

Honoring healers, educators and the arts



Operation Embrace co-founder Anne Clemons, right with Israeli terror bombing victim Neta Zaken

By Estelle Abraham
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“In the aftermath of terror ...to ease the burden of the terror victims... the mental part of rehabilitation is the hardest part,” according to Roth Gagin, director of social work at the Rambam Medical Center in Haifa.

Far from the site of terror in Israel and from the lives of victims of suicide bombing, Gagin spoke at Ralph and Sherry Foxman’s Potomac home during an Operation Embrace fundraiser.

Operation Embrace is a locally based nonprofit organization that offers assistance to Israeli victims of terror. The cost of rehabilitation is overwhelming, and \$90,000 was raised at the second annual fund-raising dinner.

Steve Emerson, an expert on counterterrorism cited the difference between American and Israeli attitudes toward terrorism, “Americans,” he said, “still ignore the human face of terror.” Operation Embrace brought Neta Zaken a suicide bombing survivor, to tell her story. At 19, she carries the scars over her young face and body. Her jaw was broken, her teeth gone, shrapnel penetrated throughout her body and limbs, two fingers lost. Yet, she said, “I am one of the lucky ones.”

Acknowledging that Israel is not an easy place to live, she said, “it is the best place for me.”

Bethesda resident Alice Abramson, a member of Ohr Kodesh Congregation in Chevy Chase, received the group’s Volunteer of the Year Award for her commitment and work on behalf of four Israeli victims of terror and their families who have been adopted by Ohr Kodesh’s Israel solidarity committee. Co-founders Aviva Tessler and Anne Clemons want people here to care, to work on constructive efforts to help thousands of victims. It is an arduous and painful recovery effort. The brutal injuries, mental and physical, are long lasting. They need attention now.

“We do what we must,” Israel social worker Dagin told the guests. “In the end, let sanctity triumph.”

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