



Spring 2011 volume 26 number 2

Making The Grade

GDA's Application Process



A GDA student receives instruction in how to put the harness on her new guide dog.

Students arriving at Guide Dogs of America for their 28 days of class have already made the grade. Each of them has successfully completed the extensive application and evaluation process that determines his or her readiness and ability to become a part of a working guide dog team and lays the foundation for the team's success.

Guide Dogs of America receives approximately 75 applications a year from visually impaired individuals from all over the country. The minimum age limit for its students is 18, but there is no upper age limit, as long as the person is active.

Every application is reviewed by Manager of Admissions and Graduate Services Andi Krusoe, who personally contacts the potential students to answer questions they have about the school and to discuss the next steps in the application process.

"We want to be sure they are ready for a guide dog. There is a lot of preparation," explained Krusoe. "We counsel people about what's going to be necessary for them to complete the program. If an applicant cannot cross the street alone with the use of a white cane, he or she is not ready for a guide dog."

Krusoe and the GDA trainers, who also evaluate all potential students, require that prospective students demonstrate "orientation and mobility" or "O&M." Orientation refers to an individual's ability to show that they know where they are, for example, by counting steps. Mobility refers to the ability to use a tool, such as a cane, to identify obstacles and navigate around them.

"We will refer them to outside resources where they can learn these skills and encourage them to be out there and prepare for getting a dog," said Krusoe. "We are committed to these people and will continue to check back on their progress."

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Vet's Corner



As pet owners we do our best to ensure the health and safety of our beloved companions, but emergency situations can arise. Our Vet Department has identified

several of the most common emergency situations, symptoms and steps to take should your dog be in distress.

Heatstroke – Symptoms of heatstroke include rapid or labored breathing, vomiting, high body temperature and collapse. Place the animal in a tub of cool water; gently soak the animal with a garden hose; or wrap it in a cool, wet towel. Do not overcool the animal. Stop cooling when rectal temperature reaches 103 degrees Fahrenheit.

Poisoning – Sudden vomiting, convulsions, excessive salivation or diarrhea may be symptoms of poisoning. If you suspect your dog has ingested a poisonous substance, record what it was and how much. Immediately call your veterinarian

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Mission Statement

Guide Dogs of America is dedicated to its mission to provide guide dogs and instruction in their use, free of charge, to blind and visually impaired men and women from the United States and Canada so that they may continue to pursue their goals with increased mobility and independence.

or poison control center. Do not induce vomiting. In the case of toxins or chemicals on the skin from oils, paints, insecticides and other contact irritants, request directions regarding if and how to wash the toxin off. Bring the container or the toxic substance or plant to the vet so they can properly treat the pet.

Seizures – Salivation, loss of control of urine or stool, violent muscle twitching, or loss of consciousness all are symptoms of seizure. If your dog is having a seizure, move him away from any objects that could be harmful during the seizure and use a blanket for padding and protection. Do not try to restrain your dog during the seizure. A seizure will usually last only 2 to 3 minutes. Afterward, keep the animal calm and quiet and call your veterinarian.

Diarrhea – If your dog has diarrhea, but otherwise seems normal, withhold all food and treats for 24 hours, but not water. Slowly reintroduce food with a bland diet. If the diarrhea persists, or if your dog has other symptoms besides diarrhea, including vomiting or tremors, call your veterinarian.

Vomiting – If vomiting continues more than 24 hours or any time your dog vomits and acts depressed and unresponsive, veterinary attention is needed. The digestive tract needs complete rest. Allow no food or water until your dog has gone at least six hours without vomiting. Begin with very small amounts of water at frequent intervals then slowly increase the amount of water and foods given over a 24-hour period. When handling a weak or injured dog, use care and caution. Even normally docile pets will bite when in pain. If your dog can't walk use a board, blanket or floor mat as a stretcher to transport. As with any time you have concerns about your dog's health or well-being consult your veterinarian.

In addition to being able to demonstrate O&M skills, candidates must have been declared legally blind by their doctor or ophthalmologist, have any health issues, such as diabetes, under control and be active enough to warrant a guide dog.

"They need to cover at least a mile a day, but that can be in short segments," said Krusoe. "Not only does the guide dog need to get out, but the more the team works together, the more proficient they become. Graduation at the culmination of class is just the beginning of their partnership. It usually takes six months to a year for the person and the dog to work fluidly as a team."

The application also requires personal references for each student, which Krusoe calls directly, in order to move to the next step – evaluation.

Applications are reviewed by a selection committee that includes Krusoe, Director of Programs Chuck Jordan, and several of the trainers. Once they have discussed each file, the training department will schedule either an in-person visit with the applicant or, if they are too far away, they will ask them to submit a video.

