

PAWS WITH A PURPOSE



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Canadian Friends
Israel Guide
Dog Center

Message from Israel

Thank you to all our friends in Israel and Canada, who stood by us and continue to stand with Israel and with the Israel Guide Dog Center in the face of the overwhelming challenges that we have faced over the past months.

As a result of the war in Gaza, the last few months have taken a heavy toll on everything we do at the Center. As you'll read in this report, each department has continued its important work even as a heavy cloud of sadness looms.

Almost immediately, we shifted our focus to deal with the immediacy of the situation. We had to deal with a lot of supply chain issues, distribution and training disruptions, adjusting some client acceptance criteria, and using our best resources—our dogs—to focus on helping Israel and Israelis.



We are aware of how important our work is now, and how important it will be when the war is over. We already know of many soldiers who have sustained terrible eye injuries and will need a guide dog, and we see a significant increase in the need for service dogs and emotional support dogs.

We can and will survive and thrive with your love and support!

Am Israel Chai,

Noach Braun

Noach Braun
Co-CEO & Co-Founder

Carmel Reiss

Carmel Reiss
Co-CEO

Our Mission



The Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind is the only internationally accredited guide dog school in Israel and the only such program in the entire Middle East.

Operations began in 1991, with a mission to improve the quality of life of Israelis who are blind by providing them with safe mobility, independence and self-confidence through the faithful assistance of guide dogs specially trained in Hebrew for the challenging conditions in Israel.

While we have expanded our programs to meet the needs of people with other disabilities, including children with autism and veterans with PTSD, we will never stray from our primary mission: To provide expertly trained guide dogs for people with vision loss.

From the Director

Dear Friends,

This past year has been one of unprecedented challenges and hardships for all of us. The ongoing conflict has tested our resilience and resolve, impacting every aspect of life in Israel. Amidst the turmoil, the need for friendship and support has never been greater.

At the Israel Guide Dog Center, we have faced these difficulties head-on, driven by our unwavering commitment to transforming lives. Our mission to provide guide, service, and emotional support dogs to those in need has become even more significant during these trying times. These dogs offer companionship and a lifeline to independence and confidence.

Being part of the Israel Guide Dog Center family is more than a cause; it is a profound experience that brings meaning and affirmation to all involved. Our community of dedicated staff, generous donors, and inspiring clients exemplifies the strength and compassion that define us. Together, we continue to create lasting bonds and change lives, proving that hope and kindness prevail even in the darkest times.

This annual report is a testament to the incredible work we have accomplished together.



It highlights the stories of those whose lives have been touched by our dogs, showcases our team's relentless efforts, and celebrates our donors' unwavering support. Despite the challenges, we have made significant strides, and it is through your support that we can continue to do so.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing in our mission, and for being a part of this remarkable family. Together, we are making a difference, one dog at a time.

With heartfelt gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Atarah".

Atarah Derrick
Executive Director



Guide Dogs

Hagar Shnell, Director

For more than three decades, the Center has transformed the lives of Israelis with blindness with our core program, partnering them with guide dogs. These dogs improve each client's quality of life by providing safe mobility, independence, and self-confidence.

In 2023, we placed 23 guide dogs with people of all ages, genders, religions and observance levels, geographic areas, and socio-economic statuses.

CLIENT PROFILE YARON BEN YAAKOV

Yaron, a married father in his late 50's, was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) in his early twenties. His vision loss slowly progressed and at the age of 37, he stopped driving. Only in the last two years has his sight deteriorated so much that he decided to retire from his career in computer systems for Bank Leumi. But Yaron would not let his diminished sight stop him from pursuing volunteer work and fulfilling a lifelong dream to visit Poland. Now, he lectures to businesses and colleges about loss and disability—focusing on building inner strength through actions.

Yaron has some residual sight and had been using a cane to get around until December 2023 when he was partnered with Tarny—a social, loving, and smart Yellow Lab guide dog from the Israel Guide Dog Center. Yaron said, “It has taken time for us to adjust but Tarny is amazing on the bus and guides me on my regular routes in Tel Aviv.”



“I have a mission to do good despite the difficulties I have faced in my life. My philosophy is that we find our own way through the suffering and that the passion for action can be used to move one forward.”

Tarny has enabled him to pursue the things he loves like urban biking, working out, listening to music, and attending theater performances. He loves the creative aspect of theater and has worked at Nalagat (Please Touch) Blind and Deaf Theater in Yafo, created a short film about a blind and deaf friend, is in the process of creating a play for blind people to perform monologues, and is currently studying drama at the Levenstein Drama School.

