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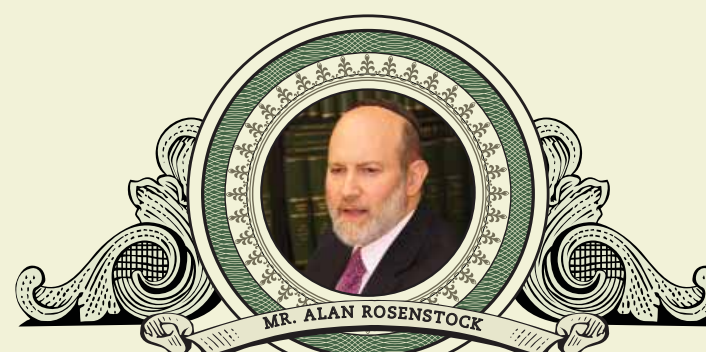
The inside world of non-profit organizations



RABBI YOSEF C. GOLDING  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ROFEH  
CHOLIM CANCER SOCIETY (RCCS)



MR. MENDY REINER  
FOUNDER AND  
CHAIRMAN RENEWAL



MR. ALAN ROSENSTOCK  
DIRECTOR, TOMCHE SHABBOS  
OF ROCKLAND COUNTY



RABBI YEHOSHUA WEINSTEIN  
DIRECTOR OF  
OUTREACH, OORAH



Each of the members of this roundtable asked me “How long do you expect it to run?” — they simply needed to know when to schedule the many other slots in their day. As I researched each of these individuals and their organizations prior to their arrival, I discovered just how many hats they wear. There is fundraising, dealing with individuals in need of help, managing office staff... but before we delved into the nitty-gritty parts of what they do, I had to hear how they got into their current position and involvement.

**Mr. Reiner:** Ten years ago, I met a person who was on dialysis and needed a kidney. I knew nothing about dialysis; I can't even say I understood the function of a kidney! But once I did basic research and realized that there was a five- to seven-year average wait time for a kidney, and that survival rates for those who didn't receive a new kidney soon enough were low, as 60% don't survive past three years on dialysis. I knew I needed to do something. I asked Mr. Shlomo Meyer how he thought I could help and he suggested I put an ad in the paper. I did,

and roughly 25 people responded saying they were ready to be a kidney donor or asking information on what it takes. I was amazed. The need was there, the solution was there; the only thing needed was to connect the two. Fast-forward ten years, we're facilitating a transplant a week roughly 30% of all altruistic kidney transplants in the U.S.

**Rabbi Golding:** I've always been in the non-profit field. I worked for Agudas Yisrael of America for over 25 years, 18 of them under Rabbi Moshe Sherer, z"l. He was

my rebbi in askanus, and it was a zechus to work for him. I volunteered for RCCS for a few years while at my Agudah job; when RCCS was looking for an executive director, I felt, at that particular time in my life, that I could accomplish more for RCCS. I asked a she'eilah and was told I could leave the employ of the Agudah, but I never left the Agudah. I think that background helped me in the building and expanding of RCCS, which has seen great strides in the last decade.

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come in over the weekend is: Is this an emergency or can it wait until Monday? The people in my office work off of their cellphones at all hours; sometimes that means even up until very close to Shabbos.

Three weeks ago, at 2:30 p.m. on Friday afternoon, a patient called to say he urgently needed a certain medication and it was not covered by standard insurance. Within an hour, the money was raised and sent to the pharmaceutical company so that the medicine was delivered on Shabbos. The patient was able to begin the medication on Shabbos, as opposed to waiting until Tuesday or Wednesday.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** The *frum* community, for the most part, associates Oorah with Fiveish rather than kiruv, so I don't get bombarded in that sense. Calls generally go to our office extensions, and messages left on our voicemails get emailed so we see them right away, but it ensures that we don't have to give out our cellphone numbers. If you function professionally and get back to people in due time, they will function with you in the same manner. They'll leave a detailed message if they realize you listen to detailed messages.

**Mr. Reiner:** In truth, sometimes the call may not be an acute emergency but it feels that way to the individual in need of a kidney. Being able to reassure them right then and there is not something to be underestimated.

