



Paws with a Purpose

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Israel Guide
Dog Center



Canadian Friends

**Israel Guide
Dog Center**

OUR MISSION

The Israel Guide Dog Center is the only internationally accredited Guide Dog school in Israel—and the only such program in the entire Middle East.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life of Israelis in need by providing them with safe mobility, independence, and self-confidence through the faithful assistance of specially trained dogs that are instructed for the unique conditions in Israel.

Since opening in 1991, we have changed the lives of thousands in need with Guide Dogs for the blind and visually impaired, Service Dogs for Israelis with PTSD, and Emotional Support Dogs for children on the autism spectrum and families impacted by war.

TOTAL DOGS PLACED TO DATE: 1,352
ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS: 221

IN 2024 WE PLACED 85 DOGS

27 Guide Dogs

13 Service Dogs

38 Emotional Support Dogs

7 Breeder Dogs





MESSAGE FROM THE ISRAEL DIRECTORS

The War that started on October 7, 2023 touched each one of us here in Israel personally and has also impacted the Center. We are grateful to our staff and volunteers for being so committed to ensuring we avoid disrupting the many activities that help us fulfill our mission.

During 2024, it became abundantly clear that the need for our specially trained dogs would continue to increase. We already know of:

- **IDF soldiers that have lost their sight and will eventually need Guide Dogs;**
- **families living in the border areas who need Emotional Support Dogs; and**
- **the dramatic increase in the number of post-trauma victims who will seek PTSD Service Dogs.**

In order to respond to the increased need, it was important to actively plan for the future, while continuing to provide our services to Israelis in need right now. We started by focusing on the Center's infrastructure. We revised our by-laws to better

align with our work, expanded our vision statement to represent our values and goals for the future, modernized our veterinary clinic, took proactive steps to expand our trainer team, and developed a comprehensive five-year plan that will guide our work as we increase the number of partnerships between dogs and Israelis in need.

We believe that we will succeed as an organization, as a society, and as individuals with the consequences of the war, growing stronger in the days that follow.

We thank you for helping us stay the course, and we pray for the return of all the hostages and for days of peace and normalcy.

Noach Braun
Co-CEO & Founder

Carmel Reiss
Co-CEO



MESSAGE FROM THE CANADIAN DIRECTOR



Recently, I had the privilege of visiting the Israel Guide Dog Center — and as always, I came away inspired.

One moment stands out. I watched one of our dedicated trainers, Gal, work with Jason, a guide dog-in-training who had faced some early challenges. It would have been easy to give up on him, but she didn't. With patience, creativity, and unwavering belief, she brought out Jason's potential. Today, Jason is not just a certified guide dog — he's begun training alongside his new handler and new best friend, ready to change their life.

Gal wasn't just teaching commands. She was, in essence, a dog psychologist — listening, adapting, and committing to the process with her whole heart. It reminded me that

this is who we are as an organization. We don't give up. Not on our dogs, and certainly not on the people who need us most.

Our commitment to our clients is a forever pact. Whether they're veterans, children with special needs, individuals facing vision loss, or those living with trauma, we walk beside them for the long haul — pairing them with the dogs who bring freedom, confidence, and joy back into their lives.

Thank you for standing with us this year. Your support ensures that this life-changing work continues — one dog, one person, one miracle at a time.

Atarah Derrick
Executive Director

GUIDE DOGS

Hagar Shnell, Director

For more than three decades, the partnerships we've created with Guide Dogs have improved each client's quality of life by providing safe mobility, independence, and self-confidence.



Our goal is to train more dogs for people in need, but this goal is hampered when we don't have enough experienced professionals to provide training for our dogs. Certifying a new Guide Dog Trainer is costly and slow; the one-on-one training takes 18 months to

complete plus another 18 months for certification as a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor who works with a person with blindness on how to work and live with a guide dog.