PTSD Service Dogs

Yariv Melamed, Director

In Israel, it is estimated that 5-8% of veterans are living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of their experiences in the military. To support this population, in 2017, the Center launched a program to train PTSD service dogs.

The graduates of this program noted an immediate improvement in their ability to function, a reduction in anxiety, and a greater ability to cope with the challenges of daily life.

By the end of 2023, we had placed 35 PTSD Service Dogs.

Following the outbreak of war with Gaza, the demand for our dogs among military personnel and civilians has greatly surpassed our ability to create partnerships. In 2023, we launched two initiatives to improve our dog training and increase support of our PTSD clients.

PTSD Simulator: In an effort to upgrade our training program, we placed a “caravan” on campus to act as a PTSD simulator for training service dogs.

This environment immerses the dogs in scenarios mimicking situations that their human partner may face. Through behaviours associated with trauma triggers, the dogs learn to recognize distress signals and provide support. Instructors use positive reinforcement to help dogs become adept at identifying cues and learn calming techniques such as nudging or lying beside their owner. These are vital tools for effective assistance during PTSD episodes.

New PTSD Psychologist: We welcomed on a staff psychologist, Shirley Sherman, to work closely with our PTSD clients in multiple ways:

- Supporting our staff to help with clinical assessments of prospective clients
- Supplementing training with emotional and psychological support
- Providing follow up immediately after the matching and partnership training process
- Ensuring ongoing support when a client and accompanying service dog are denied entry to public places

CLIENT PROFILE

Dan's entire life changed when he was partnered with Valley. Valley taught him that he was capable of caring for someone else, and he was able to focus on his marriage and his future family. Now, he is a proud father. He was transformed from a care recipient to a caregiver who offers love to his family each day. The change in his life has enabled him to begin working in an organization to help people living with post-trauma.



three

Emotional Support Dogs

Ami Toren, Director

Some of the dogs we raise do not have the qualities to become guide or service dogs. However, these dogs can be excellent supports for families with special needs children.

After October 7th, we were approached by dozens of people describing horrific trauma—families of kidnapped Israelis, widows of IDF soldiers, displaced families, and more. We knew we had to alter our criteria in order to provide an immediate response for those directly impacted.

In 2023, we partnered 40 emotional support dogs with children on the autism spectrum, children with visual impairments, and those impacted by the war.

Special Needs Patrol: Three dedicated veteran volunteers help in supporting and training these dogs while they are waiting

to be matched with new families. This provides social interaction with the dogs, relieving the pressures in the kennel, and ultimately provides families with better trained dogs.

Pilot Program for Autism Service Dogs:

Each year, the Center receives many requests for specially-trained service dogs for children with autism. After much research and building on the models of other guide dog schools, the Center has decided to pilot a program for this population. This pilot program created two service dog partnerships with dogs capable of performing three specific tasks:

- 1) creating a physical connection between the child and the dog,
- 2) behaviour to divert attention, and
- 3) actions to relieve distress.

The participating families all reported significant, positive changes in their children.

CLIENT PROFILE

In August, our first service dog, Gemy, was paired with a young family whose eldest son has autism. The parents successfully completed a two-week training session and Gemy became an instant part of their family. At the start of the war, Gemy provided a great deal of emotional support. She slept every day in the shelter next to the eldest child with autism and spent long periods of time with both children while schools were closed. The father volunteered to assist families displaced from their homes, sharing Gemy's story and her contribution.



Breeding and Kennel

Orna Braun, Director



The Israel Guide Dog Center prioritizes diversifying our genetic pool to maintain the quality and reliability of our life-changing dogs.

Our current breeding program includes:

- 26 Female: 3 Golden Retrievers and 23 Labradors
- 11 Male: 2 Golden Retrievers and 9 Labradors

As a member of Assistance Dogs International, we joined the European Breeding Cooperation (EBC) and the sperm bank initiative in Belgium with the objective of exchanging canine genetic material.

We have built relationships with other guide dog schools around the world by:

- Exchanging a male dog from Israel, for a male dog from Guide Dogs UK
- Exchanging one of our breeding stock with a poodle trained for PTSD with Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides
- Donating a puppy to Liberty Guide Dogs in Greece
- Receiving a male breeding dog from Guide Dogs of America
- Receiving 2 puppies from abroad: one from Ireland, and the other from the US

Puppy Raisers

Eli Ben Boher, Director

The outbreak of the war on October 7 caused profound logistical challenges for the staff of the department.

Every month in 2023, our 4 puppy managers supervised an average of 160 puppy raising families.

