents' income is drastically affected . In the year 2000, families of sick children created Larger than Life National pediatric cancer organization in Israel.

We are in all hospitals for them during this most grueling and challenging period. Our vision is to stand with the families from diagnosis until recovery regardless of race or religion. We seek to change and reshape the future for children with cancer. We are at the forefront of public advocacy efforts by promoting government policy changes relating to health care costs, hospital conditions, and overall support for families with pediatric cancer .

Larger than Life programs promote three main values for support :

HEALTH. We support children's oncology wards by financing innovative treatments and medications. Diagnostic testing, life-saving medications, and humanitarian financial aid are in constant demand. Our support coordinators in all pediatric oncology hospitals give the social and logistical support to navigate the maze of the health care system. No child should perish because of inadequate funding .

HAPPINESS. Children and their families need opportunities to step away from the hospital in joyous events, giving them the strength to fight this disease. We offer the children and families unique programs such as Recovery vacations, summer camps, Emotional psychological support for children and the parents - individually or in support group sessions .

HOPE. Our "The Kindergarten of Dreams" a unique sterile preschool facility for children with cancer, providing a medically safe preschool for young children to grow and heal, while allowing parents to return to work .

We are currently building a second, extended sterile educational/recovery center in Be'er Sheva and have plans to build others in Jerusalem .

Adjusted methods of response and activities during COVID-19 crisis

When the crisis broke out in Israel in the beginning of March, it was clear that the children and their families are about to face an extremely challenging time, since their battle with cancer does not stop during any other hardship .

Committed to the children's wellbeing we decided to focus our efforts in increasing daily communication with each family during their isolation at home or in hospital, identify their needs and provide an accurate response :

1. The Kindergarten of Dreams –

Our sterile pre-school educational facility for children with cancer in Ramat Gan, was closed for nearly two months and was re-opened on mid-May for partial adjusted activity. Not all the children return to the kindergarten, as many of them are still required to stay isolated under Doctor's recommendation .

Throughout the long weeks of quarantine, the team of kindergarten teachers maintained daily routine communication with the children and their families and held online sessions. The kindergarten's team was also attended to the parents' emotional wellbeing and provided them with emotional support and parental guidance to better deal with the situation, we held remote sessions in which we access essential information and help families keep home routines and spend time with fun activities.

2. LTL's team of welfare and support coordinators are at the front line of our contact with the families. They operate inside every major oncology hospital wards year-round. Once the crisis broke out and the wards were closed, they collaborated with the children's volunteer mentors and kept constant communication with the families through the phone and video chats, making sure they are well and check their needs every day.

3. Humanitarian aid to cover basic food and living costs –

Since the crisis broke out in Israel and to this day, our support coordinators are flooded with distress calls from the sick children's families. In the past 3 months, we face an increase of over 100% in the monthly demand for emergency assistance .

Most assistance is required for disadvantage families living in Israel's social and geographical periphery, who struggle financially in addition to the battle with the child's cancer disease. These families were already weak prior to COVID-19 crisis, with a single source of income, due to the need to have one parent as the sick child's caretaker. We provided financial aid for basic food and living costs to more than hundred families In a monthly amount of 500\$. Most families need this assistance for 4 to 5 months period.

4. Financial assistance for Medical needs -

In many cases, when the traditional treatment is insufficient for the child's cancer, Doctors recommend innovative precision treatment, DNA tests and medication that are not included in the national health basket or covered by public insurance.

At this point, we are stepping in to help. We purchase the medication from the pharmaceutical company on behalf of the child, get it delivered to the hospital ward to be given to the child by their Doctor . Throughout the crisis, while hospitals and labs were occupied with COVID 19 related healthcare – the demand and the response to our sick children's lifesaving medication solutions continued:

We provided help to dozens of children obtaining this lifesaving solutions.

The cost of DNA test or a precision medication is 2,500\$, which adds up to 5000\$ (an average of 2 sessions required for each child) .

5. Safe transportation to and from hospital for treatments

Families of sick children from low-income families were raising this unique and acute need very often. Many of them live in Israel's periphery, in places located far from the hospital. Given their financial situation, most of these families do not own a car and cannot afford the extremely high cost of using private transportation to and from hospital, since as we mentioned before – the battle with cancer does not stop and children are getting their treatments in the hospital, which requires them to get there at least once a week In these days of health crisis, private transportation is the only way to ensure that the sick child will get safely to treatments and avoid any exposure .The demand for this kind of assistance is mostly at the periphery areas.

We assisted about 100 families. In an average cost of 600\$ per month for each child (The cost of private transportation- taxi or ambulance).

6. Computers and laptops for children in home or hospital isolation

As most of our children are still committed to home or hospital isolation for nearly three months, they are basically detached from the outside world, and are limited to on-line communication with their friends and teachers. We received many requests to assist families with the need to purchase designated laptops or tablets for the children and address their growing need for contact with the world outside.

Since the beginning of the isolation, we have already purchased few dozens of tablets and laptops, at the cost of 350\$ for 1 tablet and 1,000\$ for a laptop and are now looking to fully address this need for additional families .

Thanking in advance for all your efforts,

Naama Elbaz

Director of International Fundraising & Philanthropy Partnerships

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