



Winter 2017 volume 32 number 1

## Development, Change And Growth

What To Expect From GDA In 2017 And Beyond



The new year has begun, and there are exciting changes at GDA to report. There's the arrival of GDA's new president Russell Gittlen (see President's Message on this page), as well as news about graduations and changes in many departments, several of which are included here.

### Graduation News

Beginning in 2017, there will be six graduations per year. Adding two classes allows us to graduate 20 more guide dog teams every year. Further, graduations will now be held on Saturdays.

### Nursery Department

The Puppy Enrichment Program was introduced last year to

provide enhanced and structured puppy development. The program is implemented by our dedicated staff and trained volunteers who oversee the exercises and monitor and document each puppy's progress to ensure he or she is ready for each new level.

From birth to four weeks the puppies are in the nursery, where they are handled and cradled and provided age-appropriate stimulation. At four weeks, the puppies are gradually introduced to experiences to build their confidence. These experiences include traveling around the GDA campus in a "Puppy Mobile" — seeing and hearing all types of new things — and venturing out into the new outdoor puppy development yard, which was designed to stimulate the development of their minds and bodies. The equipment in the yard includes a swinging bridge, tunnels, climbing stairs, many different tactile surfaces and lots of moving and noise-making toys.

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## Message From New GDA President Russell Gittlen



It is with great enthusiasm, anticipation and excitement that I begin my tenure at Guide Dogs of America. I am looking forward to immersing myself in the program and dedicating myself to the continued success and growth of our school.

For the last 16 years, I have worked diligently to support GDA through fundraising activities. I want to bring the desire and passion for GDA that was instilled upon me to anyone looking to get involved.

With no government funding, the school relies solely on donations and

[President Russell Gittlen](#) continued on page 2 »

## 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.

### Puppy Department

At about seven weeks, the puppies' care transfers to the Puppy Department for the new Head Start Program, an extension of the Puppy Enrichment Program. The experiences here are more advanced. In this new development area, the puppies are challenged with bigger steps, a larger swinging bridge and a teeter-totter, as well as shopping carts, skateboards and motorized cars.

These new programs, which we will continue to enhance, have given our puppies a "paw up" when they leave GDA to go home with their volunteer puppy raisers. We already are seeing impressive results, with dogs returning for formal training better equipped for the demands of learning the skills and behaviors required of a guide dog.

### Admissions & Graduate Services Department

To ensure qualified individuals who apply to GDA have as short a wait time as possible before being placed in a class, applicants will soon find a more streamlined application process. Also in development is a program that will expand outreach to blind individuals to make them aware of GDA's program.

### Training Department

The training program for our guide dog teams will now be three weeks and focus on weekly development goals:

**Week 1:** Basic handling and fundamentals

**Week 2:** Building a relationship and understanding each other's communication

**Week 3:** Preparing for the transition to home

### Vet Department

A recent addition to the GDA staff is Ainjil Bills, DVM, who serves as Director of Animal Health and the school's full-time veterinarian, a responsibility previously shared by part-time veterinarians. Bills provides a continuity of care in assessing and treating our dogs that are in for formal training, as well as our puppies-in-training and our working guides. Plans for new equipment in the Vet Department will make it possible for more advanced procedures to be performed at GDA, which will keep the dogs under our care and be more cost-effective for the school.

### Kennel Department

Whether it's a puppy-in-training staying for a day or a week to gain the experience, or a dog that is in for formal training, all canines that stay in the GDA kennels are treated to creature comforts. All of the individual kennels have been outfitted with new raised beds. A misting system also has been installed as another way to keep our precious pups cool during the warm summer months.

We are very excited about the changes to GDA's program and look forward to serving even more members of the blind and visually impaired community this year and for many years to come. 🐾

### President Russell Gittlen continued from page 1

fundraising to provide guide dogs free of charge to visually impaired individuals in the United States and Canada.

It is our goal that GDA will now be holding six classes each year rather than four. Adding two classes will mean boosting our annual budget goal by nearly a half-million dollars. A challenge that, with your help, I am up for.

