

American Friends of NATAL 20th Anniversary Gala Supporting Mental Health Crisis in Israel; Michael Rapaport Hosted

Record-breaking AFN Gala raised vital trauma care funds, honored resilience, and spotlighted Israel's urgent mental health crisis.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES,
November 12, 2025 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- On the evening of November 10th, over 500 supporters gathered at Pier 60 in NYC for the 20th Anniversary Gala of [American Friends of NATAL](#) (AFN), hosted by actor and advocate Michael Rapaport. The sold-out event brought together business leaders, philanthropists, clinicians, and artists for a night of remembrance, resilience, and unwavering commitment to Israel's mental health crisis.



Michael Rapaport served as host of the American Friends of NATAL 20th Anniversary Gala, standing in solidarity with Israel and shining a spotlight on the urgent need for mental health support. (All Photo Credit: Astrid Stawiarz/Getty Images for AFN)

Held at a pivotal moment in Israel's recovery from terror and war, the gala spotlighted [NATAL](#) – Israel's Trauma and Resiliency Center and its comprehensive work supporting those affected by PTSD and trauma.

“

This year feels different. The pain is deeper, the trauma more widespread, but so is the determination to heal.”

Maayan Aviv, CEO, American Friends of NATAL

“This is a pivotal moment as Israel is now transitioning from wartime survival to the long and complex journey of psychological recovery. The trauma is the real fight that’s just getting started. The profound mental health toll of prolonged terror and war is a new crisis emerging as the nation exhales. We’re seeing a dramatic, terrifying shift: 44% of NATAL’s patients are now young adults, aged 20 to

30, up from 19% previously. This highlights the immense toll on the young generation,” said

Michael Rapaport during his opening remarks. Rapaport also helped to launch the Unfiltered Fund, a creative giving initiative to turn unfiltered language into therapy hours.

A Night of Stories, Art, and Action

The evening included remarks from Ambassador Ofir Akunis, Consul General of Israel in New York, who spoke about the importance of global support, resilience, and standing with Israel during this unprecedented mental health crisis.

Maayan Aviv, CEO, American Friends of NATAL reflected on the evening, "This year feels different. The pain is deeper, the trauma more widespread, but so is the determination to heal. We're seeing record numbers of young people in crisis, families shattered by war, and communities struggling to breathe again. NATAL meets them where they are—with expertise, compassion, and care. And thanks to everyone in this room, we can continue to ensure that no one in Israel has to heal alone."

Adding to the evening's message of strength and solidarity, Pastor Chris Harris of Bright Star Church in Chicago, sang a stirring rendition of Israel's national anthem "Hatikvah." The evening also included a live art exhibit curated by the Unframed Art Collective that was a powerful visual centerpiece that invited guests into the emotional journey of trauma and healing.

The evening honored David Kostman, outgoing AFN Board Chair, for his 12 years of visionary leadership, presented by NATAL Founder Jude Yovel Recanati and Board Chair Ran Eliasaf. "As someone who grew up on Israeli air force bases and served in the Navy, I've seen how the invisible wounds of war can last a lifetime. NATAL's mission to heal psychological trauma, often



Yael and Adi Alexander, parents of released hostage Edan Alexander, were honored at the AFN Gala for their strength, resilience, and unwavering hope. (L-R) Adi Alexander, Yael Alexander, Jude Yovel Recanati, Isabelle Bichler-Eliasaf, Ran Eliasaf.



Members of the NATAL and AFN executive team & board members (L-R) Dity Brunn, Ran Eliasaf, Efrat Sharupt, David Kostman, Maayan Aviv, Jude Yovel Recanati, Ruben Krupik, Professor Rivka Tuval-Mashiach.

the hardest kind to see, is deeply personal to me and my family. Tonight marks my first Gala as Chairman of American Friends of NATAL, and it comes at a time when Israel is facing a tidal wave of PTSD and rolling trauma. With the return of hostages and the emotional toll only beginning to surface, NATAL's work is more urgent than ever," said Eliasaf. "Tonight marks a renewed promise to expand our impact and ensure every person has access to life-changing mental health care."

