

GUIDE DOG NEWS

2024
ISSUE 2



*ROSA CALDERON AND HER
GUIDE DOG, GEMSTONE*



**Guide Dogs
for the Blind**



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Lawrence Reed, p9 (top right)



To learn more about our mission and how you can get involved, visit our website at [guidedogs.com](https://www.guidedogs.com); call us at 800.295.4050, or scan the QR code (left).

Make a tax-deductible donation today by mailing a gift in the enclosed envelope or donating online.

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On occasion, GDB will share donor information with like-minded non-profit organizations to better fulfill our mission. If you do not want your information shared, please email us at donations@guidedogs.com.



Full Member



Please recycle this newsletter!

GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

Greetings,

This is one of my favorite times of year because it represents new beginnings and growth. You play a critical role in helping Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) continue to evolve and expand our industry-leading programs. In doing so, you are contributing to enhanced safety, confidence, and inclusion for our clients.

Most recently, we made big changes to our Puppy Raising Program to help increase the success rate of our dogs as guides, breeders, or K9 Buddies. We will be sharing this knowledge and our educational materials with other guide dog schools, so that our entire industry can benefit. You can read about this innovative science-based program on pages 4-5.

In March, we celebrated an exciting milestone: our 1,000th graduating class in California since our founding in 1942. Our free graduation ceremonies are held every two weeks on our California and Oregon campuses and can be enjoyed in person or via livestream on GDB's YouTube channel. Read more about the special celebration of CA Class 1,000 on pages 6-7.

Also in this issue, you'll learn how you can easily create fundraisers for GDB via our PAWSitive Impact peer-to-peer platform. Kudos to GDB grads Cheslie Bowden and Jennifer Cosman for being amongst the first in our community to create fundraisers in honor of their guide dogs. Read their amazing stories on pages 8-9.

Thank you for the profound difference you make. Your support and partnership play an essential role in making our life-changing mission possible. Together, we are unstoppable!

With gratitude,



Christine Benninger
President and CEO



PUPPY RAISING PROGRAM

Puppy Raising FUNdamentals

One of GDB's top strategic initiatives is to serve more clients without breeding more dogs.

To help meet this goal, GDB's Puppy Raising Team has been hard at work determining what key factors increase a dog's rate of success.

Kristin Lucas, canine and community operations officer, says GDB has rolled out a reimagined Puppy Raising program supported by scientific evidence that recognizes dogs as sentient beings, capable of feeling emotional states such as pleasure, happiness, fear, and anxiety. "We have a responsibility to continue to meet the physical and psychological needs of our dogs and to further enhance their quality of life. We believe this approach will not only increase the success of our programs, but it is the right thing to do."

Volunteer puppy raisers in nine western U.S. states care for pups from 8 weeks of age until

they are about 15 to 18 months old when they return to GDB's campuses for approximately three months of formal training. The reimagined program asks puppy raisers to place greater focus on exposing puppies to sights, sounds, and experiences that build their confidence and resilience rather than training puppies to learn specific behaviors. Lynna Feng, canine research manager, says the new curriculum for the puppy raising program is based on research and feedback from GDB staff puppy raising field managers and puppy raising volunteers, including raisers, puppy raising club leaders, and club volunteers. "It's been a journey of discovering the core components in puppy raising to best set our dogs up for success."

"We have a responsibility to continue to meet the physical and psychological needs of our dogs and to further enhance their quality of life."

—Kristin Lucas, Canine and Community Operations Officer



A TRIO OF GDB PUPPY RAISERS WITH THEIR GUIDE DOG PUPPIES

Puppy Raising Program Manager Alexandra Gregory says the FUNdamentals curriculum helps puppies explore the world through a series of fun activities and play sessions. "It's about building a puppy's confidence and resilience rather than training that puppy to sit and stay in a specific position. If dogs come back confident and resilient, they will be well



A GROUP OF GDB PUPPY RAISERS ENJOYING A SOCIALIZATION OUTING TO A CITY PARK

prepared to work with guide dog mobility instructors and other staff experts to become wonderful guides, K9 Buddies, or breeders.”