I have inherited a financially sound, well-run operation thanks to Dale Hartford and his experienced, dedicated staff. I look forward to introducing and implementing new ideas, setting new goals and identifying new opportunities to raise funds for our program. And, I look forward to working with all the staff, volunteers, donors and organizations that contribute their time and resources to GDA. I see such potential for our world-class guide dog school to continue to flourish.

I am honored to be GDA's president and will take every opportunity to express my appreciation directly to you, whether it's at GDA or when I am traveling on behalf of the school.

## GDA By The Numbers

**30** litters of pups born last year

**200** puppies-in-training with puppy raisers

**43,720** pounds of food fed last year

**4,460** loads of laundry washed last year

**2,080** miles a trainer walks each year

**4** pairs of shoes that each trainer goes through each year

**1,925** vaccinations last year

**175** spays/neuters last year

**44** full- and part-time employees

**120** on-campus volunteers and tour guides

## Vet's Corner

# Make a New Year's Resolution for Your Dog



It turns out that many dogs could benefit from the most popular New Year's resolution of all... losing the extra pounds. Your dog should be getting all the calories and nutrition she needs in her dog food — no matter what “the eyes” say. Feeling sorry for your dog and overfilling the food cup, even by a little every day, or giving her a treat (or two) can add up quickly to extra pounds that can be hard on your dog's health and your wallet.

**Health.** The fact is that an overweight dog is at a higher risk for serious health problems and could also face a shorter life expectancy. A few of the major health issues that obese dogs have to deal with include osteoarthritis, type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart and respiratory disease kidney disease and cancer. Even if the pounds of pudge do not trigger serious illness, your pup's ability to play, even to breathe, are diminished. Either way, her quality of life suffers.

**Cost.** In addition to the toll obesity is taking on your dog's health, there's another toll to pay — the cost of treating and managing obesity-related diseases. The cost associated with vet visits, medication and/or treatment can quickly add up well into the hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Many pet owners will not notice their dog has been gradually putting on extra weight until she starts slowing down significantly. To check your dog, feel around her midsection while she is standing. The ribs and spine should be easy to feel and, on most dogs, there should be a tucked in or slight hourglass shape to the waist. If you cannot easily feel your dog ribs or spine, and the tucked-in waist has thickened considerably enough to give the animal a more tubular shape, make it your resolution to:

- Consult your veterinarian. For the overweight dog, the vet will be able rule out any underlying medical issues that could be contributing to your dog's weight gain. Your vet can tell you the ideal weight for your dog's breed and height and devise a safe weight-loss or weight-maintenance plan for your dog.
- Cut back on snacks. If you'd like to give your dog a special reward, find healthier alternatives such as baby carrots or treats that are lower in calories. Like people food, many dog treats include the nutrition information.
- Exercise. If your dog is inactive, start slowly with exercise and build up. Walking, swimming and playing are all great ways to get your dog (and you) moving.
- Get the whole family involved. A good weight loss program starts with the support and cooperation of the entire family. In the end, your dog will be healthier, happier and live longer due to your dedication.

## Winter Merchandise

Shop GDA!

Go to [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://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 by calling (818) 833-6429 or at GDA.

## 2017 GDA Lapel Pin



This year's pin features the Guide Dogs of America logo. The words “Guide Dogs of America” appear above the logo and the year 2017 is below. The pin also features a vibrant green leaf wreath border. Made in the U.S.A., the gold metal pin is 3/4” round. Price: \$8 (includes shipping and handling).

## WINTER 2017 Order Form \*All Shipping & Handling is included\*

Questions? Call (818) 833-6429. Mail this entire form with your payment.

2017 GDA Lapel Pin — \$8 per pin \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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.**

# GDA Las Vegas Charity Weekend



GDA's Annual Las Vegas Charity Weekend is one of the most successful ways GDA raises money in support of its mission to provide guide dogs, at no cost, to those without sight.

More than 1,000 attendees gathered at the 36th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet, which capped off the three-day event. Leading up to the banquet was the 5th-annual Sporting Clay Event, which was hosted by IAM&AW Local Lodge 845, the 16th-annual Hawgs for Dogs motorcycle ride; and the 36th-annual Golf Tournament.

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



GDA is grateful to all of the sponsors, attendees and volunteers for their generosity of spirit that has made this event a huge success for nearly four decades.

