

Graduates Share Stories of Making The Change From Cane to Canine

It's time to get a guide dog when...

For many of GDA's graduates, there was an "aha moment" when they knew it was time to take the next step toward greater mobility and independence — making the switch from a white cane to a guide dog. Here, we share stories of three of our graduates about when they knew the time had come and the difference that having a guide dog has made for them in their lives.

In addition to these graduate stories, we have included quotes from several of our graduates in response to the question, "Was there a specific incident or moment that made you realize that you needed to transition from a cane to a guide dog?"



At the end of the tour given by Karen Lemmon and her guide dog Sal, a tuckered toddler snuggles with the guide dog.

Is it a stick or a snake?

Karen Lemmon went outside after a windstorm to pick up the branches scattered on their ranch property. She used the tip of her white cane to help her find the fallen limbs, which she then tossed into a wheelbarrow. When she picked up one of the "sticks" it moved. She had just picked up (and threw) a "great big bull snake." Lemmon, whose vision loss has been progressive, decided that day that it was time to "make the switch from white cane to wise dog."

Lemmon, who has been working with her second guide dog, Sal, since 2012, keeps busy on the ranch and off. In the summer months, the team may be found giving tours at the state park.

"When I'm giving a tour and I get to walking and talking too much, it's Sal who reminds me to stop before I lead the group across the road that cuts through the park," said Lemmon. "He takes my job as his job. It's not just me giving the tour; Sal is the tour guide too. Everyone loves him."

Graduates Share Stories continued on page 2 »

Puppy Corner

You Can Teach An Old Dog New Tricks

Clearing up some myth-information about our furry friends



Some myths and misconceptions about dogs have been around so long that many are considered fact. So what is fact and what is fiction? Here we address some of the most common myths and set the record straight:

You can't teach an old dog new tricks. An older dog can learn new tricks, skills and commands within his physical capabilities. What's more, they usually want to learn. As long as a dog is bright, alert, responsive and healthy, there is no reason that he cannot keep learning new things throughout his life.

Puppy Corner continued on page 3 »

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.

Lemmon, who also does work with the National Federation of the Blind, appreciates the freedom, assurance and faster pace that she has from having a guide dog.

"I can move a lot faster and I am more secure. I'm not very good with the cane; it's a slow process for me," said Lemmon. "I'm able to walk straight and move out of the way of obstacles. I have traveled alone by plane many times. With a cane, I am very tentative and people tend to not approach you as often. When someone sees you with a dog they are much more likely to ask if they can be of any assistance."

When using a cane, a blind person needs to stay constantly focused so they don't miss what the cane is telling them.

"If I am not concentrating fully — if I don't 'listen' to the cane — it's quite likely that I will bump into something or someone. Plus, Sal sees those things that my cane might not come in contact with," said Lemmon. "I can rely on him to make decisions and lead me around things that I may not have detected with a cane; the cane doesn't have a brain. I trust Sal to make the decisions because that is what he was trained to do."



Alberta Hall and Loman — her 10th guide dog

Watch your step...

It was the mid-'60s, and Alberta Hall was living in Brooklyn. She was in her early 20s and, looking to become more independent, started cane mobility lessons. Practicing with an instructor at the subway station, the still-new cane-user almost fell onto the subway tracks.

"When I asked the instructor how this could be prevented his answer was, 'Well, if it happens once, I guarantee you won't do it again,'" said Hall. "I had seen what a guide dog did for friends, but hadn't considered one for myself until that moment."

It was still a few years before she applied to GDA but, in 1969, Hall graduated with her first guide dog.

"Having a guide dog changed everything for me," said Hall. "The dog gave me the freedom to go where I wanted, when I wanted. I didn't have to think about it. With my guide dog, I felt safer when I was out by myself, especially on the New York City subway. When using the cane, I had to feel for the edge. If you missed it, then down you'd go. With my guide dog, it was no longer a concern."

Hall, who traded the city streets for country roads long ago, graduated with her current guide dog, Loman, in 2010.

"He'll walk me around ditches and pot holes and take me around things that are in my way, things that I may have missed with my cane," said Hall. "He stays right on the edge of the road. When he knows a car is coming, he will move me over to the side."

Hall has developed balance problems, and her guide dog also provides the support and counterbalance she needs.