*You give and give and give. And people still can complain. How do you deal with the complaints?*

**Mr. Reiner:** Getting a complaint after giving it all builds you. The easiest thing is to throw in the towel and say "cut off services from this individual" or make new rules to protect yourself from the next person's complaint. But if you're in it for the ultimate good, then you keep giving and realize that it made you stronger. You overcame!

**Mr. Rosenstock:** Honestly, I've never heard a complaint. I've only heard suggestions.

**Mr. Reiner:** You never had a recipient complain that they thought you should be giving them pricier cuts of meat?

**Mr. Rosenstock:** I would say that's a suggestion! Maybe it's a suggestion on what to include. My wife and I have a rule: if it's not on the Shabbos table of Tomche Shabbos recipients, it's not on our table. So yes, if the person is feeling deficient, we need to take it seriously.

**Mr. Reiner:** I guess there's a difference between our organizations. In your case, the recipient can eat chicken, meat, or whatnot. In Renewal's case, the person needs a kidney and if he doesn't feel it's happening fast enough.... It's not like something we can do partway. It's all or nothing.

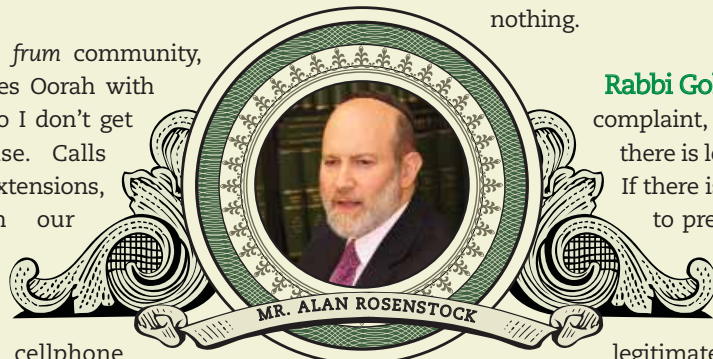
**Rabbi Golding:** At RCCS, if there is a complaint, we investigate to see if there is legitimacy to the complaint. If there is, we'll see what we can do to prevent it from happening or perhaps expand our services to make it right. If it's a complaint that's not legitimate, I send it on to Tomche Shabbos of Rockland County. [All chuckle]

**Rabbi Weinstein:** With the number of people we service, it's nearly inevitable that someone will be unhappy at some point. Rabbi Chaim Mintz is a person who tries to be a *shomei'a* and *mekabel* at all times. The one thing he has emphasized to me time and again about this is that while we have to run things professionally, we have to be careful not to turn into bureaucrats.

**Rabbi Golding:** Complaints, suggestions, whatever you want to call it — RCCS has added an entire department because of a "complaint." Ten years ago, the main function of RCCS was subsidizing insurance premiums. Today, RCCS is so much bigger. We have an entire department just for facilitating and expediting medical appointments. And this is because people told us about a need. We listened, and honestly, it would've been easier to not do this and not undertaken the extra financial burden, but we did it.

*A good leader knows he can't do everything. But delegation is very challenging. How do you find the right personnel? How do you feel about having the work done by volunteers vs. paid staff?*

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**Rabbi Golding:** All our patients have code numbers to ensure privacy. We have auditors who help us maintain the highest standards of financial oversight. We have a Rabbinical board, and we follow their advice. Our paid staff is committed to following our guidelines and principles, and our volunteers are never privy to private info. For the most part, our volunteers are the *nashim tzidkaniyos* doing fundraising for the Chinese Auction and the over-600 house parties they organize and host. We had one here last week, at the *Hamodia/Binah* office.

The only other volunteers we have are former cancer patients who give *chizuk* to the patients, and they understand the need for privacy and policy. I just asked a survivor to help convince a boy who said, "It's my choice to deny myself medication. I'm an adult and I have the right to die if I want to." That very night, the volunteer was at the young man's home for two hours, and afterwards, he texted me "Mission accomplished." He was able to do something that our staff could not. But in terms of the services we offer, it would be impossible to give that kind of thing over to volunteers. It's just too sensitive.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** We survive on volunteers. We believe that no organization can ever be *mekarev* people; people are *mekarev* people. Oorah's role is to facilitate the *kiruv* that is being done by our volunteers. We work hard at training and overseeing our volunteers but we also have to empower them.

