

## GDA Graduates Show Others The Way

From advocating to educating: three graduates who open doors and open minds



*Andrew Hager and Trotsky.*

Students arrive at Guide Dogs of America and spend 28 days in class learning to work and live with a guide dog. All of our graduates leave GDA as ambassadors of what can be achieved with the assistance and companionship of a guide dog, returning home empowered to pursue a life filled with “the possible.” Many — simply by their actions and example — have inspired others.

Three graduates who work and volunteer in positions that directly or indirectly

serve to empower others living with vision impairment are Andrew Hager, Beverly Hammett and Robert Sweetman. The work done by each of them extends beyond their clients, customers and the classroom and reaches into the communities in which they live and work to open doors and open minds.

### From the classroom to the principal’s office

When Andrew Hager returned to teach his sixth-grade world cultures class this fall with his guide dog, known in public as “Trotsky”, he had to expand the curriculum. As the first blind teacher at the school, Hager had to teach his class, as well as the school’s administration, about what to do when you meet a guide dog team.

“It was easy to teach the kids; they are used to having rules,” Hager said. “It took a little longer with the adults, but everyone has been great. The school and the administration have been very supportive and very respectful of Trotsky.”

Hager spent a few days during those first weeks back at the school giving his students the opportunity to ask him questions.

“I told the kids to ask me what they want to know about blindness, my guide dog and the training program at GDA,” said Hager. “I showed them a video about retinitis pigmentosa, and we talked about what they thought a person with a disability could do. The biggest thing I want these kids to take away this year is an understanding that disabled or not, you can be whatever you want.”

Hager gave his students the assignment to create a pamphlet about what to do when you meet a guide dog team. He also announced that one of the pamphlets would be selected to be included in a back-to-school packet at the start of the next school year.

“They did a great job,” Hager said. “It means a lot to me that the school has been so accepting and that Trotsky and I have this opportunity to go beyond the classroom to educate people. A lot of it is just awareness. Once you get past the initial strangeness of having a dog there, it becomes normal and a part of the culture.”



*Sue and Robert Sweetman with AJ.*

### He’s there with the ‘assist’

Robert Sweetman’s parents always told him, “Just try it.” Today, that’s what he is telling his customers who turn to him for help with assistive technologies.

Sweetman and his wife, Sue, own a company that sells assistive technology — computers and other devices — for people who are blind or have low vision. He also provides training, which is tailored to meet the needs of the user.

“Our main job is setting up the equipment properly and configuring it so it’s easy for them to use,” Sweetman said. “At first, people seem a little

overwhelmed by all the equipment. They are not going to be comfortable with it right away, but I encourage them to push limits on what they can do by using the technology that is available. It opens up so many opportunities and possibilities. That is what drew me to this business."

Every time he delivers a system, Sweetman will spend two to three hours showing someone how to use the software. Oftentimes, he will record their session so the person can go back to a specific issue.

"I spend a lot of time writing manuals," Sweetman said. "Sometimes, a person won't be able to access the format that the manual has been provided in, so I will adapt it for them. If you can't access the manual, you can't use the technology. These tools are here to make life easier and more accessible. I want to do whatever I can to make this easy for people to learn and to use."

Sweetman travels with AJ, his guide dog of six years. "He makes travel so much easier," said Sweetman. "He learns routes quickly and is great at navigating airports."

Together, the team delivers systems to his customers throughout Southern and Central California. But it's not just Sweetman's customers who benefit from his understanding of assistive technologies and his ability to clearly communicate how to use it.

"Recently, I received an email from a man who was attending a university in Ethiopia," said Sweetman. "He thanked me for teaching him to use a particular program. He had found a manual that I had written online and used it to learn the program."



Beverly Hammett and Mazie.

### No obstacles, just opportunities

Beverly Hammett's motto is "Go with the gusto!" And she goes with more gusto than most.

Hammett's 35 years of experience in social work gave her the tools and skills to be a successful advocate and have served her well as she endeavors to remove obstacles and create opportunities for others with disabilities. Since 2012, the tireless volunteer has logged 2,500 to 3,000 hours a year with her guide dog, Mazie, by her side.

"We are on the go every day. Some of it is business; some of it is pleasure," Hammett said. "Mazie and I do it all, and she helps me to do it with freedom and independence."

