



ISRAEL PARASPORT CENTER

Empowering Life Without Limits

Formerly American Friends of Israel Sport Center for the Disabled



2022 Impact Report



Dear Friends,

Thanks to the incredible support of generous donors and friends, 2022 was an unprecedented success for The Israel ParaSport Center. **THANK YOU** for making it another record-breaking year for The Center.

Despite lingering COVID-era anxieties and challenges, we chose to make the most of a difficult situation. Our athletes in Israel never missed a beat and neither would we!

We exceeded our fundraising goal of \$5 MILLION, which enabled us to fulfill key priorities on Israel's wish list: **raising more than \$2.5 million** of the \$3 million needed to renovate both The Center's pools, re-opening our satellite campus in Be'er Sheva, and adding more programs to accommodate even more athletes. This amazing accomplishment has provided so many children access to additional opportunities. Additionally, an increased number of scholarships were available providing necessary financial assistance to those families in need.

The Center is committed to **"Empowering Life Without Limits."** We are fortunate to have a fully engaged Board who helped to expand our reach, grow our visibility, and support all our events from coast to coast. We held two events in New York with board members from Chicago, Atlanta, and Israel in attendance; a new event in Los Angeles, Teaming with Laughter, saw attendees from Chicago and Israel; and a Gala in Atlanta with attendees from Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, Chicago, and Israel. The support we received at each event made the past year most fulfilling, rewarding, and productive.

2023 is already off to an outstanding start in Israel, as we continue to expand our programming at both locations, rebuild and repair our existing facilities in Ramat Gan, and purchase new, state-of-the-art equipment and technology.

Thanks to our donors, friends, lay leaders nationwide, our partners in Israel, and our dedicated staff, our 2023 goals are attainable. **You empower life without limits with your continued support of the Israel ParaSport Center.**

Henry Ward Beecher said, "What I spent, I had; What I kept, I lost; What I gave, I have."

Together, we are helping change the lives of our Israel ParaSport Center athletes and their families for a brighter future.

Lori Komisar
National Board President

Jennifer Flink
National Executive Director

Friends,

In the 75th year of our independence, division and conflict threaten to tear us apart. This will not happen. Our fabric is too strong, and we depend on one another too much. The Jewish people, in Israel and in the Diaspora, weave together a delicate and beautiful tapestry of hopes, dreams, and an unbreakable spirit.

Zoom in, and that same beauty and strength can be found in our special community of athletes with disabilities, staff, and volunteers in Israel and in the U.S.

The Israel ParaSport Center.

It is the world's most unique example of a community by and for people with physical disabilities and their families, and we take great pride in it.

This year, we touched the lives of thousands.

Our athletes raised the Israeli flag in Asia, America, Africa, and Europe. We were able to complete much-needed capital projects, like the new table tennis hall and our new Expo Center; we provided scholarships to more than 100 children and youth with disabilities; we developed new programs for children with vision impairments; and we watched our wheelchair basketball players, who it seems were only children yesterday, spread their wings and play professionally on some of the best teams in the world.

In these times of difficulty to find our common ground, maybe this is it: **We are proud of what we have achieved with your help, we are proud of every athlete, and we are proud of you, our supporters around the world.**

We do our best to make you proud of our Center, which is yours as much as it is ours.

May God bless you, and on behalf of our volunteers, staff, and athletes with disabilities: TODA.

*Boaz Kramer
Israel Executive Director*



THANKS TO YOU

Nearly

2,900

people with physical disabilities and their families participated in The Center's programs in 2022, a 4% increase from 2021. Almost a third were under the age of 21.

40

athletes traveled to 20 countries to compete with teams from across the world. Notable competitions included the U22 Wheelchair Basketball World Championships in Thailand, the Boccia World Championships in Brazil, and the Wheelchair Rugby European Championships in Norway.

The Center reopened its Be'er Sheva satellite campus in 2022 and served

95

children with physical disabilities, providing much-needed social and rehabilitative services to underserved communities in Southern Israel.