"During the evaluation we learn a lot about a person to best determine which guide dog is the best match," Jordan explained. "Does the person live in the city or a rural setting? How active are they? How fast or slow do they walk? Are there kids or animals in the house? Will the dog be going to work or school every day? What is the most frequent method of transportation? We consider all of this and more in pairing the student and the dog. It's what I refer to as 'the magic of the match.'"

On average it takes from two to six months from the time a person applies to the day they come to the school to begin their training. It could take up to a year depending on the needs of the student and whether the dogs currently in the program match those needs.

"Our number one focus is the dog match. Sometimes a student will have to wait," said Krusoe. "It's frustrating for them, I know, but it's very important they get the right dog. When you consider this will be a long-term relationship of 10 years or so, waiting a couple of months isn't really that long."

There are a number of people who contribute to the matching of every guide dog team, including the volunteer puppy raisers, the puppy department, the nursery, the training department, and beyond that, everyone who works at the school and the donors that help to support the program.

"We do everything we can to make this a positive step in the lives of our students, but what it distills down to is trust," said Krusoe, who is in her 20th year with GDA. "Our students have to trust the people at GDA to treat them right and do right by them. They come and stay in our facility for a month and we teach them to use a guide dog and be safe in the world. The blind person has to trust his or her skills and ability out in the world, and they have to trust the dog to take them safely around things. The dog has to trust the person that he or she will be fair, kind and take care of them."

When asked about her job and why she loves what she does, Krusoe said: "I love guide dog users. They have faced their challenges, have taken a positive step, and are moving forward with a new sense of independence. I feel so much gratitude that I am able to be a part of that." 🐾



Students learn to walk with their guide dogs.

Donor Spotlight

Rita Marchi



For more than 60 years, Rita Marchi has been knitting sweaters and other cozy items for her husband, family members, friends and herself, but it's only been the past six years that she also has been knitting sweaters for friends of the four-legged kind.

Rita's idea for her designer dog sweaters came

when the owner of the dog bakery she frequented commented that she liked the sweater Rita was wearing, which she had knitted for herself. The owner suggested that she make dog sweaters and said that she would sell them in her store. Rita had become aware of Guide Dogs of America several years before when she read about the school in a magazine. A long-time owner and lover of Labrador Retrievers, Rita started to make donations to the school. She knew that she would donate 100 percent of what she made from the sweaters to GDA. It was a perfect fit.

Over the years, Rita has knitted and sold more than 50 sweaters, which start at \$25 depending on the size of the dog and the detail of the design.



Rita Marchi's creations — cable knit sweater (left) and sweater with dog bone buttons.

Rita's husband, who passed away four years ago, shared her love of Labs and was very supportive of his wife's commitment to the school. Her husband was impressed by her ability to bring together the talent she began developing at the age of four and her love of dogs to make a difference in the life of blind individuals by supporting GDA.

"My husband and I have owned several Labrador Retrievers. I know what it takes to train them, and it's a lot of love and patience," said Rita. "Labs are the kind of dogs that want to do something; they want to help. Both the blind person and the dog benefit from the incredible work of Guide Dogs of America. The dog gives its partner love and devotion, which he gets right back from the blind person to whom the dog has given a life of greater independence."

Rita has turned a lifelong hobby into a warm and loving gift, both for the lucky dog that wears one of her creations and for Guide Dogs of America.

Rita's love for Labs and her commitment to GDA inspired her to become a Partner

In Trust. As a result, Rita's contributions to the school will continue through planned giving to extend beyond her lifetime.

Partners in Trust



Make your gift to Guide Dogs of America last a lifetime and beyond. GDA established Partners in Trust Society as a way to recognize and honor the generosity of those who have included the school in their planned giving. Providing life income gifts and bequests lets your gift continue working beyond your lifetime to help others

achieve their goals with increased mobility and independence through a partnership with a loyal and loving guide dog. Charitable organizations are not subject to gift or estate taxes so your gift continues to support the causes close to your heart, like Guide Dogs of America, without being diminished by the IRS.

You will receive our special "Partners In Trust" crystal jar as our way of thanking you. We hope that you will display it proudly, knowing the difference you are making in the lives of others through supporting Guide Dogs of America. Please call Rhonda Bissell at (818) 833-6432 for more information.