"If I didn't have a guide dog, I would be petrified to travel," said Hall. "I'm not a good cane traveler. I have had guide dogs for more than 40 years and would never be without one. I could never go back to using a cane."



Greg Hoover and Kuma take a walk on a snow-free day.

Freedom!

Greg Hoover has one word to describe how having a guide dog changed his life. "Freedom!"

"Having a guide dog gives me freedom! The cane touches everything, including people," said Hoover. "The dog passes by or goes around. I have not only freedom on the street, but peace of mind."

Hoover has been blind for 37 years. The first few years, he relied on a cane for mobility but he was not comfortable working with it and

decided a guide dog would give him greater mobility. He received his first guide dog in 1980 and, in 2009, Hoover graduated from GDA with his current dog, Kuma.

"I would hear comments from people about the cane and I would worry about what the cane was touching," said Hoover. "After I got a guide dog I would hear, 'What a beautiful dog.' It took the emphasis off of me. I no longer feel insecure about being blind."

For Hoover, having a guide dog has made a great difference.

"I am able to move quickly and I don't worry about bumping into things," said Hoover. "The dog also makes a big difference in crossing the street safely — he keeps me in the crosswalk and going straight."

Hoover works at a racquet club within walking distance from his home and it's his guide dog that gets him there.

"We live in the Midwest and we can get a lot of snow and ice in the winter," said Hoover. "With a cane, you can't go through heavy snow, you can't feel anything. With my guide dog, it's no problem at all." 🐾

*Read quotes from other graduates on page 3.

Letting my dog out in the yard is enough exercise.

Dogs need mental stimulation, as well as physical activity. If you just leave your dog out in the yard alone, they might not get much of either so it's important to take them for walks, play fetch or simply run around together. Not only will it make for a happier, healthier dog but it will help to strengthen your relationship.

A warm and dry nose means a dog is sick.
A dog's nose is often dry and/or warm if he has just woken up — and this is perfectly normal. However, a nose that is persistently dry and crusted might be a sign of a health problem. If you have a concern, contact your vet.

Dogs see in black and white.

Dogs can see color, but not the way most humans do. It is believed that dogs see primarily in blue, greenish-yellow, yellow and various shades of gray.

Calculate a dog's age by multiplying human years times seven.

Dogs do age at a faster rate than humans early in life, but it seems to get slower with age. A 1-year-old dog is basically like a human teenager, but an 8-year-old dog is like a middle-aged human.

A wagging tail is a sign of a happy dog.
Tail wagging is just one of the many ways dogs communicate. A wagging tail may be an indication of happiness, but it can sometimes signal fear or anxiety. Learning to read what your dog is telling you will go a long way in helping build your relationship.

A dog's mouth is cleaner than a human's mouth.

While it's true most of the germs in a dog's mouth are dog-specific and harmless, that does not include where your dog's mouth might have been.

Dogs eat grass when they are sick.

Many veterinarians consider grass eating a normal dog behavior. While dogs don't gain anything of real nutritional value from grass, it also may not hurt them — as long as there are no dangerous fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides used on the grass itself.

Graduate Question

Before an applicant can be accepted as a GDA "student," he/she must already be an experienced, independent traveler, which most often means they've had a full Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training course, including using a cane. For our graduates, a guide dog is a step toward greater mobility and independence. We asked our students to respond to the question, "Was there a specific incident or moment that made you realize that you needed to transition from a cane to a guide dog?" Some of their responses appear here.

Before I lost my vision, I was a fast walker. I liked to get to my destinations quickly. With a cane I was always running into or bumping into obstacles. I found that when I transitioned to a guide dog, those issues were no longer a problem.

— Bill Mlynarski

I find that using a cane makes me tired and frustrated within a block. With my guide dog, I can walk like I am on a cloud.

— David Dowland

Twenty years ago I broke my left hip and it was repaired with pins. I fell due to my diminishing sight. I was able to rehab and learn to walk again with a support cane. As my sight loss worsened, it was time to transition to a guide dog. I work with a large dog to keep my balance on the weaker side. It is awesome to be able to be independent and travel easily.

— Kristi Harrison

I had been walking up to three miles each way with my guide dog. When I retired him, I thought I'd see what life was like without a guide. I found that I was just staying home or using the bus to avoid walking with the cane. Within the first month, my exercise and independence had declined so drastically that I couldn't sign up fast enough for my next dog. I'm so much happier now with my second dog. I encounter more people because I am out in the community much more.