Inspired by our colleagues at Guide Dogs UK and using the standards set by the International Guide Dog Federation in January 2024, we inaugurated "The Academy", a program to hire and educate more Guide Dog trainers. After the new recruits' initial months of theoretical instruction, they began hands-on training, each with 3 potential Guide Dogs in real-life situations under the close supervision of senior trainers. Once their training is completed and the recruits pass the rigorous certification process, they will each be responsible for preparing 10-12 Guide Dogs per year. This helps the Center provide more Guide Dogs and shorten our waiting list.

"To increase the number of specially trained dogs, it is critical to increase the number of trainers."

PROFILE



Dany Layani's journey is nothing short of extraordinary. At 20, while serving in the IDF during the first Lebanon War, a bomb explosion next to him left him blind. Yet, even in the face of this life-altering challenge, Dany's spirit remained unshaken.

Over the years, Dany achieved incredible milestones—earning two degrees, advising Israel's Prime Minister, and working with the Organization for Disabled Veterans. Through it all, he relied on the unwavering companionship of five different Guide Dogs. But the most transformative moment came when, after 25 years of blindness, Dany experienced a miracle: he regained his sight and saw his wife and four children for the first time. Unfortunately, his vision began to fade once more, but Dany chose to remain positive. "I decided not to let it make me bitter," he said.

Today, Dany's Guide Dog, Rolly, is by his side every step of the way. Calm, gentle, and loved by all, Rolly accompanies Dany to work and even travels with him abroad. Most recently they traveled to the UK to promote the work of the Israel Guide Dog Center.

Together, they are a perfect team, embodying the strength, resilience, and optimism that has defined Dany's remarkable life.

Though soon enough, Rolly will retire and a new dog will begin training with Dany. We will be there every step of the way for this remarkable transition.

PTSD SERVICE DOGS

Yariv Melamed, Director

The ongoing War has led to a significant increase in the number of IDF veterans and civilians diagnosed with PTSD—an invisible yet profound disability. It has also highlighted the urgency of providing meaningful tools to them.

The Center has more than 30 years of experience partnering specialized dogs with visually impaired people. In 2017 the Center started providing Service Dogs to IDF Veterans with service-related PTSD. We take great pride in our effective and unique program:

- **Our Goal:** Our service dogs help reduce anxiety and panic attacks, create a sense of security, interrupt negative behaviour patterns, improve social interactions, promote routine and responsibility, and provide emotional support.
- **Our Dogs:** We know the pedigree, health, temperament, and outstanding qualities of all our Service Dogs. We go to great lengths to make sure that our clients and dogs are perfectly matched.
- **Our Training:** Our intense 5-month program emphasizes communication between the dog and handler, while reinforcing the dog's responses to signs of PTSD. Once the dog is trained and matched with a client, the new partners practice working together as the dog learns to recognize its partner's signs of distress and effective ways to support them.
- **Ongoing Support:** Each partnership receives continuous guidance and support. These follow-ups include supplemental training and professional psychological support in individual and group settings.

Israel's Ministry of Defense currently recognizes 7,000 IDF veterans who have been diagnosed with PTSD. This number is expected to increase by more than 185% to 20,000 in 4 years' time. The actual number is probably much higher.



PROFILE

Yigal, a quiet man in his late 30s, served in an elite Special Operations unit in the Israeli Police. After returning home to his family in Rishon LeZion, Yigal's PTSD symptoms started. He was not aware of the warning signs of an oncoming panic attack, so Yigal became afraid to leave the house and couldn't work; and he was afraid to sleep because of the intensity of his nightmares.

The Center partnered Yigal with Zappa, a male yellow Labrador. Yigal has never had a dog, so the education had to start with how to care for and interact with Zappa. According to the Center's trainers, "Zappa was a natural, he has an intense desire to please and is extremely responsive to Yigal's cues."

Yigal now sleeps better and has more confidence because he knows that Zappa's nudging and grounding skills will help him cope and bring him back to reality.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT DOGS

Ami Toren, Director

As more families struggle with trauma, displacement, and uncertainty caused by the war, the demand for our Emotional Support Dogs continues to grow.



As a result, we have expanded our program to provide Emotional Support Dogs to survivors, evacuees, and individuals living with war-related trauma in addition to the previously served children with special needs.