Hammett is extremely involved in public speaking and takes every opportunity to advocate for the blind and to educate and inform her local and regional communities. She has spoken to countless service clubs, churches, schools, hospitals and nursing homes and has won numerous community service awards for her work, including the Governor's Incentive for Giving Excellence (GIVE) for outstanding service.

"I went to GDA never dreaming all these doors would open for me," said Hammett. "I was surprised by how many people wanted to talk to me about having a guide dog. It has given me so many opportunities to make a difference. I have created a disability-awareness program to educate and inform people about service dogs. I speak to as many organizations as I can."

In addition to educating the public, she helps educate other blind people about the services that are available to them. Hammett provides them with one-on-one instruction, including working with students who need orientation and mobility training (O&M) and taking students and teaching them their bus routes.

"Together, Mazie and I let people with disabilities know there are no limits. We can move mountains," said Hammett.

## Save The Date GDA Las Vegas Charity Event

Nov. 19-21



Mark your calendars for the annual Las Vegas Charity Weekend Nov. 19-21. The weekend will kick off on Thursday, Nov. 19, with both the Hawgs for Dogs Ride and the sporting clay event. Friday morning, foursomes will tee off at Angel Park for the golf tournament. The weekend will conclude on Saturday evening with the 35th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet at Bally's Hotel & Casino. Details are posted on the GDA website.

### 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.

## In Case Of Emergency... DIY Dog First-Aid Kit

No one likes to think about what would happen if their dog were injured or in an accident but, as a responsible pet owner, it is important to your dog's health and well-being that you have a pet first-aid kit on hand.

We've created a checklist of items and information to include in a DIY (do-it-yourself) dog first-aid kit to make sure you are prepared in the event of a pet emergency. This information does not replace a phone call or visit to your veterinarian. If your dog has been injured or is in distress, having these basic first-aid items on hand can help to prevent further injury and/or allow you to begin treatment as directed by your veterinarian until you can be seen in their office.



Place the items in a clear, waterproof, latched container that can easily be stored at home and that you can grab and go when you are traveling with your dog.

### Pet Emergency Contact Sheet

- Veterinarian**
- Emergency vet**
- Animal poison control**
- Medical records and pet insurance**
- Pet name(s) and photo(s)**

- Towels & rags:** for washing, keeping the pet warm/cool and transporting to the vet
- Tweezers:** to remove splinters or other foreign materials from wounds

### Medications & Ointments

- Alcohol prep pads:** to sterilize items such as scissors or tweezers
- Antibacterial cleanser:** to clean your hands and any tools you are using
- Antibiotic ointment (non-prescription):** for minor skin wounds; always use with discretion and ensure that the pet cannot lick the ointment
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl®):** for allergic reactions, bug bites; check with a vet before administering
- Hydrogen peroxide (3 percent):** to induce vomiting; always contact your vet or animal poison control first
- Lubricant:** a petroleum- or water-based lubricant for thermometer
- Rectal thermometer:** to see if your dog is running a fever; normal body temperature for a dog is approximately 99.5-102.5°F
- Sterile saline eye solution:** to flush out foreign objects in your pet's eye or to help clean around the eye area
- Styptic powder:** to stop bleeding in cases of torn nails

### Tools & Materials

- Adhesive tape:** to secure sterile gauze
- Blanket:** to wrap around an injured pet
- Disposable gloves (non-latex):** to help protect you and keep the wound sanitary
- Eyedropper:** to dispense liquid medication or clean superficial wounds
- Gauze (sterile, rolls and/or pads):** to help apply ointments and clean up any blood
- Instant cold pack:** to prevent or reduce swelling or to treat burns
- Q-Tips:** to help clean wounds, administer ointments, clean ears, paws, etc.
- Scissors (blunt tip):** to cut gauze or to help cut long fur
- Soft muzzle, gauze roll or cloth strips:** to prevent your pet from biting you or chewing on an injury while in pain (don't use this if your pet is vomiting, choking, coughing or otherwise having difficulty breathing)

## Donor Spotlight

Donor Committed to Helping Visually Impaired Chooses GDA



When Mordechai (Mort) Arditti decided it was time to write his trust, he reflected on who should be the beneficiary of his estate and how it would be allocated.

"I wanted my trust to help those with vision loss. I knew of Guide Dogs of America, but I didn't know any details about the program,"

Arditti said. "I arranged a time to visit the school and learn about becoming a Partner In Trust.

I was extremely impressed by GDA's commitment to keeping administrative and overhead costs low. It was important to me to know that my donation will have a direct benefit and

will enhance the life of someone with a visual impairment; with GDA as a beneficiary, I know that it will."