— Pam Crabtree

When my first guide dog, a beautiful Golden Retriever, passed away, I swore I would never go through a heartbreak like that again. About a year later, I noticed my frustrations with using a white cane. My cane would get mixed up in table legs, corners, people's legs, etc. It also didn't respond with love and devotion like my guide dog did. I longed for that feeling again. Along came my second guide dog. It's the best decision I could have made. My cane did not warn me about danger or curl around my legs like my four-legged best friend. I love her so much.

— Turalee Smith

The final decision was made when a gentleman, about 15 years older than I was at the time, blew by me on the sidewalk with his guide dog while I continued to tap-tap-tap along with a cane. It made me look like I was waiting for a bus.

— Michael Moore

I have a dear friend who got her first guide dog, and I observed how gracefully she moved through traffic. I knew then that I wanted a guide dog.

— Bob Acosta

GDA Las Vegas Charity Weekend



More than 1,000 attendees gathered at the 34th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet, which capped off Guide Dogs of America's largest fundraising event of the year: the three-day Las Vegas Charity weekend. Leading up to the dinner were three additional annual fundraising events.

The weekend kicked off on Thursday, Nov. 20 with the 14th-annual Hawgs for Dogs motorcycle ride, which attracted a record number of participants — 70 bikes and 100 people. Also on Thursday, more than 60 participants took aim at the 3rd-annual Sporting Clay event, which was hosted by IAM&AW Local Lodge 845. On Friday morning, 280 golfers teed off at Revere Golf Club for the 34th-annual Golf Tournament.

"This fundraising weekend wouldn't be possible without the generosity of all of our sponsors, attendees and volunteers," said GDA President Dale Hartford. "We are so grateful for their continued commitment to making this our most successful fundraising event of the year, every year."

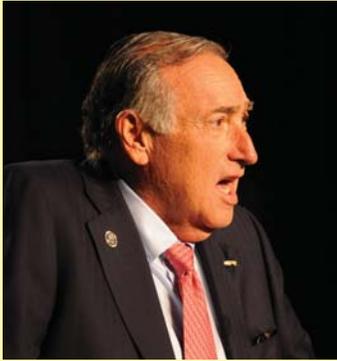


Throughout the weekend, graduates, puppy raisers and puppies-in-training greeted all those who gathered and thanked them for their participation.

The fundraising weekend culminated at Bally's Hotel and Casino with the 34th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet. At the banquet, three outstanding members of our GDA family were recognized for their support of Guide Dogs of America and were presented with the prestigious "Gift of Sight" Award.



Gift of Sight Honorees



Myron "Mike" Shevell

Myron "Mike" Shevell began in the trucking business as a teenager, making pickups and deliveries in and around Perth Amboy, N.J., for his family's trucking company.

In 1953, Shevell entered the executive ranks of the industry as Vice President of Apex Express, a family-owned business. He then served as President of Royal Motor Lines from 1958 until 1963, when the company merged with Eastern Freight Ways, where he served as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. Shevell, along with his brother, Daniel, increased the company's gross revenues from \$6 million to \$50 million in eight years.

For the past 25 years, Shevell has played an integral role in growing New England Motor Freight (NEMF) from a troubled regional trucking company with revenues of less than \$1 million, to the largest privately held, Northeast-based, less-than-load (LTL) trucking carrier with revenues in the hundreds of millions. Today, he serves as company chairman. NEMF

has 40 terminals throughout the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and Midwest, with a network that spans 15 States, Puerto Rico and Canada.

Shevell is Chairman of New Jersey Motor Truck Association and is on the Board of Directors of New Jersey Transit; Board Member Trump Palace Organization; Member of the National Defense Executive Reserve, U.S. Department of Transportation; Member of The Traffic Club of North Jersey and Raritan Traffic Club; and Member of the Defense Orientation Conference Association (DOCA).

Shevell adds GDA Gift of Sight honoree to the many honors he has received, including Ernst & Young Master Entrepreneur of the Year; Salzberg Medallion for Excellence in Transportation, Syracuse University; Hall of Fame, Perth Amboy High School; Ellis Island Medal of Honor; New Jersey State Troopers Coalition Businessman of the Year; Cops Foundation, Inc. Businessman of the Year; Jack Winchester Award; Honoree, The Elizabeth Coalition To House The Homeless.



