



LEFT: POM unit in Toronto, Canada. RIGHT: Nina Brodsky (left) and Howard Feldman (right) bringing gifts to 1100 Golani soldiers in 2013.

## IDF Combat Veterans Find Peace and Build San Diego Community Bridges

Over the years, I've had the honor of engaging with dozens of young IDF soldiers. One thing that always struck me was the sharp contrast between the Diaspora's view of IDF soldiers as extraordinary heroes, and the Israelis' self-perception of being unremarkable.

There are, of course, several organizations to support IDF soldiers, but I've recently joined Howard Feldman in support of an Israeli project called Peace of Mind (POM). POM's purpose is to provide IDF combat veterans the opportunity to explore their feelings about their wartime combat in Lebanon and Gaza, and its impact on their lives. Although most after-effects do not rise to the level of PTSD, combat stress interferes with an individual's personal and family life.

POM provides former soldiers nine months of therapeutic group sessions in an evidence-based program led by Israeli professionals. A unique aspect of the program is that the sessions include entire combat units that already have a bond of trust. Most of the sessions happen in Israel. However, for one

week, the unit travels to a diaspora community. This allows the veterans to disconnect from the pressures of their daily lives, and to focus on the therapeutic process.

In December, POM San Diego will host our first group of IDF soldiers. This mitzvah is sponsored by Chabad of Carmel Valley with the support of community partner Congregation Beth Am. The Israeli veterans will be treated to home hospitality and the unexpected hugs of the Jewish Diaspora. And that's where the magic happens! In an environment of appreciation and love, lifelong bonds will be made.

Howard and I hope to bring another three to four units to San Diego in 2020. Future hosting and sponsorship opportunities are open to any congregation or Jewish organization wanting to join in this mitzvah.

Details about POM San Diego and the opportunity to donate or volunteer can be found at our website <https://pomsandiego.org>. 120 approved teams are on the POM waiting list. Will you join us in helping these deserving young heroes?

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