The majority of our volunteer Israeli puppy raisers are university students and many were drafted into the IDF reserves for months of service. In addition, the universities were closed until January 2024.



Puppies that were originally located in the rented apartments of the students around the university campuses were often moved to various locations around the country. As a result, we were forced to find a variety of creative solutions to supervise our puppies and ensure that they are receiving the proper training. This included using less than ideal facilities and public spaces.

To ensure the flow of information with our puppy raisers, we have been using our Gur app to help facilitate more immediate responses to questions that arise and deal with various issues, including medical.



The Puppy Raisers Department organized two major events for our puppy raisers:

1) Best Dressed Purim Competition

which was held in various locations around the country, including at Tel Hashomer hospital to bring joy to patients and their families. Both our Puppy Raisers and puppies dressed up in costumes, the most creative costumed pair winning.



2) Puppy Raisers Gathering. Our puppy raisers have an opportunity to speak with the training staff and meet various graduates of the Center. In this way, our puppy raisers become familiar with the career paths their puppies will eventually take.

Community Relations

Erez Barkai, Director



Community relations is critical to ensure our clients' sense of confidence and stability. This client-focused work supports three unique yet interconnected areas:

1) Accessibility: Our campus is fully accessible, and our staff participates in a series of courses to familiarize and prioritize accessibility and sensitivity to all needs.

2) Partnerships: We build relationships to raise awareness regarding guide dogs and service dogs including the Guide Dog Users Association, Israel Railways, the Light Rail Companies, Bus and Taxi services, Israel Nature and Parks Authority, Ofek Le'yeladenu (organization for blind children), Purina, International Council of Museum Accessibility and various academic institutes. Having these relationships helps us ensure quick and effective responses if an issue arises.

3) Government Relations: We maintain relationships with governmental agencies like the Department of Equal Rights for People with Disabilities in the Ministry of Justice, mayors, lobbyists, Committees in the Knesset and Knesset members. Our goal is to stay aware of public policy changes, raise awareness of guide and service dogs in society, and advocate for continued access for our clients.

In 2023, the Tel Aviv Municipality did not allow guide dog puppies-in-training to enter beach areas. The Center intervened, helped educate policymakers, and the laws were changed to allow the Puppy Raisers to enter the beach.

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

MARTIN SEGAL

From the outside, the work of the Israel Guide Dog Center seems magical. Behind the scenes, each member of our lean staff is critical, and we are lucky to have great people fundraising and “friendraising” in the United States, Canada, Israel, and the United Kingdom.

Sadly, in early 2023, one of these great people, our UK Executive Director, Martin Segal, lost his battle to cancer. As a true leader and mentor who revolutionized the Israel Guide Dog Center’s UK fundraising since 2011, Martin’s loss hit our global family hard.



There are not enough adjectives to describe Martin: Zionist, resilient, positive, honest, diligent, sincere, funny, imaginative, fearless, fun, kind, and a loving friend and colleague.

Martin’s name may not be well known to our friends in Canada, yet his impact is recognizable:

- he was a fierce advocate for our Canvelo Tandem Biking Group,
- he was the dreamer behind our Name a Puppy program and our Sponsor a Puppy monthly giving program, and
- he inspired gorgeous marketing materials that our donors and friends have come to expect.

Israel was a huge part of Martin’s identity and over the years, he became an important voice for the Israel Guide Dog Center. Although we may not hear his voice, Martin’s incredible memory will be a permanent blessing for all of us.

Shalom Chaver!



Celebrating the Impact of Our B'nai Mitzvah Kids on the IGDCB

In 2023, our organization experienced an incredible wave of generosity and enthusiasm from some of our youngest supporters: B'nai Mitzvah students. Through their dedicated efforts, they collectively raised nearly \$24,000, making a significant contribution to our mission of supporting guide, service, and emotional support dogs in Israel.

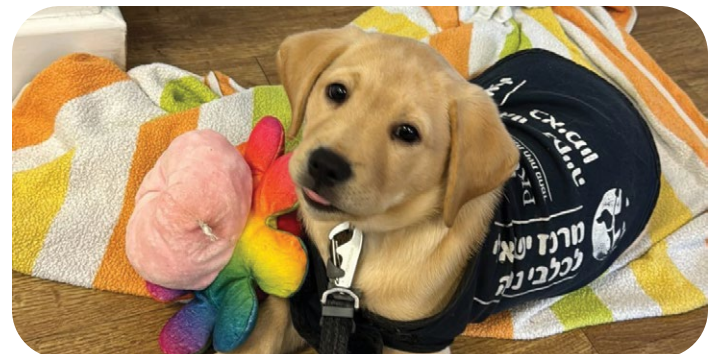
These inspiring young individuals embraced the spirit of giving during their B'nai Mitzvah celebrations, choosing to crowdfund from their friends and family. Their commitment to our cause and their ability to mobilize their communities is a testament to the power of youth-driven philanthropy.