Russell Gittlen

Russell Gittlen has been an active member of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM&AW) from the early days of his career as a mechanic.

He started out as a trailer mechanic for United Parcel Service in Massachusetts in 1987. Coming from a deeply rooted union family, Gittlen quickly got involved in the union, first as a Shop Steward and then as Chief Steward. Gittlen knew the importance of the work the IAM&AW was doing to retain jobs and support workers and moved into the Business Representative/Organizer role in 2000.

Three years later, he was promoted to Area Director, a position he holds today. He also serves as Vice President of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO Board of Directors; Chairman for the District 15 New England Health Fund; Trustee on the IAM/UPS annuity fund and as a delegate to the Massachusetts State Council.

As rewarding as all those posts are, Gittlen has found a true passion serving as an organizer of the annual Charles W. Foley Golf Tournament benefitting Guide Dogs of America. The tournament celebrated its 10th anniversary with record participation and donations. The tournament brings together unions and companies to raise funds and awareness for GDA. In addition to the golf tournament, Gittlen helps organize and participates in the District 15 Hawgs for Dawgs ride in New England.



Robert A. Scardelletti

A life-long railroader, Robert Scardelletti began working on the New York Central Railroad, in Cleveland, OH in 1967; in 1971, he was elected to the position of Local Chairman in Lodge 725.

Through the years, Scardelletti rose through the ranks of the union, holding numerous elected union positions. In 1987, he was elected International Vice President and, in 1991, was elected International President. Since then, he has been re-elected by acclamation at each subsequent TCU convention.

National President Scardelletti also serves as Vice President of the AFL-CIO and Chairman of the Cooperating Railway Labor Organizations (CRLO), which oversees the railroad national health and welfare plan covering more than 400,000 participants. In addition to being named one of this year's Gift of Sight honorees, Scardelletti has received honors and awards from organizations, including the Boy Scouts of America and the Humanitarian Award presented on May 28, 2009 by the Order Sons of Italy in America.

Congratulations Graduates

Class #385



Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Left to right: Cesar Palma and Trader (*Butch and Karen Reyburn*); Angela Rees and Emmy (*Bill and Jean Howard*); David Dowland and Ralphie (*Cindy Valancius*); Rena Bonesio and Willa (*Robb Family*); Lois Manning and Preston (*Charlene Smith and Carol Civita*); Pam Crabtree and Hasley (*Erhardt Family*); Chris Diller and Nike (*Trauger Family*); Andrew Hager and Sammy (*Thomas Family*); Adam Ohnstad and Hawk (*Green Family*); Jason Custer and Ethier (*Semeleng Family*)

Instructors: Left to right: Christopher Medina, Sean Chiles, David Ponce

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.

GDA Graduates by the Numbers

In every newsletter, we include a photo of the most recent graduating class. Before they graduate as working guide dog teams, our students and their new guide dogs live in the GDA dorm to train together for 28 days. During that time, our licensed guide dog instructors work with the students and guide dogs on the campus and out in public to ensure their safety when they return home.

With the help of the Training and Student Services departments, we looked at just "how much" and "how many" fit into those 28 days of class.

10 Students per class

50-55 Teams GDA graduates each year

40 Lectures during the 28 days of class

3-5 Miles walked per day (average)

5 Graduates who live in Canada

3 Trainers per class

4-5 Graduations per year

3 Days before a student gets his/her dog after they arrive to start class

34 States with working GDA teams

520 Number of meals served during the 28 days of class

2015 Graduations

Graduations are held on Sundays and take place at Guide Dogs of America. Graduations begin promptly at 10 a.m.

Jan. 25; April 19; July 12; Oct. 18

2015 Raffles

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

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, 2015 at the GDA December puppy raiser holiday party. Winner does not need to be present.

GDA Bike Raffle

This year, the GDA motorcycle raffle is for a custom 2015 Harley-Davidson Road King customized by Legends Vintage Motorcycles. The winning ticket will be drawn on Nov. 21 at the Guide Dogs of America Annual Banquet in Las Vegas. (Winner need not be present to win.) Visit the GDA website (guidedogsofamerica.org) for additional details and photos. Tickets are \$5 each or five tickets for \$20.