Honoring the Alexanders: A Family's Strength Amid Unimaginable Hardship

One of the most powerful moments of the evening was the recognition of Yael and Adi Alexander, parents of Edan Alexander, who was held hostage by Hamas for 584 days before his release. In an extraordinary act of resilience, Edan recently made the decision to return to Israel and rejoin the IDF, the embodiment of strength, courage, and the unbreakable Israeli spirit.

Eliasaf, a friend of the Alexander family, introduced a surprise tribute video from Varda Ben Baruch, Edan's grandmother, recorded in Israel specifically for the Gala. Shared publicly for the first time, Varda's heartfelt message brought the room to a standstill and reminded all in attendance that even in the darkest moments, there is light and that NATAL is there to help people find it again.

Spotlight: Live Podcast Conversation with a Trauma Survivor-Turned-



Left Image: (L-R) Ran Eliasaf, AFN Board Chair and Founder of Northwind Group with Ambassador Ofir Akunis, Consul General of Israel in New York. Right Image: (L-R) Pastor Chris Harris and Rabbi Michael Siegel stood together in a show of unity.



Top Image: Members of the American Friends of NATAL board (L-R) Ran Eliasaf, Maayan Aviv, Dity Brunn, David Kostman, and Jason Bordainick. Bottom Image: Michael Rapaport led a powerful podcast-style interview with Daniel Goldstein.

Helper

In a powerful segment hosted by Michael Rapaport, the gala featured a live podcast-style conversation titled "Helping the Helpers," with Daniel Goldstein, a 33-year-old reservist, licensed social worker, and trauma survivor. Goldstein, who has served 417 days since October 7th while coping with PTSD, now leads NATAL's Peer Support Program, a community-driven model that trains survivors to help others navigate trauma.

"Resilience isn't a finish line—it's a decision we make every day," said Goldstein. "This program helps people find strength in each other, especially those who wouldn't otherwise ask for help."

Record-Breaking Support Reflects Growing Commitment to Mental Health Recovery

This year's Gala marked a historic milestone for American Friends of NATAL, with record-breaking individual ticket sales and an extraordinary show of corporate and community support.

Generous sponsorships from organizations including Northwind Group, GFP Real Estate, Arete, IDB Bank, Royal Abstract, Jefferies, OakNorth, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, Polsinelli, Complete Care, Tirosh & Team, Mayer Brown, and Noble Care Marketing helped power an evening of purpose, resilience, and healing. Their support underscores a growing commitment across industries to stand with Israel during its mental health crisis and invest in long-term trauma recovery.

Thank you to Ran Eliasaf AFN's Board Chair, the support of his family including the unwavering support from his wife Isabelle, his parents, and even his children! And to the AFN Board: David Kostman, for twelve years of leadership and impact. And Andrew Malik, Dity Brunn, David Kostman, Esti Cohen, Jason Bordainick, Linda Frieze, Rabbi Michael Siegel, Sara Rubenstein, Toni Young, and Darel Benaim.

To our NATAL – Israel's Trauma and Resiliency Center team in Israel who joined us and those that could not, your dedication is inspiring: Efrat Shaprut, Prof. Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, Ifat Morad, Sharon Yeheskel-Oron, Lior Bezalel, and Hadar Ben-Sira Rothman.

About American Friends of NATAL

American Friends of NATAL (AFN) is a U.S.-based nonprofit that supports the lifesaving work of NATAL in Israel and collaborates with U.S. organizations to bring trauma-informed models of care to communities facing violence and crisis. For two decades, AFN has been a vital link connecting North American supporters to Israel's national mental health recovery. To learn more or donate: <https://www.afnatal.org>

About NATAL

NATAL provides a full-spectrum response to trauma through clinical therapy, 24/7 helplines, peer support, art and resilience programs, and trauma-informed career services. With an expanding global footprint, NATAL's proven model is now reaching trauma-affected communities in cities like Chicago and Kyiv. Since October 7th, NATAL has supported over 700,000 Israelis, delivering crisis care with compassion, urgency, and innovation.

IMAGE CREDIT: (Photo by Astrid Stawiarz/Getty Images for American Friends of American Friends of NATAL)

Nataly Blumberg

NB Communications

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/866679522>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.