The fundraising weekend culminated at Bally's Hotel and Casino Grand Ballroom with the 36th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet. Here, two 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



### **Robert H. Buker, Jr.**

Robert H. Buker, Jr. was named President and CEO of United States (U.S.) Sugar Corporation in May 2005. He has held numerous senior management positions at U.S. Sugar for 30 years and was outside council for five years prior to being employed as a member of management.

He serves on the Board of Directors for U.S. Sugar Corporation, United Sugars Cooperative and the Florida Sugar Cane League. Before joining U.S. Sugar, Buker was with the commercial law department of the Miami law firm of Mershon, Sawyer, Johnston, Dunwody & Cole.

From 1973 to 1979, Buker served as an officer in the U. S. Army, rising to the rank of captain. After his discharge, he attended law school at the University of Florida at Gainesville and graduated in 1981 with high honors.

A native of Bangor, Maine, Buker and his wife Barbara now live in rural Glades County. The couple has three children and six grandchildren.

# GDA Puppies-In-Training

On The Go And Out And About

You can always tell it's a GDA puppy-in-training by the bright yellow jacket our puppies wear whenever they are out in public. Once our pups are fully vaccinated (at about four months of age), their volunteer puppy raisers start exposing them to age-appropriate experiences, an important step in preparing them to become a guide dog. On this page are several photos of just some of the 200-plus puppies that GDA currently has in training throughout Central and Southern California, Washington, Montana and Colorado.



Gift of Sight Honorees continued from page 4



## Gary Allen

Gary Allen was initiated into IAM Local Lodge 794 in 1979 upon his employment at the General Electric Aircraft Engine Plant in Albuquerque, N.M., and rose quickly through the ranks.

In 1981, he was elected Area Steward. One year later, he was elected First Shift Steward and by 1983 he was elected Chief Steward. He also served as Local Lodge Auditor, Labor Relations Negotiating Committee member, Organizing Committee member, and as a delegate to what was then District Lodge 183.

Allen became President and Directing Business Representative of Local Lodge 794 in 1985, a position he held until 1989, when he was appointed Special Representative for the Western Territory.

He became a Grand Lodge Representative in 1991 and, in 1996 Allen was appointed as the Territorial Organizing Leader for the Western Territory. He was then moved to IAM Headquarters in 1997 as a Coordinator for Collective Bargaining and later that year was appointed Aerospace Coordinator where he coordinated collective bargaining with aerospace companies throughout North America.

In 2003, Allen was appointed to serve as the Western Territory's Administrative Assistant, where he served until 2009 when he was elected General Vice President of the Western Territory. Since 2012, Allen has represented the IAM as a trustee on the IAM National Pension Fund, the sixth-largest, multiemployer pension fund in the United States. Allen has served his community as an Executive Board member for the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), since 1991; becoming a Vice President of the Board in 2010. He also serves on the Board of Directors of Guide Dogs of America.

## Donor Spotlight: Partners Planning in Advance



Partners in Trust Kevin and Cindy Cassady knew Guide Dogs of America was a special place the first time they attended an Open House on the GDA campus. That first visit led to the couple attending numerous fundraising events for the school. Eventually, they went from fundraising participants to volunteering at the events. Ultimately, they decided that

giving their time was not enough. In 2004, the Cassadys started making donations to the school and, in 2009, they ensured that they would leave a future gift to continue their support of the school by becoming Partners in Trust.

“We were forming our living trust, and GDA was the first organization that we thought to include,” said Kevin Cassady. “What sticks out in my mind and initially

bowled me over was the Open House. Seeing all of the dogs — from the puppies-in-training, to the working guide dogs — learning about the program and seeing firsthand how a guide dog changes a person’s life. It opened up a whole new world for us.

“From the outset, we were impressed by the entire business model of the school and the dedication of the staff and the volunteers. The rate of return to the organization is very high. It’s a wonderful feeling knowing that our contribution makes possible the extraordinary gift of a guide dog — that was bred and trained at the school — to their blind partner.”

The Cassadys made it a priority to make a plan and have their affairs in order early in their adult lives.

