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DONOR OF THE DAY | By Melanie Grayce West

A Push for Yoga and Meditation

Fred Lieblich is hoping that one day doctors everywhere will prescribe yoga and meditation as complementary treatments to the best Western medicines.

It's a prescription program that is already happening in some parts of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania because of the work of the nonprofit, Kula for Karma.

The Franklin Lakes, N.J.-based organization provides no-cost yoga, meditation and stress-reduction classes to veterans, cancer patients and people who are recovering from addiction and physical abuse, among other issues. The organization's 400 volunteer instructors work in hospitals, social service agencies, prisons and schools.

Mr. Lieblich, 50 years old, is founder and chief executive of REI Fund Advisors, an investment firm, and a board member for Kula for Karma. He knows firsthand how transfor-

mative yoga and meditation can be. When he retired in 2010 as a managing director with BlackRock Inc., as the global head of real-estate equity, he says he devoted time to regaining his mental and physical health. He's a meditation devotee and teacher.

It was through a connection to a local yoga studio that Mr. Lieblich first heard of Kula for Karma. He sat in on a few of the organization's sessions with veterans, teens and people recovering from substance abuse and he taught a few meditation classes. He was hooked.

"What was really miraculous and what speaks to the heart, is the transformation that occurred in each of the classes. Where you really feel the compassion and love and acceptance of everyone," says Mr. Lieblich. "And that's one of the things that we get so little of in our society—truly being compassionate and loving and



Fred Lieblich

caring without expecting anything in return."

In the last few years, Mr. Lieblich has contributed about \$6,000 to Kula for Karma and volunteered hundreds of hours with the organization to share his business and finance expertise to help the nonprofit expand and leverage the passion

of the volunteers and board.

This year, the organization will double the number of programs offered at the Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center and hopes to expand on its work with Hackensack's John Theurer Cancer Center. The effort is to treat the whole person, not just the disease, says Kula for Karma's founder, Geri Topfer.

"Right now the oncologists are prescribing, chemo, radiation and yoga and that is absolutely huge," says Ms. Topfer. "And that is truly exciting because the medical community is embracing this modality of healing."

The expansion is to build on an effort to provide an additional "ingredient" to help people feel whole, says Mr. Lieblich. "What we try to provide is a place of compassion that's also safe and full of understanding and acceptance," he says.