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It's the only way to uncover what they are capable of. Yes, sometimes you fail and sometimes you need to re-shift responsibilities, but you'll never know unless you try.

**Mr. Reiner:** Renewal relies mainly on its staff for day to day operations. We depend on our past kidney donors to volunteer for those tasks that don't require a continuous relationship with our potential kidney donors, such as speaking with them about their experience, driving them to appointments and visiting them post transplant.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** We have the opposite of the RCCS model. The fundraising is done by staff and the services are all run by volunteers. We have employees and senior volunteers who guide the volunteers and answer questions. Before camp starts, we have a full weekend dedicated solely to training. Admittedly, there are many challenges. At the same time, if you inspire your volunteers, give them a sense of ownership, help them feel people are dependent on them, they will produce incredible results. Can you have people who shirk responsibilities? Sure, but we don't take them back again.

**Mr. Rosenstock:** For us, it's very similar. We run a monthly sale where *rebbeim* and *kollel* families order products Costco-style at greatly reduced prices. Hundreds of families order via an automated phone ordering system and their order is picked up on a set day. This division, Chodesh Food Outlet, is meant for those who are above Tomche Shabbos's income bracket but still struggle to make ends meet. One sale took place this past Sunday; I went to the warehouse late Motzoei Shabbos and found one of our volunteers working late preparing the orders for pick up which was taking place the next day. This is not unusual. The people who man our eight checkouts at the sale are all volunteers. The person who runs our warehouse, the forklift operator, all are dedicated volunteers.

We give adult education classes in computers. All the teachers are volunteers. One of our teachers has a top position at B&H. He gets back to Monsey at 7:30 p.m, does not go home but rather goes directly to teach his class. He, like all our teachers, is a volunteer. Our volunteers' dedication is absolutely incredible.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** We find that people whom you are paying for the job can be "clocking in and clocking out" their time; volunteers will accomplish more and inspire the employees.

**Rabbi Golding:** I guess that goes back to finding the right person. What he (Rabbi Weinstein) said about employees "clocking in"... our employees don't do that. Our employees work with their cellphones, they work Erev Shabbos until the *zman*, and they're extremely dedicated. In that aspect, I can't agree.

**Mr. Rosenstock:** The dynamic approach of a volunteer is something that exceeds anything you'll ever get out of a paid employee.

**Rabbi Golding:** I disagree with that. We employ everyday *malachim* who have the same verve and diligence as do volunteers.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** There is a myth out there that with volunteers you can't get anything done.

We have found that the enthusiasm and dedication that a volunteer has can outdo what you get out of someone paid. At the same time, our employees — who are truly dedicated to our mission — are employee-volunteers. They could be doing other things and making more money. But they don't. And they go far beyond what could ever be considered their "job descriptions."

**Mr. Reiner:** All of our employees are involved in lifesaving operations. That often means late-night conversation, off-hours arrangements as transplants typically start very early in the morning... they don't get paid for that. The people at Renewal are paid between 9am-5pm and volunteer between 5pm-9am.

*Many of you have launched new services/programs and dropped others. How do you decide which programs to start and which to drop? [I turn to Rabbi Golding] How did you decide to open an Israel branch?*

**Rabbi Golding:** One day, Rabbi Hershel Kohn, the founder of RCCS, said, "What are we doing for the *heilige* Yidden in Eretz Yisrael?" We spent up to a year investigating

what services were needed there — it's a different world. It's socialized medicine, and if you don't have private insurance, you can't get anywhere. And if you don't have *protektzia*... it's tough.

We met with the top oncologists in Eretz Yisrael to help us develop a system of services. We found that there was a huge need to pay for pharmaceuticals that Kupat Cholim doesn't pay for. We are paying out huge sums there — millions of shekels for surgeries and pharmaceuticals because the Kupah won't pay for it. We serviced over 400 patients this past year, and if we are assured that they are receiving optimum medical treatment in Eretz Yisrael, as opposed to uprooting an entire family, it is usually better...