While Emotional Support Dogs do not have the legal protections afforded to Guide Dogs or Service Dogs for public access, their presence at home provides invaluable emotional and psychological benefits. Emotional Support Dogs bring a profound sense of safety and stability. Beyond their physical presence, they play a vital role in emotional and sensory regulation, helping their families manage anxiety and stress.

These dogs are more than just pets—they are loyal companions who help restore peace in times of turmoil.

In 2024, we provided 38 Emotional Support Dogs to children and families in need.



PROFILE

Avi, a father of six, lives in Sderot in Israel's south and is an IDF commander. He and his family suffered many losses because of the October attacks—their friends and colleagues were taken hostage and others were killed. Each family member has experienced emotional challenges from the immense trauma each one saw.

One of Avi's children, Daniel, who is on the autism spectrum, withdrew completely and stopped speaking outside the home.

On the recommendation of their psychiatrist, the family received one of our Emotional Support Dogs, named Henry. The impact was profound. The child formed a deep bond with the dog and again found his voice. The dog didn't take away the trauma but has become a source of healing and hope for the entire family.



BREEDING & KENNELS

Orna Braun, Director

Caring for our dogs and making sure they are healthy is not just important, it is critical to our work. We are extremely proud of the care we provide our dogs at every point of their lives at our on-campus clinic.

Rebuilding the Veterinary Clinic



Our original two-room veterinary clinic, built in 1993, had become too small and overcrowded to meet the medical needs of more than 400 puppies and dogs each year. In 2024, the facility underwent a \$600,000 complete renovation with a

redesigned layout and expanded space to support our growing breeding program—especially the use of frozen assets to enhance genetic diversity.

To maintain operations until the renovations are complete in April 2025, the veterinary team has temporarily moved to a mobile clinic adjacent to the facility, transferring all essential equipment.

We are grateful to our generous friends around the world for donating to this important effort! The new clinic's entrance area is extra special because it will

be dedicated in memory of Martin Segal z"l, Executive Director of the UK Friends of the Israel Guide Dog Center. His passing in early 2024 was a tremendous loss to our community, and this tribute recognizes his unwavering dedication to our mission.

Genetics

Ensuring strong genetic characteristics in the puppies born is a top priority for Guide Dog schools worldwide. It is critical to diversify our genetic pool to maintain the quality and reliability of our life-changing dogs. We do this by keeping a group of male and female breeding dogs (Labrador and Golden Retrievers) who are used exclusively to create the next generation of working dogs.

Our 2024 breeding program, where the average litter size is 7, included:

- 11 male studs in breeding colony
- 25 breeding females
- 117 puppies born at the Center
- 3 dogs brought to Israel from Canada and the US.



PUPPY RAISING DEPARTMENT

Eli Ben Boher, Director



The first year of a puppy's life is critical in shaping its future as a Guide Dog, PTSD Service Dog, or Emotional Support Dog. Any disruption in training can impact a puppy's ability to succeed in one of these roles. Therefore, ensuring consistent, high-quality training and exposure to diverse environments is essential.

Volunteer puppy raisers receive their puppies at just 8 weeks old and care for them until they are approximately 14 months of age. Under the guidance of our professional puppy managers, they teach basic obedience, good manners, and provide critical socialization experiences.

In 2024, approximately 170 puppies were placed with 320 volunteer puppy raisers across Israel.



Our puppy raiser, Roei in his own words

This is my farewell letter about my experience with the puppy Cheetah because today Cheetah is returning to the Israel Guide Dog Center.

It all started in the middle of my freshman year when I decided to raise a Guide Dog puppy. Something deep within me knew it was important for me to do. Four months later I had a tiny puppy in my hands.

Her sweet face didn't prepare me to be alone with her cries and responsible for her needs 24/7. Yet I found the strength to parent her every single day. And as time went on Cheetah began to mature into the sweetest creature—and our bond became stronger every day.

This process has given me so much more than hundreds of pictures could. It has given me insight into life, and I've turned out to be a much better and complete person.

