

Israelis to join int'l project for terrorism-affected youth

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Four Israeli teenagers whose lives have been forever altered by terrorism will meet with 45 youths from across the globe who are struggling to overcome similar experiences during a unique eight-day long international community-building experience.

Project Common Bond is being launched this week by Tuesday's Children, a non-profit organization founded by friends and family of the victims of September 11th in partnership with other groups from all over the world, including the Koby Mandell Foundation in Israel.

Hosted by Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, the initiative is tailored to youths between the ages of 14 and 20 who have lost a loved one to terrorism in their home country, be it Israel, Northern Ireland, Spain, England, or Liberia.

"These are children who have lost a family member due to a terror act," Project Common Bond director Kathy Murphy told *The Jerusalem Post*. "Other camps may bring them together for religious reasons or because they live in conflict countries. That's not our philosophy. That's not our mission. Ours is to bring kids together who have had a personal loss due to an act of terrorism, the idea being to allow them to build a community."

Seth Mandell, who founded the Koby Mandell Foundation with his wife Sherri after their eldest son Koby was killed in 2001, expressed his support for Project Common Bond's international scope.

"The experience of being connected to children from other cultures who have undergone terror attacks can widen their horizons and let them see in a certain sense that this is an international issue," Mandell told the *Post*.

Each region's delegation will be joined by an adult chaperone, and a team of translators will be on hand to facilitate communication. The mornings will begin with a three-hour Global Leadership Dialogue program aimed at promoting mutual respect and understanding, developing leadership and peace building skills, exploring identity and culture, celebrating diversity and creating a personal action plan to effect change in the participants' respective communities.

The afternoons will be filled with dynamic art, theater and music programs, as well as with sports and optional activities such as yoga, qi-gong and meditation led by specialists in therapeutic activity and nonconventional expression. Extensive fundraising has ensured that every participant is financially supported.

Committed to making a difference, Project Common Bond is already looking ahead towards sustaining the impact of the program year-round via the Internet and support for the implementation of the participants' personal projects in their home countries.

"The camp is just the beginning," said Murphy. "Success to me at the end of this pilot week would mean that we have brought kids together, we have helped them to forge a community and friendships, and to gain some understanding about themselves, each other, and the larger world on their journey to become global citizens."