2014 Bike Raffle Winners!

One bike, two winners

Congratulations to James Conigliaro, Sr., Directing Business Representative for IAM&AW District Lodge 15, and Gus Lurima of Brooklyn, NY. The pair held the winning ticket in last year's raffle for a 2014 Harley-Davidson Ultra-Limited-FLHTK.

Special thanks to Legends Vintage Motorcycles who customized the bike, Henderson Harley Davidson, Klock Werks Custom Cycles, Freedom Performance Exhaust and Wizard's Products.

In Memory

With sadness, we note the passing of the following GDA family members:

Evelyn Pearlman – Class 333
Sheila Huggins – Class 338

We also note with sadness the passing of the following guide dogs:

Jake — Class 345 Walker — Class 343
Nacho — Class 340 Yazzie — Class 351.5
Proxy — Class 342

New Employee

Melcy Gutierrez – full-time kennel tech

Winter Merchandise

You'll find lots of great GDA logo items at Shop GDA. Go to guidedogsofamerica.org, click **How to Help**, then click on **Shop GDA!** All prices include shipping and handling. Merchandise is also available for purchase by phone (818-833-6429) or at GDA.



Three Dog T-Shirt

Design features individual silhouette of three breeds and cleverly worded message that corresponds to each, "Trust Our Lab Results To Shepherd Your Way and Retrieve Your Mobility." 100% cotton. Charcoal gray T-shirt with orange graphics and lettering. GDA logo is on the sleeve. Unisex sizes: S - L, XL, 2XL, 3XL. Price: \$23 (includes shipping).



2015 GDA Lapel Pin

This year's pin features a photo of an adorable puppy-in-training in the immediately recognizable bright yellow GDA jacket. The pin reads "Guide Dogs of America" across the top and the year, 2015, runs across the center of the pin. Made in the U.S.A., the gold metal pin is 3/4" round. Price: \$8 (includes shipping and handling).

WINTER 2015 Order Form

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

Mail this entire form with your payment.

Merchandise

2015 GDA Lapel Pin — \$8 per pin \$

Three Dog T-Shirt — Size S-3XL \$23

SM MED LRG XL 2XL 3XL \$

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 _____

Credit Card (check one) Visa MasterCard Discover AMEX

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: ____/____/____

Signature: _____ CVC: _____

required for credit card purchase

3-4 digit code

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

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

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Donor Spotlight – Mark & Sharon Winters

A Lunchtime Friendship Turns into a
Lifetime of Support



Mark Winters had a question for the blind woman with the guide dog who ran the cafeteria and served as cashier at the county building where

he worked. It wasn't about how she totaled the menu items and made change. Winters wanted to know how it was that her clothes were always so well matched. The question turned into a conversation. Winters went home and told his wife, Sharon, that she needed to meet this woman. It was the beginning of a friendship that, for this trio, continues more than 20 years later.

The Winters learned more about Guide Dogs of America when they attended one of our graduations.

"We learned about how the school receives no federal funding and relies solely on donations to provide guide dogs at no cost to their graduates," said Mr. Winters. "My wife Sharon and I thought what a great program. With many other organizations there is so much overhead and salaries paid out. GDA is run so efficiently. We see a fantastic return."

When the Winters set up their living trust and will, they told the attorney that they wanted to give something back to society.

"We decided to name Guide Dogs of America in our trust," said Mr. Winters. "I cannot think of a finer organization."

For information about becoming a Partner in Trust, please contact Rhonda Bissell at (818) 833-6432.

5th-Annual Holiday Card Contest

This Year's Holiday Memories; Next Year's GDA
Holiday Card



Did you snap a perfect picture of your pooch this holiday season? We are taking submissions for our 5th-annual Holiday Card Contest and can't wait to see holiday-themed photos of your precious GDA pups. Be sure to follow the submission guidelines and deadlines below:

Submission Guidelines

- All photos **MUST BE TAKEN IN HIGH RESOLUTION (300+ dpi)** and submitted (via email as an attachment) by Feb. 28, 2015 to partners@guidedogsofamerica.org
- Winner will be notified on June 12, 2015 and photo will be posted on our website
- Please make sure that the email includes your full name, dog's name and your phone number
- All photo entries become the property of GDA
- Credit for the winning photo will be given