

# A PROUD HISTORY

Since 1940, many people and groups in the United States have played a major role in the historic task of saving lives in Israel by supporting American Friends of Magen David Adom / Ann Zeitlin

**A**merican Friends of Magen David Adom (AFMDA) - which was formerly known as "American Red Mogen Dovid for Palestine," "American Red Magen David for Israel" and "ARMDI" - will celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2010. Concurrently, Magen David Adom will celebrate its 80th year. AFMDA is the sole authorized fundraising and advocacy organization in the United States supporting the life saving efforts of MDA in Israel and representing Magen David Adom in the US.

Magen David Adom started in Tel Aviv with one ambulance in 1930 that was constantly on call. Today, MDA has 800 ambulances, Mobile Intensive Care Units (MICU) and Multi Casualty Response Vehicles (MCRV), which drive nearly 10 million miles a year to complete 700,000 operational runs, providing emergency care for more than 520,000 patients.

Magen David Adom is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with crews often racing out in the middle of the night to respond to emergencies, including traffic accidents and other incidents. As Israel's only government-mandated emergency medical first responders and ambulance service, MDA delivers state-of-the-art, world renowned pre-hospital emergency care to all of Israel's people, as well as collects, stores, processes and supplies the nation's blood supply.

## Since the British Mandate

AFMDA's legacy of providing service to Israel started in 1940 - in the days of the Yishuv, before the establishment of the State - when a group of New York supporters recognized the key role played by the 10-year old "Magen David Adom for Palestine" in protecting Jews who were attacked during the Arab riots of 1929 and 1936-39. Under the leadership of Herman Z. Quittman, Dr. Harris Levine and Congressman Emanuel Celler, American Red Mogen Dovid for Palestine was formed to give medical assistance to the people of Israel (then "Palestine").

The organization supported MDA during the tumultuous last eight years of the British Mandate and played an important role in helping Holocaust survivors reach Palestine. It also supplied most of MDA's ambulances, which were on the front lines in the War of

Independence.

In advance of 2010, which is also when Magen David Adom in Israel will celebrate its 80th anniversary, the "70 for 70" campaign will pay tribute to select people or groups who played important roles in the organization's history. AFMDA has set a two year campaign goal of \$70 million to mark this milestone. "In a year when AFMDA marks its 70th anniversary, we are gearing up to honor the many people who have steadfastly supported us and made saving lives in Israel such an important priority," says Lewis Krinsky, National Chairman. "I have personally been involved in supporting MDA, initially with my parents, for 35 years. We have provided the funds, equipment and facilities MDA needs in order to serve the people and the State of Israel and we are committed to continuing this proud tradition of being the world's foremost supporters of Magen David Adom."

Erna Kahn Marx is an example of an American who dedicated herself to helping Magen David Adom throughout her lifetime and also posthumously, and whose achievements will be honored by the "70 for 70" campaign. She was President of the Emanuel Celler Chapter in New York for 10 years and made an uninterrupted annual gift for more than 25 years. Three months before she passed away, having survived her husband Henry and with no children, Erna decided to make a \$4 million leadership legacy gift to AFMDA, to support the MDA Israel National Blood Services Center in Ramat Gan. That gift, said Erna, "makes my whole life seem worthwhile."

## Training and readiness

Magen David Adom is manned by 1,600 professionals and staff and 12,400 volunteers, many of whom are in high school. MDA volunteers come from all sectors of the society; they are Jewish (including ultra-Orthodox), Druze, Moslem, Christian and Bedouin. "This organization could not be run without our volunteers," says Harvey Rafofsky, Vice Chairman of the Campaign, stressing that "MDA is the first line of defense for Israel."

MDA has more than 100 emergency medical stations and 11 dispatch stations around the country, equipped with state-of-the-art GPS tracking systems. This means that the



American-donated ambulances and bloodmobiles in Israel, circa 1950



closest ambulance, and not necessarily one from the command center, is sent to answer a call. The quicker response time can mean the difference between life and death.

Many call MDA the "civilian army," but unlike the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Magen David Adom receives almost none of its \$100 million budget from the Israeli government. MDA is the only organization mandated by Israel's government to provide emergency medical and ambulance services, as well as the nation's blood supply, however it is not government funded although the prices that MDA can charge for its services are set by the government. MDA is also not reimbursed for drills they run to maintain preparedness even though it is a part of the National Emergency Administration along with the IDF, Home



New York mayor Michael R. Bloomberg is the lead donor for the MDA Station in Jerusalem which is being rebuilt

Front Command, Israel Police, etc.

Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda Market was the scene of an emergency drill last August during which MDA, Jerusalem police, Israeli Border Police, firefighters and Jerusalem Municipality workers simulated response to a large-scale terrorist attack. Using live "wounded" participants and dozens of rubber dummies, the emergency forces practiced treating the victims at the scene and evacuating those who needed hospitalization. In addition to the Jerusalem drill, a large scale nationwide emergency drill is planned for early 2010. As a further example of Magen David Adom personnel keeping their training and readiness at the highest level to protect Israel's people, MDA personnel recently spent one week training for earthquake preparedness.

## Responding to Qassams

Magen David Adom (MDA) personnel have been a lifeline for residents of the western Negev during the past eight years, which has seen over 8,000 Qassam rockets and mortars crashing into their homes and communities. While 2008 saw 3,300 rockets from Gaza hit the area, extending roughly from Ashdod all the way to Beersheva during Operation Cast Lead, 300 have been launched since the end of the hostilities in January 2009. In recent weeks, however, there has been a marked increase, with two rockets landing on the outskirts of Sderot over Rosh Hashana and one on October 18th near Shaar HaNegev.

During Operation Cast Lead, Magen David Adom dispatched teams to every rocket attack, treating and evacuating 770 casualties, including four fatalities, four severely wounded, 11 moderately wounded and 167 lightly wounded. An additional 584 people were treated for shock. To show solidarity and to raise morale during the war, AFMDA sent a delegation to visit MDA ambulance teams and stations in Sderot, Ashdod and Ashkelon, as well as Nahariya and Haifa in the north. AFMDA's emergency "Code Red" campaign that began with the outbreak of fighting in the south raised urgently needed funds for portable bomb shelters, helmets and flak jackets, as well as much needed medical equipment and supplies for the MDA National Blood Services Center.

Long before this latest Gaza War, American Friends of Magen David Adom concentrated much of its recent efforts to building new facilities or renovating existing ones in the area. On March 30, 2008, AFMDA dedicated the new MDA Sderot Emergency Medical Station in memory of Judy Kaplan of New York and Esther and Hyman Rapport of Cleveland. On May 4, 2007, AFMDA also opened the new Natalie and Manny Charach MDA Ashdod Emergency Medical Station, which was a special project of the John J. Mames Chapter - Michigan Region of American Friends of Magen David Adom.

## Making a difference

Even during these tough economic times, AFMDA continues to raise and contribute funds, attesting to the enthusiastic support the US community has for its life saving activities and message. Last year, AFMDA supporters provided 62 emergency vehicles to MDA. A standard ambulance costs \$100,000, while the Mobile Intensive Care Units cost \$125,000 to build. Since they are both specialty vehicles, they have to be manufactured in the United States and shipped to Israel.

According to Robert Kern, Director of Marketing and Communications for AFMDA, "we have just finished a new sub-station in

Jerusalem's Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood and we are rebuilding the Jerusalem Station, which will be named for the father of our lead giver, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York. The MDA Nahariya Station renovation will be completed this fall. We are also preparing to build a new facility in Mitzpe Ramon and contemplating additional projects. Other MDA stations which AFMDA has modernized or built in recent years include Sderot, Afula, Arad, Ashdod, Beersheva, Beit She'an, Dimona, Kiryat Gat, Upper Nazareth and Rehovot, as well as the Nancy Caroline Library at the Ramat Gan MDA Emergency Medical Station."

Entrusted to collect and maintain the nation's precious blood supply, MDA Blood Services personnel work tirelessly every-day to run blood drives throughout Israel. Recognizing this urgent need, AFMDA's Israel Representative Jonathan Feldstein is facilitating opportunities for visiting Americans to participate in this effort, adding 1,600 units to date for this year. This matches last year's record total and many more blood drives are

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planned, as well as tours of MDA facilities for groups of US tourists

Naomi Kaplan of New York has experienced the worst tragedies a parent can face. When she lost her daughter Ann, Naomi donated the "Ann Kaplan Blood Bank" in the MDA Haifa Emergency Medical Station and brought her other daughter, Judy, to the dedication. Shortly after that, Judy lost her life to lung cancer. Mourning a second child, Naomi chose to name the new MDA Sderot Station in her memory. "During the war in Lebanon, every time I heard about the rockets landing in Haifa, I thanked God that I chose the Blood Bank in the MDA Haifa Station in memory of my Annie," she says. "Then, this past winter, the same thing happened in Sderot. Never in my life have I felt so good about any of the gifts I have made as I do about these two. I feel honored that perhaps I have done something to make a difference between life and death for the people in Israel." ■

For more information on supporting AFMDA and resupplying Magen David Adom, or to give blood when you are in Israel, call 866-632-2763 or go to [www.afmda.org](http://www.afmda.org). In Israel, contact [IsraelOffice@afmda.org](mailto:IsraelOffice@afmda.org) or call 057-761-4220.