Innovation, Flexibility, and Inclusion

Puppy Raising Director Sarah Blevins says the transformative program really looks at both sides of the leash to ensure both people and puppies thrive. “It’s more inclusive for puppy raisers because the curriculum is easier to understand and implement.” And she says GDB has rolled out a new hybrid puppy raising model in Northern California and Portland, Ore., to attract and retain a broader spectrum of volunteers. While the traditional puppy raising model involves monthly in-person club activities within a close-knit community of puppy raisers, the innovative approach offers flexibility through online trainings, webinars, and in-person workshops from GDB’s expert puppy raising team. “We have created an additional program that is flexible, fun,

inclusive, and gives people from all walks of life and geographical areas the opportunity to participate as puppy raisers, co-raisers, sitters, and more,” says Sarah. “It truly does take a dedicated group of people to raise our puppies.”

This year, 800 puppies are expected to go through the program, which can require help from thousands of volunteers. GDB’s new Puppy Raising Guidebook with an overview of the program, along with the FUNdamentals curriculum, is available at guidedogs.com/puppy-raising-guidebook. As a member of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), GDB collaborates and shares its research and knowledge with other guide dog schools throughout the world. “We will be looking at ways to support other schools and smaller organizations with our curriculum,” says Sarah. “We can’t wait to see the confident, resilient, and happy puppies, dogs, and volunteers this new program can help create.”



MEMBERS OF GDB GUIDE DOG CLASS 1,000 (L TO R): ROSA CALDERON AND GEMSTONE, SHEILA MORALES AND ENGLAND, JUDY GOODRICH AND GROOT, KASEY HOPPER AND CHANCE

CELEBRATING GUIDE DOG CLASS 1,000!

“Life-changing.” That’s how many graduates describe GDB’s programs.

This spring, we celebrated the 1,000th guide dog class to graduate in California since our founding in 1942. The milestone featured heartfelt speeches and a proclamation from the mayor of San Rafael. The event concluded with a special puppy delivery where several 8-week-old puppies met their volunteer puppy raisers for the first time.

Graduations celebrate the accomplishments of GDB clients and honors volunteers, donors, and staff for their dedication and support. During this special graduation, tears of appreciation flowed


from GDB client Rosa Calderon when she took to the stage with her black Lab, *Gemstone*.


“This is so incredible. I’ve gained so much independence back, she said. “I thank everybody who interacted with *Gemstone* and was there to bring up this amazing dog. From the day that I picked up the harness and told her forward, it’s been incredible. I seriously can’t wait for all the adventures we’re going to go on.”


The other clients in the guide dog class, Kasey Hopper with *Chance*, Judy Goodrich with *Groot*, and Sheila Morales with *England*, also expressed appreciation for GDB’s volunteers and donors.

SUPPORT OUR LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAMS


Use the enclosed donation envelope or give online at guidedogs.com/newsgift

 **\$50** helps provide a leash and grooming supplies

 **\$100** helps cover a client's meals and materials

 **\$250** assists with the cost of a "Puppy Raising Kit" for a volunteer raiser

 **\$500** helps pay for an ergonomic guide dog harness

 **\$1,000** helps support the cost of training a guide dog team



"This is such a life changing experience, it's really hard to put it into words," said Sheila. "These dogs change our lives and *England* has changed mine already."

In addition to the clients in the guide dog class, Tyler Chriswell and his family were also on hand to celebrate Tyler being paired with his K9 Buddy, *Yosemite*. "Yosemite is really contributing to Tyler feeling more confident — he's a great companion," said Tyler's mom, Victoria Chriswell.

Graduations take place every two weeks on both our California and Oregon campuses. They are free and open to the public. They can also be watched via livestream on GDB's YouTube channel. For more information, visit guidedogs.com/graduations.



GDB DONORS GAYLE AND TODD TRAVERS, AND NANCY TRAVERS LUCAS

FUNDRAISE FOR

PAWSitive



Impact

Members of our community are tapping into the power of their networks to raise money for GDB's life-changing programs using our peer-to-peer platform, *Fundraise for PAWSitive Impact*.