GDA Las Vegas Charity Weekend



Join us Nov. 17-19, 2011 for the 31st Annual Guide Dogs of America Charity Weekend

Spend an "Evening in Paris" at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas at the 31st Annual Guide Dogs of America William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet, and your days playing golf

or riding on a motorcycle. The banquet will be held on Saturday, Nov. 19, at the Paris Hotel. The 31st Annual Charity Golf Tournament will be played on Nov. 18 at Revere Golf Course. Early registration is encouraged, as the tournament sells out quickly every year. The three-day weekend revs up with the 11th Annual Hawgs for Dogs motorcycle ride on Thursday, Nov. 17. Contact Dale Hartford, president of Guide Dogs of America, at (818) 833-6424 or dehartford@guidedogsofamerica.org.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Partner's Dinner

5th Annual Partners' Awards Dinner Raises More than \$100,000



More than 350 guests attended the Partner's Dinner.

It was all hands on deck to raise money for Guide Dogs of America at the 5th Annual Partners' Awards Dinner, which was held on the Queen Mary of Long Beach on Saturday, February 26. Guests, honorees and volunteers all contributed to making the evening a great success. More than \$100,000 was raised for GDA. The evening included dinner and dancing as well as a live auction and raffles. There also was a "Fund a Need" auction, from which the proceeds will fund specific needs as requested by each of the departments at GDA. One of the evening's highlights was when GDA Graduate Tom Olzak, accompanied by his guide dog, Wrigley, took the stage and shared what having a guide dog has meant to him.

GDA's 2011 Partners' Dinner honorees were Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Gettleman and Mrs. Louise Henderson. The Gettleman's were honored for their continuing generous support of Guide Dogs of America. Sadly,

Mr. Gettleman passed away shortly before the event. Puppy Department Manager Louise Henderson also was honored for the countless volunteer hours she has dedicated to Guide Dogs of America for 23 years.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the following sponsors, without whom the evening would not have been such a wonderful success: *Partners Sponsor:* Mr. & Mrs. Tennenbaum; *Play Date Sponsors:* Jacklyn Gettleman, Maxine Singer; *Dog Tricks Sponsors:* Animal Specialty Group, Clearman's Northwoods Inn of Covina, Scott Wealth Management Group, Wells Fargo Foundation; *Kibble Sponsor:* Mr. & Mrs. Reizes; *Dog Bowl Sponsors:* Mr John Granger, Mrs. Eleanor Hughes, Mrs. Sheila Scott-Kendall, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Park; *Dog Paw Sponsors:* Mr. Walter Walker, Webster Supply. There is a long list of companies, foundations, families and individuals that we would like to thank for their generosity and for giving so generously of their time, money and services. For additional pictures, please visit www.guidedogsofamerica.org and click on "Fundraiser Photos."



Gift of Sight Honoree Louise Henderson with sons (from left) Bobby, Stephen and Sean.



Gift of Sight honoree Jacklyn Gettleman.



Save The Date – Open House

June's in Bloom at GDA

Join us for our annual Open House on Saturday, June 11. It's a great way to spend the day with fun and festivities for everyone. One of the most popular events is the obstacle course for our puppies-in-training. The puppies are put through their paces – maneuvering past food, animals, and other distractions and simulated vet and travel situations. Later in the day, our trainers give a guide dog demonstration. The Silent Auction is another highlight, as is the raffle for "A Day with the Trainer." Admission to the Open House is free, and there is food available to purchase. Gates open at 11 a.m. and close at 4 p.m. Events begin at 11 a.m. and end at around 3 p.m. We do ask that you leave your personal pets at home.

Quilt Raffle

A Perfect Patchwork of Pups



This year's quilt, "My Best Friend," was made and donated by the Santa Clarita Quilters Guild. Each one-of-a-kind panel features a different breed or group of playful pups stitched on a colorful background of white dog bones and red hearts. The border is a paw print fabric. The quilt measures a generous 99" by 110" and will fit a king- or queen-sized bed.

Purchase tickets using the order form on this page and mail it to GDA postmarked by Dec. 2, 2011. Tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10. The drawing will be held at the GDA December puppy raiser meeting on Dec. 10, 2011. Winner does not need to be present.

"A Day With The Trainers" - The Experience of a Lifetime

This extremely popular annual raffle prize takes you behind the scenes of GDA, where you will observe the trainers working with our incredible dogs and teaching them to become partners with our visually impaired students. Two lucky people will spend "A Day with the Trainers," accompanying them as they transport and work our guide dogs-to-be on training routes; observing daily training exercises; and, after being blindfolded by a trainer, taking harness in hand and being led on a short route with a dog and the trainer to experience how it feels to be led by a guide. Winners must be at least 18 years of age and able to walk 4 to 5 miles in one day.

Use the order form included in the newsletter or purchase tickets at GDA on or before June 11, 2011 (Open House). Tickets are \$5 each or five tickets for \$20. Winner will be notified on June 18, 2011. Training day date to be announced after the drawing.