Each of these students took on the challenge with creativity and determination, leveraging their social networks to share our mission and encourage donations. Their efforts not only raised substantial funds but also raised awareness about the importance of guide and service dogs in enhancing the lives of Israelis.



One of the most heartwarming outcomes of their fundraising was the opportunity to name puppies in Israel. Each donation not only contributed to the training and care of these vital animals but also left a legacy, as the names chosen by our B'nai Mitzvah kids will be carried by these dogs throughout their service lives.

We are so proud of them, and we wish them a hearty Mazal Tov on their B'nai Mitzvah!



If you are interested in learning more about our B'nai Mitzvah program, please contact Atarah Derrick at atarah@israelguidedog.ca or visit israelguidedog.ca/mitzvah-tzedakah-projects.

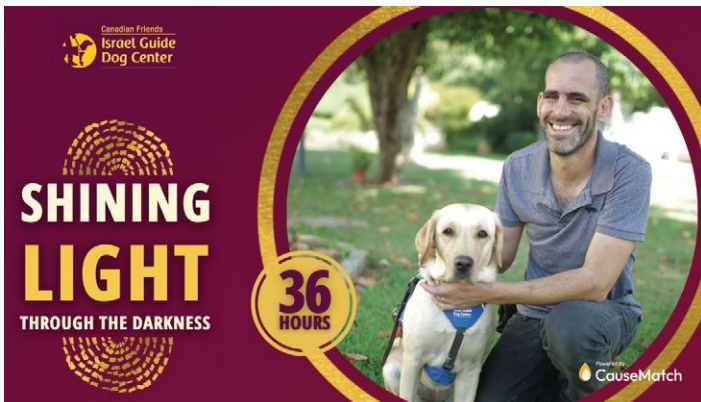
Crowdfunding Campaign Raises Over \$300,000



In June 2023, Canadian Friends of the Israel Guide Dog Center ran its first crowdfunding campaign to raise and train service dogs to treat PTSD, specifically in IDF veterans.

The community gathered for a campaign launch party and met Elad Fast and his dog, Rita. They heard firsthand from Elad and saw how Rita helps him manage his PTSD symptoms. We were also joined by Noach Braun, our founder and Israeli CEO, who helped us better understand the long process of training our canine partners before becoming service dogs.

Two weeks later, 30 ambassadors helped us raise over \$300,000, exceeding our initial goal of \$200,000 and adding two bonus rounds. We are immensely grateful for our community's support and look to a future with more support for our clients.



A million thanks to our incredible matching donors, new donors and amazing ambassadors!



PUPPY POWER!

NAME A PUPPY THAT WILL ONE DAY CHANGE THE WORLD

What you see here are no ordinary cute puppies. With or without the capes, our puppies will soon be superheroes providing confidence and independence for Israelis in need.

But our superheroes can't do it alone, they need to team up with people like you to help them reach their fullest potential.

When you name an Israel Guide Dog Center puppy, you are part of a heroic effort to change people's lives and make the world a better place. The adventure begins when you choose a name for our special hero, then you will be able to follow the puppy's adventures from birth until it is placed with their partner.

Your \$5,000 sponsorship helps us care for our priceless puppies. It helps us to operate our Puppy Development and Training Campus, supporting their journey from puppy to world-class guide dog, PTSD service dog, emotional support dog or ambassador dog.

Every one of our puppies is a superhero making an impact for good. And someday, they'll reach their true potential because people like you care enough to make a difference.

If you are interested in being a hero to one of our superheroes, please contact Atarah Derrick at atarah@israelguidedog.ca or call **416-577-3600**.



FINANCIAL REPORTS

This is our most recent internal Financial Report and Budget for 2024.

