

Equal in Uniform 2023 - Impact Stories

1. **Netanel - A Bright Light from Ashkelon**

Born and raised in Ashkelon, Netanel Kadoshi is a 26-year-old young man with an intellectual disability. He lives with his mother who also has an intellectual disability and a younger brother. Since his father's passing several years ago, Netanel has become the backbone of the family.

After completing school, Netanel was advised by his teachers to enter the workforce. However, Netanel had a dream - he insisted on first taking a path to serve and defend his country by joining the IDF. In September 2018 Netanel enrolled in the "Equal in Uniform" (EIU) program.

Accompanied by a social worker and support staff with expertise in special education and disabilities, participants of the EIU program have the opportunity to participate in military service and perform professional tasks, based on their interests and abilities. Netanel was assigned to work in the kitchen on the Julis base near Ashkelon.

His daily tasks ranged from meticulously arranging shelves and checking expiration dates to crafting pastries and providing top-notch service to his fellow soldiers—all while keeping things spic and span. Netanel didn't just perform his duties, he infused them with a contagious enthusiasm, dedication, and a profound sense of responsibility. Along the way, he forged meaningful connections with his comrades and earned the respect and appreciation of his superiors.

In January 2020, Netanel's dream came true as he proudly joined the IDF. After completing his service in September 2022, he ventured into a unique role at a cannabis farm, under the auspices of the "Tomorrow's Factory" – a program that involves group inclusion in the job market with guidance and support.

Currently, Netanel works for the food company Li-Bar at Intel in Kiryat Gat. He is responsible for the large dining area where he excels at providing superior service. Netanel is adored by everyone around him. Through his stable employment in the work force, he supports his mother and brother.

Netanel's journey is more than just an engaging story, it is testimony as to how with determination, one person can have major impact on those around him when just given the opportunity.



Netanel lighting the family Menorah in Ashkelon - Dec. 2023



2. Increasing Productivity and Sensitivity on his base: YAIR

Yair is a 23-year-old enlisted soldier who began his journey in the "Equal in Uniform" program in October 2020. Since then, Yair has transformed into an invaluable enlisted soldier in the Logistics division of a classified intelligence base in central Israel.

Yair's responsibilities include receiving, registering, and distributing equipment within a large central warehouse at a major base. The role demands precision and organizational finesse. Yair's seamless integration into the unit not only stands as a testament to the success of the "Equal in Uniform" program, but also sets a compelling example of a harmonious blend of respect, professionalism, belonging and inclusion.



Yair with surrounded by his commanders, AKIM social worker Rakefet Raz and International Relations Dept. representatives – Dec. 2023

Yair's commanders and comrades at the base have grown to appreciate his productivity and therefore have placed expectations upon him. This demand not only bolsters his sense of capability but also serves as a catalyst for his ongoing development, ensuring that he acquires skills that translate to the labor market for a seamless transition upon completing his service.

Yair's passion for his role is palpable—his love for the job, sense of belonging on the base, and pride in being a soldier are the building blocks of a fulfilling IDF service. His desire to continue serving in the same capacity reflects a commitment that goes beyond duty; it mirrors a genuine connection to his role and its impact on the unit.

Yair's social integration and amicable relationships within the unit are notable. His proactive and responsible approach, coupled with kindness and respect, not only fosters a positive atmosphere but also underscores the collaborative spirit within the team.

When facing challenges, Yair showcases valuable qualities including his ability to seek help when needed and he skillfully defend his rights.

According to S, Yair's Commander, his presence not only elevates S. as a person, but also as a leader. Aside from enjoying a strong personal relationship, the need to exercise patience, inclusivity, and appropriate communication, transformed the military setting into a stage for the personal growth of S and Yair's comrades.

Yair's story illustrates the transformative power of inclusion and diversity within the IDF

3. Samuel's Journey from Manchester to the IDF

Samuel Rabinowitz is a 22-year old who made Aliyah with his parents from Manchester, England in August 2018 to Raanana. His two older brothers, Joshua and Daniel remained in England and visit occasionally.

Samuel has been living in a home for young men at Kibbutz Lavi for the past 3 years. He visits his parents during weekends. Samuel volunteers in the IDF's Electronic Optics Unit in the northern branch of the Electro-Optics Factory belonging to the Technology and Logistics Corps. The unit repairs, restores, enhances, and adapts electro-optical systems.



Samuel with Larissa Amos, EIU Coordinator in the Galilee, and his AKIM facilitator Lital – Dec. 2023.

During wartime, Samuel assisted friends in preparing packages for soldiers and felt grateful for his meaningful contribution. "At AKIM people help me a lot, with an open heart, and this is really important to me. When I arrived in Israel I was in a boarding school, and I felt that I would not succeed and I was told I may not be able to serve in the IDF. Thanks to AKIM, my dream came true. All my friends enlisted and I was concerned that I would be the only one different from them."



Samuel is grateful for AKIM's assistance and appreciates the emotional and practical support he receives from his facilitator Lital. According to Samuel, "she helps me solve my problems, supports my decisions, and knows how to provide me with independence." Samuel's role is to repair night vision devices. He emphasizes the importance of his work, as these devices directly impact soldiers' ability to operate efficiently at night, showcasing the vital nature of his contribution to their efficiency and safety. Since joining the program, Samuel has experienced positive changes in his mood and overall well-being. He has conveyed a sense of belonging - "the people here like me, and I like my friends and commanders. They accept me the way I am."

Proud to contribute to the well-being of his comrades, Samuel relishes socializing in the dining room, fostering connections and friendships. He feels accepted and appreciated by his colleagues and commanders. Looking forward, his immediate goal is to become a full-fledged soldier.

Samuel aims to further develop his relationship with a young woman, continue living in Israel, and wishes to pursue further his education. AKIM will be there to guide and support as much as desired.