Since becoming a Partner in Trust more than 10 years ago, Arditti has supported the school in other ways, as well.

"I've attended the Open House and the Annual Charity Banquet in Las Vegas, I've even done my holiday shopping at GDA," Arditti said. "The work being done by GDA for the blind is great. I am happy to support the school in a significant way by naming them in my trust, but I know the smaller ways that I contribute throughout the year also make a difference."

# Varying Degrees Of Blindness

Vision loss does not always mean total darkness

While many GDA graduates have no vision at all, many others have severe visual impairment. An individual may have some light perception, and some have a very small visual field. It is the degree to which an individual has this residual vision that determines if he or she is considered legally blind and, therefore, eligible to receive a guide dog.

Legal blindness occurs when a person has a visual field (the area of which a person can see) of less than 20% in his or her better eye with correction and/or vision less than 20/200 in his or her better eye. With 20/200 vision a person can see at 20 feet what a person with 20/20 vision sees at 200 feet.

At the beginning of GDA's newest video featured on our website, *Tails of Independence*, several graduates share what they can and cannot see.

**"I lost my vision at the age of three from cancer of the retina. Both of my eyes are artificial so there's no sensations, there's no connection between my brain and my eyes."** — Teresa Eaton

**"Everything is cloudy in front of me. The only time I can really see something is when I'm walking toward it or getting close up to it."** — Arroyo Fields

**"At 16 years of age, I was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa. By the time I was 21, it was sort of like looking through a narrow paper towel roll. In my mid 30s, my eyesight got down to the point where I was looking through a straw."** — Greg Steinmetz

**"I can see colors and shadows out of my left eye. Out of my right eye, I can see a little bit more but it's like looking through an out of focus camera. My depth perception is not that great, so I may not be able to tell if there are steps or a hill."** — Mark Hanohano

While there are many causes of blindness and visual impairment, there are four diseases that can sometimes be characterized by a distinct pattern in the visual field. The four eye conditions and associated visual patterns shown at right are among the most common in our graduates.



*Macular degeneration*



*Retinitis pigmentosa*



*Diabetic retinopathy*



*Glaucoma*

## A GDA Wag Of The Tail



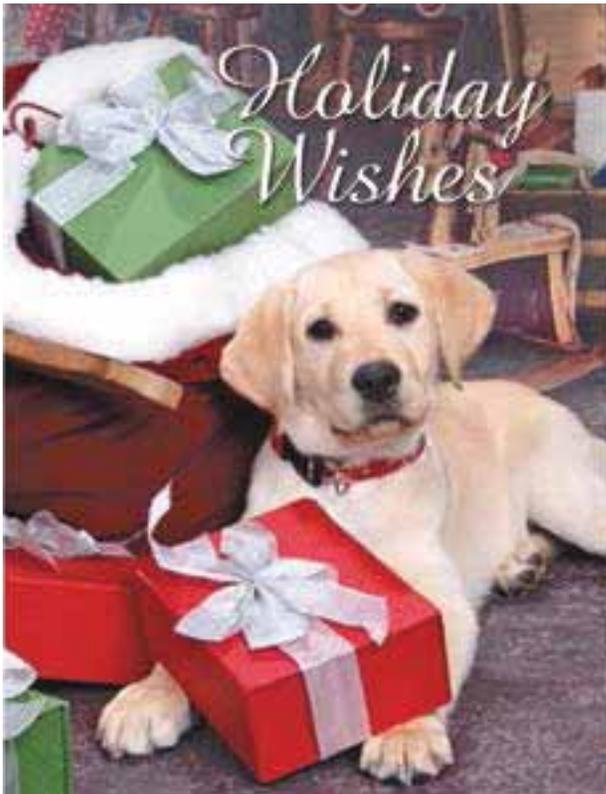
*Dr. DaSilva Curiel performs an eye exam on a puppy-in-training*

GDA sends our sincere thanks to Dr. Jeannette DaSilva Curiel and her staff at Animal Eye Care Clinics in Camarillo, Calif. For more than 20 years, Dr. DaSilva Curiel has donated eye certifications for GDA's dogs that are in formal guide dog training. She donates this crucial service four times each year. We deeply appreciate her support. Thank you Dr. DaSilva Curiel and staff!

