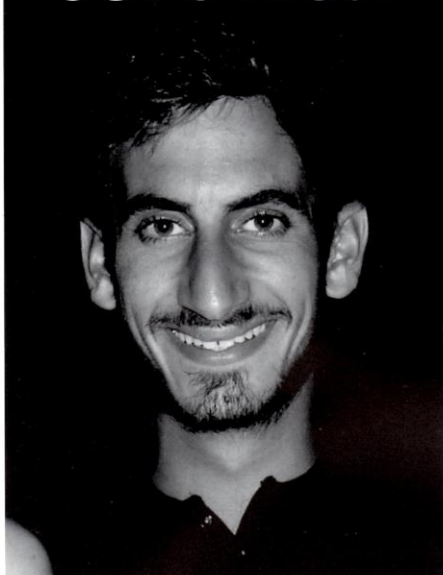


TIKKUN OLAM

GUY'S TRUST

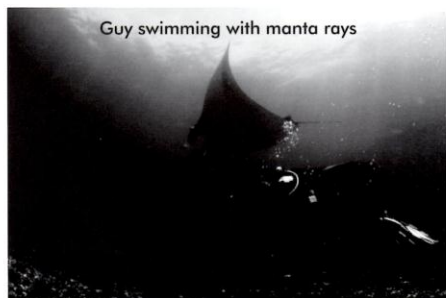


Last Pesach, Vicky Joseph wrote about the death of her son Guy in a paragliding accident. A year on, she writes about Guy's Trust, the charity that has created something positive from the tragedy and helped the family to manage its grief.

school, childhood friends, people he'd met on his travels, many of them previously unknown to us – came together to help decide on a fitting legacy for their friend. As one by one they introduced themselves, saying how they knew Guy, it seemed impossible to believe that he was no longer with us.

After much discussion, two ideas began to emerge. One: we would build a facility of some kind for children in Nepal, a country that Guy, who had a wonderful way with children, loved and had planned to return to; and two: we would fund a project to support marine conservation, an issue Guy was passionate about.

Finding a suitable marine project was easy. While working as a scuba-diving instructor in Flores, Indonesia, Guy had been instrumental in setting up MantaWatch, an organisation dedicated to protecting the endangered manta ray. We knew this was a cause about which he cared deeply.



Guy swimming with manta rays

On Saturday 15 October 2011 I spent a rare afternoon in town with our younger daughter Alex, who was visiting from New York. At around 5pm she went to meet some friends for a drink and I started the slog home to East Finchley on my bike. An hour later I opened our gate and was puzzled to see that Alex was back home with Lauren and two police officers. Tony was standing at the front door. He said just three words: words that in an instant would change our lives forever.

Guy had been in Spain working for a paragliding school. The previous afternoon he had gone flying with a group of friends. The conditions were perfect. Apparently, when the group returned to the agreed landing place, he wasn't there. They searched for him until nightfall and called the emergency services at first light. He was found about a kilometre away in the next valley. We'll never know exactly what happened and why he crashed; it doesn't really matter – it doesn't change anything.

I don't even know how I felt at that moment. Shock has a way of numbing your emotions; perhaps it's the only way you can survive. But one thing I am sure about is that within minutes of hearing the devastating news, I knew that we had to do something to keep Guy's memory and passions alive, and to salvage some meaning from this catastrophe. I had absolutely no idea what we would do or how we would do it, but I was determined to make it happen.

Where to start? We organised a brainstorming meeting. Fifteen of Guy's friends from different parts of his life – university,

Despite the huge importance of the ocean environment to Indonesia, the country suffers from a shortage of marine-science graduates as university fees and living expenses are prohibitively expensive. We decided to honour Guy's commitment to MantaWatch and carry on his involvement by funding two annual internships for deserving and academically gifted students to spend a month working with MantaWatch in Flores.

Last October, two students from Panjaderan University in Java successfully completed the first internships. On what would have been Guy's 26th birthday, Andy Harvey, director of MantaWatch and a close friend of Guy's, posted on his Facebook page, "We used to talk about training local marine scientists to research and conserve manta rays in Indonesia. Your birthday marks the midpoint of the Guy's Trust MantaWatch internship programme. We made it happen!"

Identifying a project in Nepal was clearly going to be more challenging. We were fully aware of the necessity of meeting an existing need and the pitfalls of working in a developing country with no knowledge of the language or culture. We needed an established and experienced partner organisation, which would also understand our desire for a project to which we could attach Guy's name and the emotional journey that this would entail.

We approached several organisations, finally choosing ActionAid, who have an excellent reputation for international development. They proposed the construction of a pre-school facility for 150 children that would be named the Guy Joseph Early Childhood Development Centre. It was a project that met both the requirements of the Nepalese government and the Joseph family! And not only was it to be in the district where Guy lived, but we could take a group of between 20 and 30 friends and actually start building the centre ourselves.

Now we had to raise the funds: £1,000 for the MantaWatch internships and £35,000 for the school. By January 2012, we had decided on the name Guy's Trust, had applied for registered charity status, created a Facebook page and Twitter account to let Guy's friends from around the world know what we were doing, and set up an online-donation facility. By April we had a logo and a website and had raised our first £10,000. By the end of May we were officially registered as a charity, and a generous £4,000 donation from the NNLS Tikkun Olam fund took our funds to £20,000. At the time of writing, with the extraordinary generosity of many hundreds of

friends and strangers from all over the world, and with no fewer than 25 fundraising events completed and several more to come, Guy's Trust has raised over £123,000.

Last November, Tony and I visited Nepal and met the "untouchable" community whose children will soon, for the first time, be able to attend school. They told us of their struggles and how grateful they were for the life-changing opportunity Guy's Trust is giving their families. They told us how sad they were for our loss and that "all of our children are your children too". Then we cried together, first for Guy and then for the better future their children will now have. It was a humbling and overwhelmingly emotional experience.

As planned, at the end of March we will be joined by 26 friends to lay the foundations, start the build and make our vision a reality. Not only that, but we have identified a site for a second school and are currently planning third and fourth projects.

On that dreadful day in October 2011, we decided simply that we had to create a tangible memorial to our beloved son and brother. Fifteen months later, Guy's Trust has grown beyond our wildest dreams, has become virtually a full-time job for me, maintains contact with Guy's friends and also serves as a therapeutic diversion from our sadness. Guy's Trust seems to have an unstoppable momentum and is a fitting testament to a young man who had such an enormous zest for life and was loved by and inspired so many people.

www.guystrust.org