	2024 Budget	2023	2022
INCOME – OVERSEAS			
US Friends	\$2,886,000	\$2,174,678	\$2,497,500
Direct Donations from US Donors	\$277,500	\$552,554	\$240,500
British Friends	\$370,000	\$377,943	\$444,000
Direct Donations from British Donors	\$25,900	\$20,732	\$18,500
Canadian Friends	\$490,000	\$489,000	\$370,000
Direct Donations from Canadian Donors	\$3,700	\$–	\$3,700
Donations from – Other Countries	\$111,000	\$138,175	\$88,800
TOTAL INCOME – OVERSEAS	\$4,164,100	\$3,753,083	\$3,663,000
INCOME FROM ISRAEL			
Donations from Israel	\$664,150	\$1,742,824	\$846,560
Donations Israel – Ministries & PTSD	\$717,245	\$573,280	\$560,550
CanVelo Donations	\$83,250	\$86,448	\$48,100
CanVelo Income	\$185,000	\$48,842	\$48,100
In-Kind Donations	\$283,605	\$239,475	\$294,705
TOTAL INCOME – ISRAEL	\$1,933,250	\$2,690,868	\$1,798,015
TOTAL ALL INCOME	\$6,088,350	\$6,454,862	\$5,461,015
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Dog Training Expenses	\$2,121,821	\$1,648,708	:
Kennel Expenses	\$983,106	\$873,318	\$843,053
Puppy Raising Expenses	\$487,360	\$452,705	\$352,057
Maintenance	\$519,520	\$385,440	\$433,640
Marketing and Fundraising	\$773,990	\$682,796	\$624,469
Administrative Expenses	\$781,288	\$700,963	\$702,160
CanVelo Expenses	\$271,950	\$143,312	\$96,200
Financing Expenses	\$21,090	\$11,868	\$16,650
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$5,960,125	\$4,899,111	\$3,068,231
FIXED ASSETS			
Fixed Assets - & Construction	\$989,380	\$115,527	\$227,735
Depreciation	\$344,100	\$370,000	\$370,000
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	\$1,333,480	\$485,527	\$597,735
TOTAL ALL EXPENSES	\$7,293,605	\$5,384,638	\$3,665,966
SURPLUS/-DEFICIT	-\$1,205,255	\$1,070,223	\$1,795,049

Financial report is in Canadian dollars.

1 Israeli New Shekel equals 0.37 Canadian Dollar.

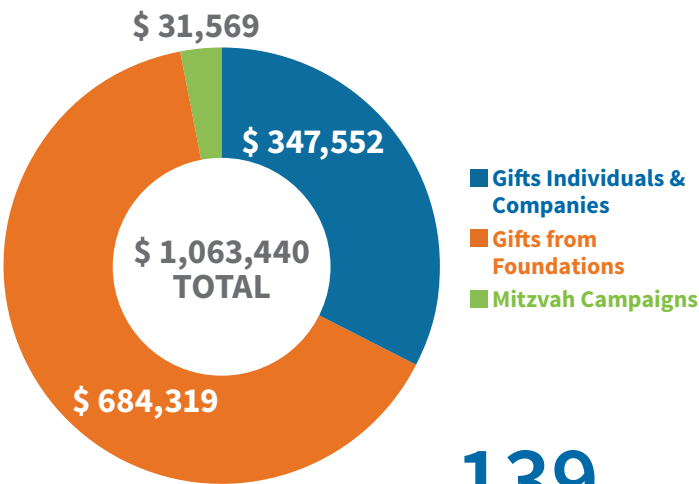
By the Numbers



**Total Dogs Placed
Since 1991: 1,277**

(Guide Dogs: 796 / PTSD and Emotional Support Dogs: 481)

2023 Donations



139

puppies born in 2023



7

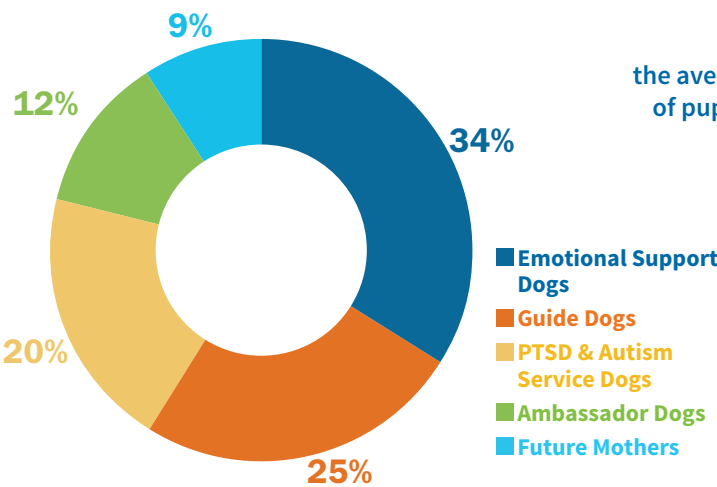
the average number
of pups per litter

THOUSANDS OF LIVES CHANGED.



**Active Dog
Partnerships: 231**

Career Paths





CANADA HEADQUARTERS:

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Canadian Friends

**Israel Guide
Dog Center**