My wish is for Cheetah to fulfill her calling and to be the perfect champion Guide or Service Dog that she was meant to be and to make a difference in someone's life—just like she did for me.

Thank you Cheetah, — Roei



COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Erez Barkai, Director

Our Community Relations Department was launched two years ago to focus on expanding our government relations, business partnerships, nonprofit collaborations, and client support services.

Since then, we've seen a meaningful impact on the lives of our clients.

Being denied access when you have a Guide Dog is challenging for our clients. Unfortunately, it happens more often than it should in a country that guarantees the public access rights of all Guide and Service Dogs. Luckily, our Community Relations Department is experienced with helping our clients manoeuvre these tricky situations.

A year and a half ago, a young blind man, Einav, entered a restaurant in central Israel with his newly trained Guide Dog. After months of training with his new partner, he'd finally gained the independence he craved. But when the security guard at the entrance saw Einav's Guide Dog, he refused to let them in, not understanding what a guide dog was.

Einav was understandably furious and also humiliated. He was ready to go straight to social media and call out

the restaurant. Instead, Einav called the Israel Guide Dog Center first. We asked him to hold off posting until we could try to rectify the situation.

After reaching out to the CEO, two weeks later, I was able to meet with the board of directors. While the actual mistake was made by the security guard, the larger issue was the restaurant's failure to train its staff about basic access rights for people with disabilities.

The outcome was surprising. The company took responsibility, started to support the Center financially, and helped us form new relationships. Though it was a frustrating reminder of the challenges blind people face and the incredible amount of work we must do, it led to something positive with the potential to create change that helps our clients.

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BUILDING BRIDGES, CHANGING LIVES:

A Cross-Continental Partnership with Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides

Over the years, we've been proud to nurture a strong and mutually beneficial partnership with the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides in Oakville—an alliance that reflects our shared values of excellence, collaboration, and impact.

Through this unique relationship, we have successfully exchanged dogs for breeding and service, strengthening both our programs and expanding our reach.

Willow, originally born and raised at the Israel Guide Dog Center, is now a proud breeding dog here in Ontario. Her genetics, temperament, and training background are helping raise the next generation of service dogs in Canada. Meanwhile, Jace, a strong and capable stud dog from Oakville, has made his home in Israel, where he is already contributing to our guide and service dog breeding program.

One of the most inspiring stories to emerge from this collaboration is that of Vinton, a Canadian poodle who travelled from Oakville to Israel. After training at our



Center, he was successfully matched with an Israeli IDF veteran living with PTSD. Today, Vinton provides daily support and emotional stability, exemplifying the transformative power of service dogs.

This international exchange of expertise, genetics, and purpose is just the beginning.

By working together across borders, we are building stronger breeding programs and changing more lives, both human and canine.





EVENING OF MIRACLES



Our *Evening of Miracles* gala was an unforgettable night of music, inspiration, and community. It raised over \$330,000 for the Israel Guide Dog Center.

Hosted by Canadian television and radio personality **Ben Mulroney**, the evening featured heartfelt storytelling, stirring performances, and moving testimonies from our clients. **David Broza**, one of Israel's most beloved singer-songwriters, performed alongside **Trió Havana**, energizing the crowd with their vibrant fusion of Israeli and Latin music.

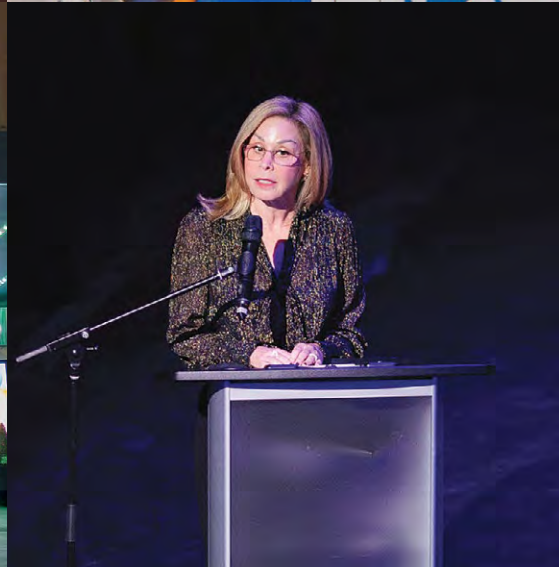
The heart of the evening came from our clients. **Erez Barkai**, our Director of Community Relations and IDF veteran **Achiya Klein**, who lost his sight in combat, shared how their guide dogs transformed their lives — giving them back freedom, confidence, and independence.

