



RIDERS COME together in a celebratory huddle during the 14th annual Wheels of Love ride that ended in Jerusalem on Friday. (Courtesy Alyn Hospital)

Alyn hospital bike ride earns record proceeds

Young patients greet 700 riders at end of weeklong trek that raised \$2.5 million

• By JUDY SIEGEL

A record \$2.5 million was raised for the Alyn Orthopedic Hospital and Rehabilitation Center during the 14th annual, week-long Wheels of Love bike ride that ended Friday and saw 700 riders participating.

Children who are patients at the hospital greeted the bikers with flowers and medallions in Jerusalem at the end of their 400-kilometer effort. The trek began at Michmoret and proceeded over five different routes, depending on the riders' stamina and interest. Each of the participants amassed sponsors for the campaign. The largest previous amount ever raised for the bike ride was \$2m.

A number of disabled children rode bikes themselves during the last leg, from

Latrun to Jerusalem. Shira Neufeld, aged eight, who lost her sister to a road accident two years ago and herself was left paralyzed in her lower limbs, was one such participant. She led the riders from Latrun, cycling with her hands.

Nine-year-old Noam Medina also rode despite suffering from contracting Perthes disease, a pediatric condition characterized by a temporary loss of blood supply to the hip. Without an adequate blood supply, the rounded head of the femur bone (the ball of the ball-and-socket joint of the hip) dies. The area becomes intensely inflamed and irritated. Medina had to undergo an operation in her leg and doctors feared she would remain disabled. It was her program of treatment and rehabilitation at Alyn that allowed her to dis-

card her wheelchair. Today, she walks normally and on Friday, also her birthday, other children waited at the finish line with a birthday cake donated and delivered by the Inbal Hotel.

Dr. Moshe Torem was also in attendance and has joined in the Wheels of Love campaign for the past 12 years. Earlier this year Torem suffered a leg injury and was instructed by doctors not to ride a bicycle, but he insisted and used a hand bike to get to Jerusalem.

Alyn is the national rehabilitation center for children and youth suffering from physical handicaps resulting from motor, sensory, respiratory, cognitive, behavioral and communication problems. The hospital works to return the children back into their community as soon as possible.