“We encourage everyone — at any age — to make a trust and to think about and explore how you can make a difference,” said Cindy Cassady. “We feel good knowing that what we are building now will help to ensure that this incredible program will continue to provide guide dogs, free of charge, to their blind recipients beyond our lifetime.”

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

## Dedication Of GDA’s New Visitor And Education Center



Thank you to everyone who joined us on Saturday, December 10 for the dedication of Guide Dogs of America’s new Macki and Phil Singer Visitor and Education Center. The center will allow the school to enhance our visitors’ experience by being able to further educate and give a more in-depth look into our mission. This expansion of GDA’s 7.5-acre campus in Sylmar, California was initiated by a generous donation from Macki and Phil Singer, who have supported our mission since 1994.

We were honored to have IAM&AW International President Robert Martinez, Jr. address the audience. He expressed his pride and support of the growth that GDA continues to achieve. Also speaking at the event were outgoing GDA President Dale Hartford, Gary Allen, General VP, IAM&AW Western Territory and Macki Singer.

Several naming opportunities are still available for areas of the building. Learn more about how your donation can support this exciting new addition to the GDA campus by visiting our website at [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org) or contact Rhonda Bissell at 818-833-6432



### Naming opportunities include:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <del>GDA Store</del> — \$10,000 <b>NAMED</b>              | <del>Flag Pole</del> — \$25,000 <b>NAMED</b>            |
| <del>Audio/Visual Display 1</del> — \$10,000 <b>NAMED</b> | <del>Board Room</del> — \$50,000 <b>NAMED</b>           |
| Audio/Visual Display 2 — \$10,000                         | <del>Courtyard</del> — \$100,000 <b>NAMED</b>           |
| <del>GDA History Wall</del> — \$15,000 <b>NAMED</b>       | Apartment — \$100,000                                   |
| Break Room — \$25,000                                     | Lobby — \$150,000                                       |
| Serving Room — \$25,000                                   | <del>Large Meeting Space</del> — \$250,000 <b>NAMED</b> |



# GDA'S Wish List

Help keep the spirit of giving going into the New Year, and you'll be helping to keep our puppies and dogs happy and healthy all year long. Below is a list of specific needs that we have compiled from some of our departments. Your thoughtfulness and generosity in making these wishes come true are greatly appreciated. Websites for purchasing items are listed with each department's list.

## Puppy Department

([www.petedge.com](http://www.petedge.com))

**Dura Chew Plus-Chicken (Item: TF400). Size: 6" (Wolf).**

- Quantity needed: unlimited. \$7.39 each or \$6.79 when you buy 6-plus

**Dog Zoom Grooms (Item: KC202). Size: Medium.**

- Color: Boysenberry and Raspberry. Quantity needed: unlimited. \$4.99 each

**Pressed Rawhide Bones (Item: RR297). Size: 8".**

- Quantity needed: unlimited (in bulk - 50 per box). \$86.99

**24" Exercise Pen (Item: ZW121).**

- Color: Black. Quantity needed: 5. \$49.99

**30" Exercise Pen (Item: ZW121).**

- Color: Black. Quantity needed: 5. \$59.99

## Vet Department

([www.petedge.com](http://www.petedge.com))

**Top Performance Prodenal Dual End Toothbrushes (Item: TP126).**

- Quantity: In bulk (50 count \$19.99)

**C.E.T. Enzymatic Toothpaste (Item: ZT0201).**

- Quantity needed: 30. \$6.99 each

**Greenies Pill Pockets Canine Chicken Capsules (Item: ZT955).**

- Quantity needed: 5 bags. \$7.49 each

## Kennel Department

([www.petedge.com](http://www.petedge.com))

**Dental Dinosaur (Item: F22101). One size.**

- Quantity needed: 10 dozen. \$4.59 per unit

**Nylabone Wishbone (Item: TF192). Size: 6" (Wolf).**

- Quantity needed: 10 dozen. \$5.99 per unit

**8-cup Stainless-steel Bowls (Item: ZW150).**

- Quantity needed: 10 dozen. \$2.29 per bowl

**Big Chews-Beef Bone (Item: TF525). Size: 7".**

- Quantity needed: 10 dozen. \$12.29 per bone

## Training Department

([www.petedge.com](http://www.petedge.com))