Sometimes *askanim* believe that a sensitive surgery needs to be done in the States and we listen, but for the most part, keeping them home is huge.

You asked about dropping services, there were times we saw a project being picked up by someone else so we phased it out. We're not interested in doing services for the sake of services. RCCS is built on servicing whatever the cancer patient needs to survive. We're not so big on social services, we focus on financial needs for survival.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** We are a fast-paced organization, and we have to be very forward-thinking, both internally and externally. We come up with new ideas

on a daily basis, and we need to choose which will go over well and which not.

Some programs start on a smaller scale and turn into something huge. I'll give you an example. Every child in camp gets set up with a Torah Mate. Our camp looks and acts like a camp but it's really a *kiruv* operation that builds a bridge between the counselors and their unaffiliated campers. So all these children have Torah Mates and they have to keep in touch.

One of our *bachurim* said, "Why do we just learn on the phone and get together only every once in a while? Let's get together, Avos Ubanim style, on a weekly basis. We'll be the 'avos.'" We paid for the pizza but the *bachurim* ran the program. It was so *matzliach*, we saw that it was something that should be duplicated. We now have the Learn N Chill Zone in over 40 locations.

Cutting out a program is a *she'eilah* of *pikuach nefashos*, even if only a handful are benefiting. But sometimes, we do need to stop a program. Many years ago, the organization asked me to develop a certain project. I worked very hard on it, spending a lot of time and getting people together, but in the end, they decided to ditch it for whatever reason.

I was very disappointed as I'd invested so much *kochos*. Rabbi Mintz quoted the words of the Gemara, "*K'shem shekibaltem s'char al hadrishah, kach tekablu s'char al haprishah*." And he adapted it for this situation saying, "Just as you received *s'char* for working on it, you should receive *s'char* for walking away from it." We have to be able to do that.

We're not interested in doing services for the sake of services. RCCS is built on servicing whatever the cancer patient needs to survive.



We work hard at training and overseeing our volunteers but we also have to empower them. It's the only way to uncover what they are capable of. Yes, sometimes you fail, but you'll never know unless you try.

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**Mr. Rosenstock:** Tomche Shabbos has never cut out any projects. We've only added them as necessary. Projects are added only after giving them careful consideration. There must be a clear and obvious need, and it must focused on helping struggling families. Initially we left packages of Shabbos food at people's doorsteps late Thursday nights. After a few years, we realized that we would be doing more for these families if we found them suitable employment, which is a longer term solution, and the highest level of tzedaka as cited by the Rambam. So we began to engage in job placement one person at a time. In the process though, we noticed that many people couldn't be placed due to their lack of up to date job skills. We created our adult education division. For the past three years these volunteer teachers have taught courses in Excel, Quick Books, Microsoft Word, sales, and interviewing skills. Over the years we noted an urgent need for financial counseling for families so they can learn to better manage their money. A group of volunteers formed the financial counseling division where people meet with a counselor, including some CPA's and businessmen, assigned to them by our office.

**Mr. Reiner:** In Renewal, we measure the need for a new division or program based on numbers of kidney transplants. When we see our kidney donor base is petering out in one type of community, we begin brainstorming ways to market to a different community.

*How transparent should an organization be with its donors? How do you decide how much to share and with whom?*

[I was surprised at how taken aback they were by this question. They felt it was a no-brainer, but I pushed further because the issues surrounding transparency in the non-profit sector can be murky.]

**Mr. Rosenstock:** All of us around this table publish 990s. We all have a board of directors who review the finances, and that board is made public too! At Tomche Shabbos, we have an outside CPA firm review all our books on a monthly basis. Additionally, each of our board members is able to view every single bank transaction. It doesn't get much more transparent than that.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** The reason some have a problem is because they're not operating as a 501c3 so they don't publish 990s. For example, religious groups (Congregation accounts) don't have to publish 990s, so they may not have that

information accessible. I don't think every person who gives five dollars for the auction needs to see every transaction, but large donors certainly have rights that they exercise to see how the money is managed.

