

Young Girl with Disabilities Receives Yellow Belt Judo Ranking from Israeli Olympic Medalist Ori Sasson

The Shalva National Center's sold-out gala event to benefit rehabilitative care for children with disabilities

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL, December 20, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- 9-Year-old Alisa was born with a rare genetic multisystem disorder called Prader Willi Syndrome, which is characterized by diminished muscle tone; yet, despite the odds she is a rising judo star. Alisa participates in a rehabilitative judo program for children with disabilities at the [Shalva](#) National Center which utilizes martial arts as a tool for developing motor and behavioral skills. Shalva's judo program was established by Israeli Judo Medalist Ori Sasson and is one of the organization's several rehabilitative fitness and recreational programs that benefits hundreds of children and adults with disabilities weekly.



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Israeli Judo Medalist Ori Sasson

“Today is coming full circle for me,” Ori Sasson told the packed auditorium of 750 Shalva supporters upon bestowing Alisa with her new judo belt. “This is one of those moments that reminds of why I do what I do; how judo has built me and how it builds them and what an honor it is to be part of the Shalva organization's amazing work.”

Alisa's mother who joined her on stage for the ceremony was overwhelmed with emotion. "Wherever Alisa goes, Prader Willi walks through the door first; but at Shalva, Alisa walks through the door. They see her for who she is and for everything she can be," said Alisa's mother Ivgenia.



9-Year-old Alisa

The Shalva National Center in Jerusalem is one of the largest centers for disability care and inclusion in the world, with some of Israel's most

expansive disability accessible sports facilities. Shalva has received international recognition for its pioneering rehabilitative models and impactful inclusion projects, including the Shalva Band which has performed on some of the world's most prominent stages. The organization was founded thirty-two years ago by Kalman and Malki Samuels in response to their own experiences raising their son with disabilities. Today the organization provides a range of lifecycle programming for over 2,000 individuals with disabilities and support services to them and their families.

Shalva's annual gala event, which took place on Sunday December 19, at the Hevel Modiin Cultural Hall in Airport City, was attended by over 750 people in-person and over 1,000 virtually who came to support the organization's rehabilitative services for individuals with disabilities and their families. The event's musical performance was hosted by Maestro Gil Shohat and showcased the Shalva Band who were accompanied by the Raanana Symphonette Orchestra and some of Israel's top music and vocal artists; Shiri Maimon, Daniella Lugassy, and Amir Dadon. The evening's culinary hospitality was the work of Israeli Chef Shaul Ben-Aderet who was assisted by an inclusive staff of sous chefs that included graduates of Shalva's Riklis Cooperberg Culinary Course. Shalva's culinary course is a unique element of the organization's employment program for adults with disabilities which has raised the bar in culinary training and certification for adults with disabilities in Israel. Some of the course graduates are currently employed as sous chefs at high-end restaurants.

Among the guests were some of Israel's most prominent business magnets and corporate giants in the finance, transport, oil and gas, and pharma industries. "Shalva's partnerships with Israel's corporate community is one of the organization's most important supports," says Kalman

Samuels, Founder and President of Shalva. "This partnership allows us to provide the best care to thousands of individuals with disabilities and their families."

Notable guests who attended the event include ; Irit Wertheimer, Israeli businessman Ofer Nimrodi, Dudi Weissman of Sonol, Andrew Danos of the James Richardson Group, Yaron Kestenbaum of the Israel Infrastructure Fund, Shaul Gelbard of Bank Yahav, Atalia Shmeltzer of the Shlomo Group, Hadassah Fattal of Fattal Hotels, , Henia and Moshe Nur of Nur Star, Meir Jacobson of Medicine Pharma, and Arik Yogev of Ayalon Insurance.

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