The Center replaced

258

tires for its athletes' elite sport wheelchairs.



\$150,000

in scholarships were distributed to athletes at The Center for various programs, including the new MVP wheelchair basketball program, transportation, and other need-based scholarships.

"You are helping us build a better future here in Israel, a future of social integration with improved lives for thousands of people with disabilities."

- Asael Shabo, Wheelchair Basketball Athlete

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

2022 was an incredible year for The Center

Because of your support, new programs were implemented, social services were expanded, and our community grew in new and exciting ways. Below are just a few highlights from the year:

Wheelchair Basketball

The Center's new MVP Wheelchair Basketball program awarded its first scholarships in April 2022 to 12 rising wheelchair basketball stars. Award recipients receive extra court time, coaching, services, and equipment.

Wheelchair Rugby

Due in part to the success of the professional wheelchair rugby team, The Center introduced the sport in the Childrens Program. The program currently serves 15-20 children and continues to grow.

Judo

In September 2022, The Center introduced a new judo program for children with visual impairments. The Center is the only place in Israel where judo is available for children with visual impairments.

Animal Assisted Therapy

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) - consisting of both dog therapy and horse therapy – was re-introduced in The Gan (Preschool). These two AAT programs quickly turned into a highly anticipated experience for both children and staff.



BIG WINS

ATHLETE ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2022



Maayan Zikri, Wheelchair Tennis

Wheelchair Tennis

Paralympian **Shruga Weinberg** celebrated his 500th international win since 1992 and was selected to represent Israel on the 2024 Paralympic Committee.

Maayan Zikri shot up in the world rankings from 50 to the top 20, winning her first world title in April 2022.

Sergei Lysov entered the men's league this year and rose in the rankings from 61 to the top 30.

Wheelchair Basketball

The Center's Wheelchair Basketball Team placed 2nd in the EuroLeague.

The U22 team competed in the Wheelchair Basketball World Cup for the first time in Center history.

Seven of The Center's Wheelchair Basketball players began competing for teams across Europe and the U.S.



Mordechai Zidkiyaho, Wheelchair Rugby

Wheelchair Rugby

The Center's Wheelchair Rugby team placed 2nd at the European Championships and were bumped up to the next level of play, ensuring a place at the European Championships in 2023.

Table Tennis

Caroline Tabib qualified for the Wheelchair Table Tennis World Championships in August 2022.

Aviv Gordon won gold at the Montenegro Table Tennis Open.

14-year-old **Yehonatan Levi** won silver in his second international tournament

Boccia

Paralympian **Nadav Levy** won first place at the Boccia Israel Championship.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“The Center is the most perfect place for children like me. When I’m at The Center, I feel great! No one makes me feel like I’m different because of my disability, and I love playing all the sports!”

- Mika Berliner, Childrens Program



“In every other part of my life, even though I have many friends, I am the only person with a disability. At The Center, there are so many kids and adults just like me. No one is different, because everyone is different! It’s my favorite place to be because I can dream of playing any sport there.”

- Yonatan Minkin, Childrens Program

The Israel ParaSport Center is like my second home. It is where I feel like I am among equals, among other people who speak my language. It is at The Center where I know that my experience as a kid with a disability is understood.

- Tal Dagan, Wheelchair Basketball Athlete





ASAE SHABO

LIGHTS A TORCH AT ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

On May 4, 2022, professional wheelchair basketball player Asael Shabo stood in front of the citizens of Israel, told his story of triumph, and lit one of the 12 torches at the Israel Independence Day State Ceremony on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem. This was a momentous occasion both on a personal level for Asael, and on a community level for everyone – including his coaches, his peers, and the young athletes whom he mentors.

“[The ceremony] was amazing,” said Asael. “It was one of the most beautiful days of my life. Standing on the stage and knowing that the entire nation of Israel was watching me, and imparting my important message, was very meaningful for me. My message was one of optimism and unity – of unconditional love and, of course, of the amazing power of parasports.”