Larry Meisner, chief philanthropic officer, says clients, donors, and volunteers are now able to create personalized fundraising pages that can be easily shared with friends and family by email, social media, and texts.

"It's a fun way for people to share their passion about why they support GDB."

GDB client Chelsie Bowden also hosted a fundraiser called the *Stockton Memorial Fundraiser* in honor of her second guide dog, *Stockton*, a black Lab, who passed away. "He made a huge difference in my life not only as a companion but helping guide me in everyday life and on adventures. Together, we helped mentor many guide dog puppies in training and helped to raise awareness for Guide Dogs for the Blind."

"You haven't just given Chelsie guide dogs; you've gifted her wings to soar with confidence, independence, and security."

—Charmel Bowden, mother of Chelsie Bowden, pictured here with her former guide dog, *Stockton*



Chelsie told friends and family that their support will help GDB provide exceptional training, support, and education to amazing human and canine teams – all free of charge. “Your kindness and support can truly change lives.” Chelsie was recently paired with *Harry*, another black Lab.

GDB client Jennifer Cosman launched a holiday fundraiser to give back to GDB after receiving her first guide dog *Vermont*. She posted a photo of herself and *Vermont* and was eager to share why supporting GDB is so important to her. “*Vermont* is sweet, wiggly, and full of personality but in harness is very serious about doing his job. He is my partner in everything I do. He is always by my side helping me at work or doing daily activities.”

On her fundraising page, Jennifer also expressed appreciation for GDB’s community of staff and volunteers. “The GDB staff, *Vermont’s* puppy raiser, and trainers worked so hard to make my life so much brighter. I am so blessed and grateful for the opportunity to be part of the GDB family. This is my way of thanking GDB for what they did for me. It changed my life.”

GDB’s Board of Directors also held a fundraiser in April in honor of *International Guide Dog Day*. Each member created their own fundraising page, sharing their personal story with their networks. Board Chair Diana McQuarrie chronicled her involvement with GDB noting that she has raised seven guide dog puppies and served on the Board for six years. “It has been an incredible life journey. I can’t begin to tell you what it’s like to witness a puppy I lovingly raised all grown up, trained, and working in harness guiding someone who is blind. I’m living my dream.”



JENNIFER COSMAN AND HER GUIDE DOG, VERMONT



DIANA MCQUARRIE AND HER GUIDE DOG PUPPY, FORESTER

To learn how you can turn your celebrations, athletic events, and more into fundraising opportunities that benefit GDB, visit fundraise.guidedogs.com.

GROWING UP GDB



BACK ROW LEFT TO RIGHT: MEGAN MINKIEWICZ, HER SISTER ROCHELLE BOCHNER, AND THEIR MOTHER DIANE SHAPIRO (FRONT) WITH HER GUIDE DOG, HENRIETTA

Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) has been a big part of Megan Minkiewicz's life. She grew up with GDB career-changed dogs and retired guides as pets. Her older sisters were puppy raising volunteers, and her mother became a guide dog client at age 80.

Megan and her husband Alex are raising their 18th guide dog puppy, a yellow Lab named *Lancer*. They have been donors for 20+ years and have named GDB in their estate plans. "The primary reason we support the organization is because GDB cares for the health and wellbeing of the dogs we raised for their entire lives," notes Megan. And she says GDB's unrivaled care and support for its

clients is another key reason. "We choose to give to organizations that we believe in and that we know have strong reputations in their communities. We see the impact and the results of GDB's work every day. I see it with my mom – their willingness to support clients and fast response is world class."

Megan has introduced generations of nieces and nephews to the organization as well. "I'm most proud of all the people we have brought into the GDB fold because of our involvement with the organization. Friends who came to the holiday event want to become puppy raisers! I've come to realize that it's not just about the dogs, it's about the people. The people are what make GDB great."

THANK YOU TO OUR NEW & CONTINUED SUPPORTERS

January 1 - March 31, 2024

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"I'd like to thank GDB's donors for the enhanced independence, freedom, and friendship I have experienced with my guide dog, Wrigley. They are part of my journey because their money has made a difference in my life and in Wrigley's life."

—Margeaux Gray

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