**Rabbi Golding:** Most of the people out there have no clue how to read an IRS 990. It's a very complicated thing, and there are critical differences between an organization that just gives money and an organization that also provides services. If you're providing services, how do you judge how much is overhead, administration, etc.? Most of what's seen as "administration" on our form is really patient services.

Major donors are invited to bring in their own auditor if they want, and we've done it. We go over all finances and they can talk to our auditor, Loeb and Tropper. I believe the more transparent you are, the better it is, and if somebody has a good suggestion on how to save money, kol hakavod!

Sometimes people ask how we know the funds are going to the right people. Our recipients attest to their financial income, how much the insurance is costing them, and why they can't afford it. The number one cause of personal bankruptcy in the U.S., according to *The Wall Street Journal*, is: cancer. We don't ask for W2 forms but we do ask them to give us the name of a Rav who can attest to their financial situation.

Secondly, we want to make sure that the person is in active treatment, so we ask for a letter from a doctor or hospital. Once we have that it goes to the committees to approve. That's how we vet to see who is worthy financially. I'm assuming Tomche Shabbos must have something similar.

**Mr. Rosenstock:** We are cognizant of the fact that we will one day have to give *din v'cheshbon* on every penny taken in by our organization. On a regular basis Rabbonim are consulted and *shaylos* asked. We *daven* for *siyatta diShmaya* asking that we be guided to administer the money carefully and in full accordance with *halacha* and the law.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** One of our programs is help with yeshivah tuition for children who switch from public school: 150,000 a month over 200 schools. We only help a child who is coming from public school, so we have to get report cards and other proofs.

As far as a financial standpoint — and this is very different from other *mosdos* — Rabbi Chaim Mintz consulted with Harav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*, and Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky, *zt"l*, years ago, to find out what to do in regard to wealthy families whose children were in public school. The *psak* was that they're

sending their children to public school because they're not *machshiv* a yeshivah education. While they may not be *aniyim* in their pocketbooks, they're *aniyim* in their minds, and the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* applies.

**Mr. Reiner:** We reimburse kidney donors for lost wages and other expenses they incur. A few years ago there was a terrible story with organ trafficking and our board voted to get an opinion on our policy to ensure it was compliant with every last regulation, which it is. We require affidavits from the kidney donors in order to get reimbursement; we need to cross a lot of t's in order to meet federal law of not being allowed to pay for a kidney. We try to make it smooth but as I tell those in the office, making one donor happy is important, but making more transplants happen is even more important. When our financial donors see this amount of transparency they appreciate it.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** Rabbi Mintz has a line: "You can't be *makriv nefesh hatzibbur* because of *nefesh hayachid*." You can't be nice to one person and hurt others in the long term.

*It sometimes seems there's an overlap between services offered by the many organizations in our community. How do you deal with "competition"? What do you say to those who feel that there should be particular niches for each one to best conserve communal funds?*

**Rabbi Golding:** I don't know any other organization doing what RCCS is doing. We only look to fulfill unique services. If someone else is doing it, we're happy to step aside.

**Rabbi Weinstein:** Firstly, when we run a program on our own, we can ensure it meets all of our standards. Secondly, as far as Oorah is concerned, the more the merrier. Competition is a very healthy thing. When we started growing larger, people questioned, "Why does Oorah have to open a summer camp if organization X already has one?"; "Why does Oorah need to have Torah Mates if organization X has a similar program?"; "Why does Oorah need to make *Shabbatons* if organization X does that?" The *metzius* is that we're not servicing the same people at all. There are millions of unaffiliated Yidden who need to be reached out to. There is only so much that Oorah can accomplish. So bring on the competition — we'll all have to improve our services to get more *kiruv* going on.

**Mr. Rosenstock:** For the benefit of the *aniyim*, the more people involved in helping the *aniyim* the better. *Halevai* that everyone would be concerned with the financial situation of the person living next door to them or the family whose child attends Yeshiva and sits right next to my child. We do suggest though that the best way to become involved, is to work with an existing all encompassing organization. **B**



*As I tell those in the office, making one donor happy is important, but making more transplants happen is even more important.*

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