



GRAPEVINE

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN

■ MANY PURIM events were canceled or postponed, and thousands, if not tens of thousands, of children who had been looking forward to parading in their Purim costumes were disappointed. So were parents who had spent a lot of money on those costumes. But every year in Israel, Purim celebrations start ahead of time and finish as much as a week after the actual date, so there's still a chance that traditional Purim celebrations will take place. At Beit Issie Shapiro (BIS), which provides therapies that help children with a variety of disabilities to have as good a quality of life as possible, Purim came in early.

For more than a decade, BIS has been working in partnership with the Holon Institute of Technology (HIT) to come up with creative designs of costumes for children in wheelchairs or those who are dependent on walkers. It's quite a challenge, but one that is met with joy and sensitivity.

Purim is an exciting time for all young Jewish children, but more so for children with disabilities that hamper their mobility. They are thrilled with what students at HIT dream up for them.

"In these challenging days in Israel, continuing this Purim tradition feels more important than ever," says BIS Executive Director **Ahmir Lerner**. "Our

children and families have faced so much over the last two and a half years, and they deserve moments of pure joy. These custom-designed costumes don't just make dreams come true – they celebrate each child's uniqueness and show how inclusion, creativity, and community can bring light and possibility, even in uncertain times."

HIT President Prof. **Eduard Yakubov** is a keen supporter of this sentiment. "As every year, we are proud to contribute to this collaborative project with Beit Issie Shapiro. Over 60 students dedicate their time, talent, and hearts, especially during the busiest period of the academic year, to make these dreams come true. This project is a clear example of how creativity and design can drive real social impact and empower children to thrive."

Over the years, the project has been adopted by other organizations across Israel.



DAN IN his Purim bus driver costume with members of the Holon Institute of Technology design team. (Courtesy Beit Issie Shapiro)