We also honoured founders **Noach and Orna Braun**, whose visionary leadership continues to guide our work.

It was a night that reminded us: with community and compassion, miracles are possible.

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FINANCIAL REPORTS:

This is our most recent internal Financial Report and Budget for 2025.

	2025 Budget in CAD	2024 Actual in CAD	2023 Actual in CAD
INCOME - OVERSEAS			
Transfers from US Friends	\$3,188,888	\$3,141,972	\$2,744,905
Direct Donations from US Donors	\$350,000	\$302,113	\$295,605
Transfers from British Friends	\$427,777	\$402,817	\$331,500
Direct Donations from British Donors	\$27,222	\$28,197	\$29,561
Transfers from Canadian Friends	\$530,834	\$548,712	\$506,752
Direct Donations from Canadian Donors	\$3,889	\$4,028	\$4,223
Donations from - Other Countries	\$116,666	\$120,845	\$101,350
TOTAL INCOME - OVERSEAS	\$4,645,276	\$4,548,684	\$4,013,895
INCOME FROM ISRAEL			
Donations from Israel	\$1,068,666	\$723,057	\$1,646,098
Donations Israel - Ministries & PTSD	\$1,069,639	\$780,860	\$722,121
CanVelo Donations	\$89,055	\$90,633	\$69,256
CanVelo Income	\$116,200	\$201,408	\$134,711
In-Kind Donations	\$298,084	\$308,758	\$330,022
TOTAL INCOME - ISRAEL	\$2,641,645	\$2,104,717	\$2,902,207
TOTAL ALL INCOME	\$7,286,920	\$6,653,401	\$6,916,102
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Dog Training Expenses	\$2,256,617	\$2,310,015	\$2,059,661
Kennel Expenses	\$1,184,352	\$1,070,302	\$1,043,813
Puppy Raising Expenses	\$691,054	\$530,586	\$453,977
Maintenance	\$547,264	\$565,598	\$541,878
Marketing and Fundraising	\$1,013,965	\$842,639	\$836,522
Administrative Expenses	\$821,055	\$850,584	\$789,775
CanVelo Expenses	\$121,334	\$296,070	\$208,190
Financing Expenses	\$22,945	\$22,960	\$23,648
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$6,658,586	\$6,488,754	\$5,957,463
FIXED ASSETS			
Fixed Assets – New Building Depreciation	\$1,220,332	\$1,077,132	\$529,134
Depreciation	\$472,612	\$374,620	\$422,293
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	\$1,692,944	\$1,451,752	\$951,426
TOTAL ALL EXPENSES	\$8,351,531	\$7,940,505	\$6,908,890
SURPLUS/- DEFICIT	(\$1,064,610)	(\$1,287,105)	\$7,212

This is an internal projected budget

The fixed assets expenses are subject to a designated donation

Please remember that we provide all of our services at no cost to our clients.

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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 to 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, and then you will be able to follow the puppy's adventures from birth until it is placed with an Israeli in need.

Your \$5,000 sponsorship helps us care for our priceless puppies. It helps us to operate our Puppy Development and Training Campus and support our puppies' journeys from puppy to world-class Guide Dogs, PTSD Service Dogs, Emotional Support Dogs, or Ambassador Dogs.

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**.



VISIT:

**israelguidedog.ca/name-a-puppy/
to name a puppy and become part
of a heroic effort to
change people's lives.**



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Canadian Friends

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Photo credits: Special thanks to Eli Ben Boher, Rina Arbel, staff, and volunteers