

GUIDE DOG NEWS

2024
ISSUE 1



GUIDE DOG PUPPY,
BETTYROSE



Guide Dogs
for the Blind



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Full Member



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GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

Greetings,

I hope your 2024 is off to a great start! As we embark on our 82nd year of working toward a world of greater opportunities, inclusion, and independence for people who are blind or visually impaired, I want to thank you for all you do. **The positive impact your support is having on people's lives is nothing short of powerful.**

Whether you are a volunteer, client, or donor, your impact on our mission helps GDB create life-changing programs that help empower more people to achieve their goals and live the lives they want to live. **Together, this impact is making our communities stronger.**

Your support also positively impacts GDB's innovative programs in puppy raising, canine research, veterinary care, guide dog training, and client services, solidifying our place as a world leader in the guide dog industry. Throughout the year, we'll share our progress on these fronts and how you are helping to impact lives through your investment in our mission. You can stay up to date on all our news by listening to our Central Bark podcast at guidedogs.com/podcast or visiting our blog at guidedogs.com/blog.

Stay tuned. We're just getting started!



Christine Benninger
President and CEO



“My outlook on the world is so much more positive since having Snoopy in my life. I feel like I can go anywhere. That to me is just priceless.”

—René Carrasco
with his guide dog,
Snoopy



LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT

At Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB), we believe that everyone deserves to move through the world safely and confidently—to live the life they want to live. Our Guide Dog, Orientation and Mobility, and K9 Buddy Programs meet clients where they are to serve their ever-changing needs throughout their lives.

Guide Dog Program

When René Carrasco returned to school full-time, he wanted a guide dog to help him navigate a crowded, sprawling college campus. *Snoopy*, a yellow Lab, has been his perfect partner.



“It’s been magical. We’ve fallen in love,” says René. The two developed a trusting bond that René says filled him with confidence while he earned his business degree. “There’s so much freedom that comes from having a guide dog. It’s made the hard parts of blindness not so hard. I really don’t know how to express how life-changing this experience has been.”

Orientation and Mobility Program

GDB guide dog client Amit Ahuja recently completed GDB’s Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Immersion Program to brush up on his navigational skills. “My experience was just fabulous,” says Amit, a GDB board member and an associate professor of political science at UC Santa Barbara. “Not only did it help me learn to navigate my environment more safely using a white cane it also made me an even more confident guide dog handler.”

K9 Buddy Program

13-year-old Ella is another client who has benefited from her K9 Buddy, *Lafferty*. The K9 Buddy Program matches select dogs, who were not suited to become guide dogs, to be pets and buddies to people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired. “For kids with visual impairments, the struggle is real for social contact,” says Ella’s mother, Christy McKerney. “*Lafferty* has totally opened new social connections for Ella. She’s come out of her shell more and has grown in confidence.”



“To say that GDB is meeting my needs would be an understatement. GDB has transformed my life!”

—Amit Ahuja with his guide dog, Tashi



ELLA MOORE, FAR RIGHT, WITH LAFFERTY AND SISTER AMANDA MOORE AND PARENTS CHRISTY MCKERNEY AND TOM MOORE

UNRIVALED CARE AND SUPPORT

Guide dog partnerships are life-changing, and your generosity helps ensure Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) clients and their guide dogs or K9 Buddies have unrivaled care and support. In fact, GDB is a global leader offering the most comprehensive care and support programs for clients and their dogs.

“Our dogs change lives, and we want them to live long, happy, and productive lives with their human partners. Maintaining the health of every dog is critical to the overall success of our guide dog and K9 Buddy teams” says Dr. Kate Kuzminski, Guide Dogs for the Blind’s Medical Director.”

GDB’s Veterinary Financial Assistance (VFA) Program provides financial assistance as needed for GDB clients requiring veterinary attention for their guide dogs or K9 Buddy dogs. The program helps clients like Abdul Kamara. When he completed a tech job across the country and was flying home to Portland, Oregon, Abdul noticed his guide dog Faye was lethargic and had a swollen belly. After landing, he called GDB for help.



*ABDUL KAMARA WITH GUIDE DOG FAYE AND HER PUPPY RAISERS:
LEFT TO RIGHT — BACK ROW: GAIL MARTIN, JESSICA FIRKINS, AND
ARISS FIRKINS. FRONT ROW: ANNIE MARTIN AND CERELLE FIRKINS.*



“GDB’s donors have helped facilitate a very meaningful, dynamic, and empowering partnership that I’m profoundly grateful for. “I can’t imagine not having Faye in my life.”

