

## OT Students Raise Nearly \$29,000 Plus Pledges For Israel's Terror Victims And Their Families

Running in skirts and covered elbows, Gilah Lempel and her close friend and classmate Yonina Blumenthal finished the Westchester, New York Triathlon on September 17, just a day after their classes ended in occupational therapy. Since July, the two young women, who recently were elected president and class representative for their class, had been training rigorously while carrying full course loads in order to raise money through the triathlon for terror victims in Israel and their families. The final results: nearly \$29,000 in cash, with additional pledges expected to bring in more for the victims. "It was incredible to see how generous people are and how Americans just step up to the plate to help Israel," said Lempel, who added that the entire experience has created in her a yearning to return to Israel. "The race was so much fun. We got a lot of comments like, 'That is so cool that Orthodox Jews are partaking in this [event], and for such a great cause'," she said.

The triathlon consisted of a one-mile swim, a 24-mile bike ride and a six-mile run. The money raised, she said, is going to terror victims in Israel through OneFamily Fund, an organization that provides direct financial, legal and emotional assistance to victims of terrorism in Israel. The two were part of a team of 32 individuals who participated in the Triathlon through OneFamily, which as a group raised nearly \$100,000.

Lempel is a third year student from Monsey, New York who is studying for her master's degree in OT at Touro's School of Health Sciences. She graduated with a bachelor of arts from Stern College for Women at Yeshiva University. Blumenthal, who was raised in Lawrence, New York but currently lives in Far Rockaway, completed her undergraduate pre-requisite work for the OT master's program at Lander College for Women. Lempel said she always loved athletics but never had time to devote to it because of school. Over



*Gilah Lempel, left, and Yonina Blumenthal, right, raised nearly \$29,000 for families of terrorist victims in Israel in the Westchester Triathlon on September 17th.*

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the summer, she decided she wanted to challenge herself – and at the same time both young women heard about the OneFamily Fund and started discussing it. After some research, they decided to sign up and partner in the effort.

"We met in occupational therapy school and hit it off right away. We became very close friends, and encourage each other to do our best work and to do extra-curricular things in society," said Lempel. "It was very hard to balance the training, the fundraising and intense full course loads while obtaining our masters'. We often felt overwhelmed, but knew in our hearts we were doing the right thing. We knew that was the reason we chose to go into this field – to help people. We want to make a difference and we know that we will! This triathlon has made us feel all that much more empathetic."

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