**Undercoat Rake - Short Pins (Item: TP250).**

- Quantity needed: 4 dozen. \$8.69 per unit

**Zoom Groom - (Item: KC202).**

- Color: Any. Quantity needed: 4 dozen. \$5.49 per unit

## Nursery Department

([www.revivalanimalhealth.com](http://www.revivalanimalhealth.com))

**Drymate Whelping Pad. Size: 48" X 50" (Item: 25135-601-154).**

- Quantity: unlimited. \$24.99 each

([www.dog-on-it-parks.com](http://www.dog-on-it-parks.com))

**\*Bow Wow Barrel (Item: 6703).**

- Quantity needed: 1. \$1,289

**\*S-tunnel (Item: 6700).**

- Quantity needed: 1. \$2,920

**\*Step-up Table (Item: 6405).**

- Quantity needed: 1. \$1,307

**\*Hound Hoops (Item: 6415).**

- Quantity needed: 1. \$844

**\*Complete Dog Waste Station (Item: 7408S).**

- Quantity needed: 1. \$266

([www.dog-on-it-parks.com](http://www.dog-on-it-parks.com))

**Top Performance Baby Powder Shampoo (Item: TP566).**

- Quantity: 6. \$5.99 each

**Top Performance Sungold Shampoo (Item: TP509).**

- Quantity: 6. \$6.99 each

**Top Performance Seabreeze Shampoo (Item: TP508).**

- Quantity: 6. \$6.99 each

**Nylabone Original Bone (Item: TF176). Size: Giant.**

- Quantity: 6. \$6.59 each or \$5.99 when you buy 6-plus

**Nylabone Puppy Teething Ring (Item: TF216).**

- Quantity: 4. \$4.39 each

**Nylabone Pro Action Dental Chew (Item: TF501). Size: Large.**

- Quantity: 3. \$10.99 each

\*Because we only need one of each of these specified items, please contact Lorri Bernson at [Imbernson@guideddogsofamerica.org](mailto:Imbernson@guideddogsofamerica.org) or 818-833-6431 if you are interested in purchasing one so that we can take it off of our list.

## New Employees

Ainjil Bills, Veterinarian

Jamie Carranza, Class Chef

Diane Gittlen, Marketing

Sara Ormenyi, Admissions & Graduate Services

## In Memory

With sadness, we note the passing of the following guide dogs:

**Duke** — Class 358

**Miles** — In-home

**Ninya** — Class 360

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(818) 362-5834 FAX: (818) 362-6870

E-MAIL  
mail@guidedogsofamerica.org

EDITOR  
Lorri Bernson

WEBSITE  
guidedogsofamerica.org



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## 7<sup>th</sup>-Annual Holiday Card Contest

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

As you go through your many holiday photos, there may just be that perfect holiday-themed photo of your precious pooch that's too good not to share. Share it with us, and your photo may just be selected as the winner in GDA's 7<sup>th</sup>-annual Holiday Card Contest.

### Submission Guidelines:

All photos MUST BE TAKEN IN HIGH RESOLUTION (300+ dpi) and submitted via email as an attachment by March 15, 2017 to **partners@guidedogsofamerica.org**. All photo entries become the property of GDA. Credit for the winning photo will be given.

- Winner will be notified on May 15, 2017 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

## Congratulations Graduates

Class #395



### Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

**Front Row from left to right:** Leslie Minturn and Mia (*Deborah Madden*), Richard Mero and Pawdrick (*Gail Leonard*), Mark Dresen and Francie (*Gene and Monique Newman*), Tina Guidry and Disnee (*Denise Brown*), Sebastian Williams and Sooner (*Alan and Cindi Bleemers*) James Nishimura and Holland (*The Wurts Family*), Sandra Escalona and Jasper (*Ken and Jenny Goheen*), Agustin Moreno and Macie (*The DeBruno Family*), Dick Schmidt and Cassie (*Bob and Kathie Stegemann*), Elizabeth Roff and Emmett (*The Harris Family*)

**Instructors:** Back Row from left to right: Jamie Hunt, Sean Chiles, Linda Hawes

### In-home Graduate

Don Smith and Marshall (*The Bethke Family*)

**Instructor:** Steve Burkman