—Abdul Kamara






GDB Veterinarian Dr. Erin Matern oversees the VFA program and coordinated *Faye’s* care with Abdul’s local veterinarian. An ultrasound revealed a large tumor. *Faye* underwent surgery to remove the tumor, which thankfully was benign.

After surgery, *Faye* recovered at our veterinary clinic on our Oregon campus, where she received expert medical care and TLC. Once *Faye* no longer needed medical supervision, she stayed with a GDB foster family while Abdul finished moving his belongings back to Portland. “I found solace in the fact that I did not have to worry financially about *Faye’s* medical bills, which were more than \$12,000,” says Abdul. “It also gave me peace to

know that *Faye* was so well taken care of and with people who could make sure she was happy.”

This kind of unparalleled support is just one reason Dr. Matern loves what she does. “Clients often tell me they wouldn’t be able to have a guide dog if this program didn’t exist,” says Dr. Matern. “I’m so grateful that GDB offers this amazing assistance, and that I can positively impact so many lives.” Throughout the process, Abdul says he appreciated that GDB sought solutions that were best for the guide dog team. “There was *Faye’s* life to consider and my life with *Faye* to consider,” remarks Abdul.

HELP FUND OUR LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAMS

-  **\$50** helps provide a leash and grooming supplies
-  **\$100** helps cover a client’s transportation costs to class
-  **\$250** assists with the cost of a “Puppy Raising Kit” for a volunteer raiser
-  **\$500** helps pay for veterinary care covered by GDB’s VFA Program
-  **\$1,000** helps support the cost of training a guide dog team



ELLIE BURGESS AND HER
GUIDE DOG, BETTYROSE

BETTY WHITE'S LEGACY LIVES ON IN GUIDE DOG *BETTYROSE*

BettyRose, a GDB puppy named in tribute to the iconic actress Betty White, and the character she played on the sitcom “Golden Girls,” Rose Nyland, is all grown up and living her best life as a guide dog.

The Labrador/Golden Retriever cross is partnered with Ellie Burgess, an active retiree who lives in Tucson, Arizona. The team goes everywhere together attending various club meetings where Ellie volunteers or her church where she sings in the choir and plays the

autoharp. “She’s a good match for me because she likes to get out and do things like I do,” says Ellie, adding: “She loves guiding me to get to a destination, but she also likes to play when she’s not working.”

Asked about her guide dog’s namesake, Ellie says she feels privileged to be partnered with a dog named after Betty White. “I used to watch the Golden Girls and Rose was one of my favorite characters on the show. I just feel really honored to have her as my guide dog.”

“GDB is the best school I’ve ever been to, and I really have to say thank you to the donors, puppy raisers, and instructors for all that you do to make it possible for me to have BettyRose.”

—Ellie Burgess



Betty White was a longtime friend and supporter of Guide Dogs for the Blind before her passing at the age of 99 in 2021. “We loved and admired Betty’s passion for animals, her incredible sense of humor and sass, and her generosity of spirit,” says Christine Benninger, GDB President and CEO. “We wanted to name a puppy in her honor, and now that puppy is changing and enhancing lives just like Betty White.”

Like all GDB puppies, *BettyRose* was born in our state-of-the-art Puppy Center on our California campus where she was cared for and nurtured by members of our Canine Welfare/Neonatal team.

To set puppies up for success, they are gently handled their first days of life to get used to human touch. Later, they are socialized and exposed to new

sights, sounds, and situations through positive play and handling in our Young Heroes Academy. “Providing new experiences in a supportive environment gives these pups confidence and a significant leg up on meeting life’s daily challenges as they continue to develop, setting them up for success in their careers,” says Christine.

At eight to ten weeks, puppies go to live with volunteer puppy raisers who teach them house manners and provide them with further socialization experiences. *BettyRose* was co-raised by puppy raisers Nora Salet and her daughter Jamie Swain, and Sue Bohannon. *BettyRose* often accompanied Nora to the office or Jamie and Sue to school where they were teachers. “Her name really fits her,” says Nora, who is also a puppy leader. “She’s very sweet and cuddly and can be very spunky and entertaining in other moments. She was a great joy to raise — always confident and ready to go on her next adventure.”

To read more and watch a video of *BettyRose*’s journey, visit: [guidedogs.com/blog/bettyrose](https://www.guidedogs.com/blog/bettyrose)



NORA SALET AND BETTYROSE

THANK YOU TO OUR NEW & CONTINUED SUPPORTERS

October 1-December 31, 2023

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CGA rates are the highest they have been in over a decade!

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70	6.3%	70/75	5.8%
75	7.0%	75/80	6.5%
80	8.1%	80/85	7.3%
85	9.1%	85/90	8.7%
90+	10.1%	90/95	9.9%



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