

Fulfilling a Tremendous Need

There are few things in life more feared than loss of vision and there is no known mobility aid for a blind person that is better than a guide dog. The urgency of the need and the promise that it offered toward restoring the self respect, independence and mobility of blind people in Israel led to the establishment of the Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing “another pair of eyes” for blind Israelis and assisting those who already have guide dogs.



Students Give the Gift of Sight to Israeli Blind

As Bar and Bat Mitzvah students from coast to coast prepare for one of the most momentous occasions in their Jewish lives, they are encouraged to take on a Jewish community service project to supplement their studies. As Puppy Sponsors, students learn about the vital relationship between a guide dog and a blind Israeli. Everything from companionship to the new-found active and independent lifestyle made possible through the pairing. Then, at the end of their Bar and Bat Mitzvah studies, the student sponsors share their project experiences with their congregation, explaining how they have grown through this process and what they have learned about assisting the Jewish community.

To
Learn
More,
Please
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Make

ISRAEL
GUIDE
DOG
CENTER
FOR THE
BLIND

Your Mitzvah Project



How does it happen?

A Good Start



The guide dog process begins with a new litter of puppies who stay with their mother for 2 months and are then placed in the homes of puppy-raising families where they learn socialization and other skills. The goal of these foster families is to lavish love and teach the puppies how to learn. They romp and play and sleep by the bed. They learn right from left and right from wrong. No begging at the table, no sleeping on couches and no chasing cats. These dogs must learn discipline, but they also lead happy, active lives. It involves hundreds of miles of walking, a lot of perseverance, a ton of patience, a dose of fear and even a few tears, but the puppy-raisers say it's all worth it.

The puppies then return to the guide dog center for assessment and instruction if we feel that the puppy has the qualifications to become a guide dog. If qualified, the puppy then begins 5 months of intensive training. We usually use Labrador Retriever and Golden Retriever dogs and occasionally German Shepherds.

Human Training is Next

After the dog completes the training period, the blind people come to the guide dog center to receive instruction with their new guide dog for a three week period. After the course, they return to their home with their dog and receive another week of home training where they practice going to work, to the veterinarian, to the super market, to the bank and to the post office and any other place that they would normally visit. Once the dog has done each experience once, it remembers for the next time. In addition, they practice bus travel so that the blind person feels comfortable traveling with his new companion.

How is it meaningful?

An Outstanding Impact

The Israel Guide Dog Center is making an extraordinary difference in the lives of visually impaired Israelis. To give a little insight into how much of a difference, here is a story of one of our graduates. Gadi Yarkoni was a young Israeli soldier when he was blinded in Lebanon. A terrorist bullet ricocheted and severed his optic nerves. All efforts to restore his sight failed and a year later, he received his instruction with Waldo, a Black Labrador Retriever and is now able to travel independently wherever he chooses to go. He has completed a four year course in physical therapy at Tel Aviv University and is now working in his field.



Gadi Yarkoni and his second guide dog, Neptune.

No Charge to the Visually Impaired

The Israel Guide Dog Center gives these highly-trained “miracles” to individuals who need them free of charge. It is through donations from generous individuals and organizations that is possible.



Do you:
Love dogs?
Want to help the blind?
Want to aid people in Israel?
Want a special mitzvah project?

What can I do?

Spread the Word

You have a great opportunity to inform your fellow classmates as well as the congregation during your remarks at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah about the special work of the guide dog center.

Sponsor a Puppy

Why not sponsor a puppy – the cost of a sponsorship is \$500 and it includes all the costs of raising the pup during its first year. The funds could be raised by yard sales, baby-sitting, gifts from friends and relatives who may be invited to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah or other creative ways.



“This guide dog gave me the feeling today — as I walked in town — that I am not blind anymore. My dog, George, gave me the sensation of seeing again. I walked with confidence, maneuvered around people and obstacles while thinking to myself that this is a miracle.”

Our mission is to help blind Israelis to regain their lives by providing independence, mobility and self-confidence through the use of guide dogs.