2022 marked 20 years since the terror attack in Asael Shabo’s home, where his mother and three of his brothers were murdered. Asael survived the attack, but lost his leg as a result of his injuries.

“Asael represents something much bigger than himself,” said Lior Dror, The Center’s head wheelchair basketball coach. “Hope. Hope to people in our country, that despite the wars and the terror attacks, it’s possible to continue and grow, really, much like our country does.”

To The Center’s friends in the United States, Asael said, “Your friendship toward the Israel ParaSport Center for over half a century has supported tens of thousands of people with disabilities throughout the years, myself amongst them, and contributes to the improvement of the lives of thousands of people with disabilities.”

ISRAEL PARASPORT CENTER FUNDRAISING

Your incredible generosity in 2022 is unmatched. Below are just a few of the many fundraising highlights from the year:

With your support, we raised close to*

**\$5.2
MILLION**

for programs, renovations and operating costs at The Center

*funds raised are unaudited at time of publication

In total, we received

1,850

gifts from **1408 donors**, an 8% increase in gifts from 2021

The average gift per donor was

\$3,686

compared to \$2,960 in 2021

The Israel ParaSport Center hosted six events in 2022 that raised nearly

**\$2.47
MILLION**

for The Center



Jon Michelon, pictured with Sergei Lysov, rising Wheelchair Tennis star

“At The Center, the power of sports can be felt throughout the community. It’s such a special place, and by supporting The Center, you give thousands of people with disabilities a powerful gift that transforms their lives. Thank you for everything you do.

- Jon Michelon, National Philanthropy Chair



2022 U.S. HIGHLIGHTS

2022 was a year of growth and change for The Israel ParaSport Center. Below are just a few highlights of our accomplishments in the U.S.

Name Change

In 2022, the American Friends of Israel Sport Center for the Disabled announced it would move forward as the **Israel ParaSport Center**. After months of researching, planning, and conversations with the organization's leadership and key stakeholders, we unveiled our new name and brand at the Heroes of Life Gala in November 2022.

Golf Classic Honoring Mike Frazin

In August, the Israel ParaSport Center honored Mike Frazin for his dedication to The Center at the 13th Annual Chicago Golf Classic. The event had record attendance and raised more than **\$500,000** for The Center, the highest amount ever raised at this event.

Heroes of Life Gala

In November, the Israel ParaSport Center honored Andrea and Mike Leven for their outstanding commitment to The Center. More than 500 people attended the Heroes of Life Gala in Atlanta, GA, and raised close to **\$1.4 million** for the renovation of The Center's semi-Olympic and hydrotherapy pools.

Events Across the Country

Throughout 2022, The Israel ParaSport Center hosted a variety of events in cities across the United States. The Inaugural Tri-State Golf Classic, the Tri-State Heroes of Life event, and the Teaming with Laughter event in Los Angeles raised **nearly \$400,000** combined for The Center.



2022 CAPITAL PROJECT: POOL RENOVATIONS

The Israel ParaSport Center's aquatic facilities are made up of two pools - one semi-Olympic pool and one smaller hydrotherapy pool. These facilities are uniquely designed to accommodate the complex needs of children and adults with a range of physical disabilities. **The two pools together serve approximately 500 people every week.** Over the years the heavy usage has taken its toll, even with regular maintenance.

In 2022, we set out to raise **\$3 million** to completely renovate both pools.

So far, we've raised
\$2.5 Million
for pool renovations

Thanks to your generosity, renovations for The Center's Aquatics Center began in 2023. The Aquatics Center dedication is targeted for summer 2024. Fundraising for these renovations is still ongoing.



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Our Mission

The Israel ParaSport Center is committed to providing ongoing financial support to The Center, empowering children and youth with physical disabilities from all backgrounds to participate in physical and psychological rehabilitation through sports in order to attain the goal of leading productive and successful lives in Israeli society.



“Thanks to you,
anything is possible at
the Israel ParaSport
Center. Thank you for
supporting us.”

– Jacob Ben-Arie
Israel ParaSport Center
Chairman