

In conversation with Nataly Davidai:

Philanthropy as an intergenerational family mission

Caring and volunteering has been part of the family's legacy for generations. And over time, this important element of family bonding has become increasingly impactful for all those involved.

Nataly Davidai would be my dream partner for a philanthropy event in Israel promoting strategic philanthropy in her country. Sharp and knowledgeable about the sector, and the lawyer of many prominent philanthropists, she knows what she is talking about. She is a role model with a wealth of personal experience.

"My family has been involved in volunteering and philanthropy for generations. Though we always took a very hands-on approach, our work was scattered for a long time," says Nataly Davidai, who has been a passionate volunteer and philanthropist since she was very young. Following numerous family gatherings, and especially succession planning meetings, their philanthropy has since evolved to become more focused and strategic.

Part of the family's DNA

When Davidai starts to talk about her family's philanthropic engagements, you immediately realize that this is not just a topic that is dear to her heart, but is truly part of her family's DNA. Davidai's grandparents were passionate philanthropists – her grandmother firmly believed in education and skills development, and her grandfather was known for his generosity. "When my grandfather was young and serving in the state military, people would joke that whenever someone was hungry, he would open the door of his car and there was food for everyone," she explains.

The family's approach to volunteering where they felt it most needed, started to become more strategic in 2006, when Davidai was providing legal assistance in northern Israel to civilians affected by the Second Lebanon War. When Nataly returned from her trips to northern Israel, an hour and a half from where the family lived, she would tell them about the dire situation she witnessed there. And about the fact that a war was taking place just a stone's throw away. Towards the end of the war, her parents also made that trip, to see where and how they could help. With great devotion and drive, Davidai's family decided to reinforce and support the health care for the public



Nataly Davidai

in the northern Israel region. This mission was an important step for the family, and thanks to the conviction of Davidai and her brothers, who were all involved, the parents consolidated the family's philanthropy under one structure and started applying a more strategic lens in order to increase the impact of their giving and philanthropic activities.

One of their long-term commitments was supporting the local hospital in northern Israel. Davidai's paternal grandfather, who was retired but still very much involved at the time, took on the day-to-day management of the family's philanthropic activities, building up the hospital infrastructure and becoming Chairman of the hospital association. After Davidai's maternal grandmother's passing, the family decided to honor her passion for investing in people and their knowledge. This gave rise to the idea of providing scholarships for young doctors with a view to developing and bringing specialized knowledge to hospitals. Eventually, Zohara Davidai, Nataly's mother, became the driving force behind the continuation of the family's legacy. "This year, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the scholarship fund, and we will carry on as long as we are financially able to do it," says Nataly Davidai. For the 10th anniversary, the scholars made a movie, "and what they said about my parents and our program was one of the most moving things I have ever heard: It's not a fund, it's not a scholarship, it's a family," she says.

Involving three generations in philanthropy

In 2021, the family decided to expand the fund's scholarship program to other medical areas of specialization across the public health space, and to offer these opportunities not just to doctors but also to nurses and administrative staff. "We as a family decide all together what we want to focus and expand on. You should be in the kitchen, watching us," Davidai adds with laughter.

What is remarkable about the Davidai family's philanthropic journey involving three generations are its three main characteristics: the truly immersive engagement of every family member and generation, which undoubtedly has contributed to a very

strong sense of family union around shared values and legacy; the thoughtful and “democratic” decision-making process within the family; and the truly hands-on and dedicated involvement going beyond financial contributions. And this will not end with Nataly Davidai’s generation. The family’s philanthropy will continue, which is clear when you hear Davidai talking about involving her own children as much as she can in the current philanthropic activities.

Despite her and her family’s exceptional contributions, when asked what her advice would be to other families who want to get involved in philanthropy, Davidai responds modestly: “In Hebrew we say ‘I am too little to give advice’ – but what is most important to us is that it is all about ‘doing’. As my dad would say, if you feel passionate about something, do it, be willing to fail and deal with the consequences.”

Article by: Nina Hoas, Head of LGT Philanthropy Advisory
Photo: generously provided by Nataly Davidai