



## STARWEEK MAGAZINE

### New Heart, New Life

By Ida Anita Q. del Mundo Updated March 22, 2009 12:00 AM



MANILA, Philippines - When eight-month-old baby Lyka Masgay from Benguet needed an urgent and complicated heart operation, it was the Save a Child's Heart (SACH) organization that came to her rescue.

The Israeli-based non-profit organization provides life-saving heart surgeries, as well as follow-up care, for children from developing countries.

It was Lyka's grandmother, Remy, a Filipino caretaker in Israel, who approached SACH for help in treating her granddaughter's congenital heart disease, which the family could not have treated in the Philippines for lack of funds.

SACH offers much-needed operations to children in need all around the world, for a fraction of the usual cost.

In Lyka's case, an operation like hers would have cost some \$100,000, which was significantly reduced through SACH to only a tenth of the cost, or \$10,000.

Despite the lower price, Lyka's family is still finding it difficult to raise the money for the operation.

Still, in a valiant effort to save the child's life, SACH, together with Remy, tried to organize the trip and raise funds.

Already, generous support has come in from Philippine Airlines, the Baguio Travel Agency, SLU Sacred Heart Hospital of Baguio, and the Israeli Embassy in Manila.

As the SACH and the Masgay family raced to complete their preparations, Lyka's health took a turn for the worse and it was decided that she could not wait any longer for the operation.

On February 22, accompanied by Dr. Eldar Schneider, who flew to the Philippines just to ensure her safety on the flight, Lyka and her mother Agustina made the life-changing trip to the Wolfson Medical Center in Holon, Israel. Though the funds have not been gathered yet, the hospital and doctors agreed to push through with baby Lyka's urgent operation.

The day after her arrival, Lyka underwent a catheterization. And on March 4, she received the open-heart surgery that would save her life.

By March 15, Lyka was released from the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and was moved to the children's ward. After the successful operation, she now shows positive signs of full recovery and is set to return to the Philippines in two months.

Lyka is the first SACH beneficiary from the Philippines. In celebration of the work of the untiring members of SACH, an exhibit was opened recently at the Philippine Children's Medical Center, featuring the activities of Save a Child's Heart.

"By mending the hearts of children, regardless of their origin, SACH is contributing to a better and more peaceful future for all of our children," says SACH on their organization's mission. Treating Lyka, they have given a young Filipino girl not only a new heart, but a new life, and a brighter future.

*If you would like to help, donations for Lyka's operation may be sent to Agustina Masgay, account number 0790303272 at Banco de Oro, Upper Session Road, Luneta Hill, Baguio City.*

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