8th Annual Ride for Guides



It's time for the 8th Annual Motorcycle "Ride for Guides" (Sunday, May 22, 2011). Riders registering before May 1 will receive a discount and a bonus — a raffle ticket for the "2011 Harley-Davidson Tri Glide Ultra Classic" shown in this issue. All motorcycles are welcome. This poker run starts and finishes at GDA and includes welcoming puppies at each stop, lunch, raffles and a full day of fun. If you wish to join us for lunch only, the cost is \$15 per person.

For registration forms or sponsorship opportunities, please call Lorri Bernson at (818) 833-6431. Registration forms are available at our web site: www.guidedogsofamerica.org by clicking on the "Events Calendar."

2011 GDA "Trike" Raffle



This year, the GDA bike raffle will be a "trike" raffle — a 2011 Harley Davidson Tri Glide Ultra Classic. Donate \$5 on a raffle ticket and you could be the lucky person riding away on a customized 2011 Harley

Davidson Tri Glide Ultra Classic, courtesy of Legends Vintage Motorcycles. Increase your chances with a \$20 donation — you'll get five raffle tickets. At that price it's like getting one free! For more information and photos, please visit the photo gallery at www.guidedogsofamerica.org.

Complete and return the order form on this page to purchase tickets. Tickets can also be purchased at GDA or from our secure website (www.guidedogsofamerica.org) through Nov. 13, 2011. The winning ticket will be drawn on Nov. 19, 2011, at the Guide Dogs of America Annual Banquet in Las Vegas. Winner need not be present to claim prize.

SPRING 2011 Order Form

Questions? Call (818) 833-6429. *All Shipping & Handling is Free*

Mail this entire form with your payment. To ensure your eligibility, please note the deadline dates for raffle ticket purchases.

Raffle Tickets — \$2 per ticket or \$10 for 6

To be eligible, entry must be postmarked by Dec. 2, 2011.

Quilt Raffle \$

Raffle Tickets — \$5 per ticket or \$20 for 5

To be eligible, entry must be postmarked by June 11, 2011.

A Day With The Trainers \$

Raffle Tickets — \$5 per ticket or \$20 for 5

To be eligible, entry must be postmarked by Nov. 13, 2011.

Custom Harley-Davidson Tri Glide Ultra Classic \$

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

Credit Card (check one) VISA MasterCard Discover

Expiration Date: ____/____/____

Card Number: _____

Signature: (required for credit card purchase) _____

Check (make your check payable to **Guide Dogs of America**)

Mail to: Guide Dogs of America ATTN: Spring Merchandise Order Form
13445 Glenoaks Blvd., Sylmar, CA 91342 **Or use the enclosed envelope.**

Congratulations Graduates

Class #368



Graduates (left to right): (Puppy Raiser in parenthesis) Ginny Fischer & Amos (*Kay Fulton*), Ralph Martinez & Cadence (*Steve & Cindy Jaquay/Madison Hildebrand*), Betty Van Diepen & Cosmo (*The Behringer Family*), Liz Daniels & Watson (*Lewis & Elizabeth Hall*), Teresa Blevins & Cambria (*Lloyd & Virginia Price*), Oscar Ruiz & Carbon (*The Peterson Family*), Leena Bandy & Charity (*Ruth-Ann & Heidi Congrove*), Ellie Kemezis & Bronx (*Matthew & Amy Toussaint*), Ray Chisum & Ajax (*Ken & Denise Nowack*), Mona Harris & Polo (*The Chavez Family*)

Instructors standing from (left to right): Sean Chiles, Patty Elizondo, Bryan Young



**GUIDE DOGS
OF AMERICA**

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New Employees

Please join us in welcoming two new employees:

Julie Langhans, DVM – Veterinarian

Manuel Tucker, IT/Digital Communications

A Goodbye Wag Of The Tail



James Robinson, GDA's wonderful head of maintenance, retired in April. He had been at GDA for 17 years. The school held a reception for James on April 7, during which he was presented with a memory book and thanked for his many years of dedicated service to the school. Please join us in wishing James a long and healthy retirement.

In Memory

Guide Dogs of America recently lost one of its dearest friends and former GDA President John Pettitt. Under John's leadership GDA grew and many improvements were made to the school and the program. We will miss John and send our condolences to his family and friends.

It is with sadness that we note the passing of the following guide dogs for their dedication to ensuring the safety and independence of their partners.

Primo – Class #332

Veeger – Class #327

Fantom – Class #326

Yoli – Class #321

Kojak – Class #330

Farlo – Class #321.5

Noole – Class #362



Partners newsletter

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