

# '60 Minutes' to feature relief agency based on Staten Island

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By **Kiawana Rich**

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. --

The Arrochar-based Global Medical Relief Fund is ready for its closeup on the Tiffany of news hours, CBS-TV's "60 Minutes."

"It's exciting, very exciting, and I feel that it is going to bring such an enormous awareness of what we do," said Elissa Montanti, head of the non-profit, in respect of tomorrow night's segment. ("60 Minutes" airs beginning at 7 p.m. on Ch. 2.)



Staten Island Advance/Anthony DePrimo

**Elissa Montanti, founder of Global Medical Relief Foundation, with Wa'ad Borkin.**

Formed in 1997, the fund

assists children victimized by war and disasters, providing them with surgery, prosthetics and healing.

Viewers should note that 15 minutes in TV news time equals 14 months of wait time, including seven months of filming. Off and on, cameras and correspondent Scott Pelley followed Ms. Montanti's efforts in Haiti and in assisting Wa'ad Borkin, 9, an Iraqi boy maimed and disfigured by a bomb. The latter's months-long regimen included artificial limbs and sophisticated reconstructive surgery performed by Dr. Kaveh Alizadeh of the Long Island Plastic Surgical Group. In the end, a little boy can play soccer again with a

normal-looking smile on his face.

"It's more than just an organization that is giving a child a leg or fixing his face," Ms. Montanti tells Pelley. "These children go back as little ambassadors and they tell their town, their village, how wonderful the American people are."

Tomorrow night's segment had its genesis in a meeting between Ms. Montanti, of Arrochar, and Kenan Malkic of GMRF and "60 Minutes" producers at a Manhattan coffee shop in December 2009.

"We sat with them for three hours and they were enamored with our story," she recalled. "And I believe what really interested them was this little charity working out of my former walk-in closet, and we sound so global but in fact are so small. But we are doing the same as a lot of big organizations ... quietly doing big, big things, and they were taken by that."

Malkic, 28, is the reason GMRF exists at all. The then-14-year-old Bosnian lost his legs and an arm to a land mine. Ms. Montanti helped Malkic, and the two — in their mission — have been inseparable ever since. Malkic, who is like a son to Montanti and resides with her, is a GMRF board member and webmaster.

"I never looked for this charity. It fell into my lap, it really did," she said. "I helped Kenan on a personal level never thinking I would go and found this charity."

The fund's star turn will include spots on Time.Com and PBS. In addition, Ms. Montanti has been inspired by Wa'ad to pen a tune, "Putting a Child Back Together Again." Starting next week, it will be available on iTunes for \$2.99, through **[www.gmrchildren.org](http://www.gmrchildren.org)**.

For more information or to make a donation, phone GMRF at 718-448-6984 or consult the website.

The fund hopes to secure a headquarters to host visiting children during their long stays for medical rehabilitation, an amenity it has lacked since last September.