## New Employee



Dan Rollings has joined GDA in the newly created position of Director of Training. Rollings has more than 21 years of guide dog training experience and was involved with dog training for the United States Air Force for three years. "Dan is a respected member of the guide dog training community and brings an incredible depth of experience to the position," said Yvonne Martin, Director of Programs. "We look forward to the leadership and ideas that he will contribute to GDA's training program."



## 5th-Annual Holiday Card

Thank you to each and every one of you who took the time (and the photos) to enter the fifth-annual Holiday Card Contest. We loved them all and it was a very difficult task to select just one!

The winning photo was taken by GDA puppy raiser Denise Brown of puppy-in-training "Cassie." Outside message: "Holiday Wishes." Inside message: "May all the joys of the season be yours."

Holiday cards measure 5" x 7" and are bundled 15 cards (with envelopes) to a pack. Price: \$18 per pack, INCLUDES SHIPPING AND HANDLING. Please use the order form on this page to place your order. Questions? Call (818) 833-6429

## 2015 Raffles

To purchase raffle tickets, use the order form on this page or call GDA at (818) 833-6429.

### Bike Raffle



This year, the GDA motorcycle raffle is for a 2015 Harley-Davidson Road King customized by Legends Vintage Motorcycles. The winning ticket will be drawn on

Nov. 21, 2015 at Guide Dogs of America's Annual Banquet in Las Vegas. (Winner need not be present to win.) Visit the GDA website ([guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org)) for additional details and photos. Tickets are \$5 each or five tickets for \$20. Order tickets by mail using the form on this page. Orders must be received by Nov. 13, 2015.

### Quilt Raffle



This year's quilt, "Dogs Are The Spice Of Our Lives" was crafted and donated by the Santa Clarita Quilters Guild. The quilt measures 120" x 120".

Purchase tickets using the order form on this page and mail it to GDA postmarked by Dec. 3, 2015. Tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10. Drawing to be held on Dec. 12 at the GDA December puppy raiser holiday party. Winner does not need to be present.

## SUMMER 2015 Order Form

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

Mail this entire form with your payment.

**Holiday Cards — \$18 per pack** (includes shipping & handling)

2015 Holiday Cards \_\_\_\_\_ \$

### Raffle Tickets

2015 Quilt Raffle — \$2 per ticket or \$10 for 6 \_\_\_\_\_ \$

2015 GDA Bike Raffle — \$5 per ticket or \$20 for 5 \_\_\_\_\_ \$

**TOTAL ENCLOSED \$**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
(required)

**Credit Card** (check one)  Visa  MasterCard  Discover  AMEX

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
required for credit card purchase 3-4 digit code

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ CVC: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

## In Memory

With sadness, we note the passing of GDA family member:

**Kevin Flaherty** — Class 383

It is with sadness that we also note the passing of the following guide dogs and breeders:

**Dillon** — Breeder

**Dustin** — Class 358

**Jetta** — Breeder

**Rawhide** — Class 341

**Venture** — Class 333

**Weeko** — Breeder

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## Giving A Shout Out To GDA's Online Silent Auction

We would like to thank all those involved in making GDA's Online Silent Auction a huge success, including our hard-working and dedicated volunteers who put it all together, supporters who generously donated auction items and the hundreds of bidders. Their generosity and hard work helped us exceed our goal of raising \$50,000.

The online auction ran June 4-14 and featured 342 items, including travel and sports packages, entertainment and gift cards, items for pets, merchandise, jewelry and electronics. More than 1,700 bids were made by participants from 36 states who registered for the Online Silent Auction.

## Partners in Trust



Make your gift to Guide Dogs of America last a lifetime and beyond. The Partners in Trust Society was established by GDA 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 a way of thanking you that you can display 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.

## Congratulations Graduates

Class #388



### Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Left to right: Fred Marin and Bronson (*Sean and Tamara Goulden*); Kathryn Johnson and Otto (*Brian and Tina Lockwood*); Sherri Gabrielson and Van (*The Stevens Family*); Bobbi Peelman and Thompson (*Gail Leonard*); Ron Cook and Cayenne (*The Hines Family*); Veronica Hernandez and Dave (*Glyn and Marilyn Judson*); Dani Bohbot and Tabor (*Brett Suydam and Jill Wardrop*); Lauren Adams and PJ (*Jerry and Sydney Cain*); David Walden and Paiute (*Mary Deets*)

**Instructors:** David Ponce, Jamie Viezbicke, Sean Chiles