



Israel Guide
Dog Center
מרכז ישראלי לכלבי נחיה

Paw Prints

THE CENTER'S DONOR NEWSLETTER

Summer 2026 Edition

Amid Ongoing Conflict, the Center Meets the Challenge

A message from Erez Barkai, the Center's Director of Community Relations

Even before the launch of the first missile earlier this year, the need for PTSD Service Dogs had already doubled over the last several years. The ongoing conflict with Iran is only increasing the demand for these very special dogs.

In this way — and in so many ways — all of us here at the Israel Guide Dog Center are being challenged like never before to ensure that we meet the needs of all Israelis who reach out for help.

Of course, that starts with ensuring the welfare of our dogs. At the start of the war, it was truly all-hands-on-deck. Staff from all departments and some volunteers remained on the Center's Beit Oved campus, day and night, for several days.

Many of our puppy raisers were drafted immediately and had to leave their dogs with us — multiplying the number of dogs to care for and train.

As anyone who has ever raised a puppy knows, maintaining a consistent daily routine for the dogs is vital. We did everything possible to maintain that routine, even as sirens blared multiple times throughout the day and night. During a siren, we acted in a steady and matter-of-fact way. Once we returned to a safe space, we added a few minutes of calm training or quiet play to help the dogs release accumulated tension.

We have also made every effort to continue supporting each and every client, with all the



Staff members, volunteers, and dogs passing the time while in a bomb shelter.

complexity they are facing now and what may still unfold ahead. Our commitment is to remain present, responsive, and professional, even as the reality continues to shift.

Your friendship fuels all this work, making it possible for us to care for all those who are depending on us during these difficult times.

Thank you for standing with us, for your continued support, and for strengthening our ability to carry this work forward. It means more to us than can be fully expressed.

Your Support in Action: A Wife's Story

Your support of the Israel Guide Dog Center has an enormous impact on so many Israelis. But that impact doesn't end with our clients — it extends to their families as well.

That's what we heard from the wife of one of our clients who we paired with a PTSD Service Dog. She extended her thanks to us, and we wanted to share them with you, as your support made her story possible.

Dear Israel Guide Dog Center,

I wanted to reach out and let you know what a big difference you've made for my husband — and our whole family.

For a long time, I told no one. Because how do you say that you love your husband, but at night you are afraid of what happens to him?

Nightmares, sudden movements, reliving war. It's not him. It's his PTSD, but I was still afraid.

I slept on the edge of the bed, blanket between us, eyes half open and heart closed.

Our bed became a place of fear, not a place of love. We both felt it and it further broke him.

The day Johnny, the PTSD Service Dog the Israel Guide Dog Center trained and partnered with my husband arrived, everything changed.

That evening, after falling asleep, my husband moved in bed, the moment when I would have previously frozen — Johnny got up immediately and laid on him. It was as if he was saying: You are here and safe. Come back to me.

Within seconds, my husband's body relaxed and I began to cry. That was the first time in years a night passed without fear.

After a week, I fell asleep without tension.

After a month, I began to move closer to him at night.

After a few months, I found myself reaching for his hand in my sleep.

My husband changed right before my eyes. There was less shame, withdrawal, and apologizing, and more smiles, patience, and presence.

My husband no longer woke up with guilt; he woke up with hope.

And suddenly, small things returned: conversations, jokes, plans, and touch. It was no longer patient and caregiver; we were husband and wife again.

Even though Johnny sleeps between us, his presence has opened a new space between us with calm, trust, and closeness.

I tell people, "A dog in our bed saved our marriage." He saved us the first night, first week, first month ... then our lives.

He doesn't only protect my husband from his internal struggles and thoughts, he protects our love, our family, and our future.

I will be forever grateful for the Israel Guide Dog Center and those who made this possible.

-Liora, the wife of a PTSD Service Dog client



More than a Guide Dog: When a Dog Becomes Family

Two years ago, our client Oren and his wife Naama were on their way to the hospital to welcome their first child into the world. Naama was in labor and driving carefully through contractions. Oren sat beside her and between his legs, steady and calm, lay Oren's Guide Dog, Kent.

Labor contractions don't follow traffic patterns. They arrive suddenly and demand attention. As Naama focused on the road ahead, something remarkable began to happen. Seconds before each contraction began, Kent gently leaned forward and licked Naama's hand.

That simple act gave Naama something invaluable: a moment of calm and confidence. She could anticipate what was coming, safely pull over, breathe, and continue the drive with greater control. Kent, trained to guide a blind partner through busy streets and complex environments, was now guiding in an entirely different way.

At the hospital, Kent wasn't treated as an afterthought. He was welcomed into the delivery room and given a designated place to lie down. Throughout the birth, he remained quiet, alert, and present — a steady companion during one of



Oren and Naama's daughter resting on Kent

life's most intense moments. When their daughter arrived, he had been there for it all.

More recently, just after the start of Shabbat, the family returned to that same labor room for the birth of their son. This time, the story continued with an even deeper bond on display.

Once again, Kent was there. But now he wasn't simply observing — he was participating. During contractions, he licked Naama's hand. He stayed close, fully engaged, offering reassurance through every movement and breath. He bore witness to the arrival of a healthy baby boy, present for the expansion of the family he already belonged to.

We train our Guide Dogs for mobility, safety, and independence. But what this story reminds us is that training is only part of the picture.

Guide Dogs are living beings with instinct, sensitivity, and deep emotional intelligence. When they are truly bonded with their partners and embraced as members of the family, they offer support that goes far beyond what any curriculum can teach.



Oren, Naama and Kent awaiting the arrival of the newest family member

Puppy Boom – The Next Generation of Super Heroes

We're excited to introduce the Israel Guide Dog Center Class of 2028. With your help, these amazing puppies will spend the next two years training to be future Guide Dogs, PTSD Service Dogs, and Emotional Support Dogs.

We couldn't do this work without you!



**Israel Guide
Dog Center**

Photo Credits to come

968 Easton Rd - Suite H, Warrington, PA 18976

215-343-9100 | info@israelguidedog.org

www.israelguidedog.org