



volume 33 number 1

Giving The Gift Of Independence For 70 Years



GDA's first location was a residence in North Hollywood.



GDA's new state-of-the-art Visitor and Education Center.

This year, GDA celebrates 70 years of service to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. There have been many changes to the school since it opened in a private residence in North Hollywood, CA, including moving to the current 7.5-acre location in Sylmar, CA. What has not changed is GDA's commitment to its mission of "Independence, Companionship, Confidence, and Freedom."

Changes to the school's physical campus, as well as its guide dog training and puppy programs, have all been made with the goal of better serving our community — students, dogs, staff, donors, volunteer, and our neighbors. This year, we will embark on remodeling the on-campus dormitory and administration buildings, as well as other improvement and maintenance projects. We will keep you updated on our progress.

We also have several local events on the calendar. If you are in the area, we invite you to participate. Look for information on our website (guidedogsofamerica.org).

May 20, 2018

Ride for Guides

June 1 – 15, 2018

Online Silent Auction

July 21, 2018

Casino Night

Nov. 17, 2018

Las Vegas Charity Banquet

Did You Know?

Fetching Answers to Frequently Asked Questions



One of the most frequently asked questions we and our graduates are asked is, "How does a guide dog know when it's safe to cross the street?"

Many people believe that a

guide dog can differentiate the changing of the light from red to green, when in fact safely crossing the street is a prime example of the extraordinary teamwork between a guide dog and his blind partner.

Before a blind person can get a guide dog, they have to be able to travel independently using their cane. By doing this, the person learns "orientation and mobility" (O&M), which includes, among other skills, learning how to listen to traffic patterns. When the blind person hears that the traffic pattern is going in the direction that would be safe for a crossing, the command is then given to the guide dog to go "forward." If there is an obstacle, a hybrid car that cannot be heard or a cyclist, the guide dog will disobey the command. This is called "intelligent disobedience." Once the person defines why the dog did not continue, the dog is praised. The positive reinforcement the dog receives lets him/her know that the person has defined what the reason is for the refusal; then the command is given again. If it is safe, the dog will then proceed.

A Guide Dog's Journey

From the Pitter Patter of Puppy Paws to Highly-skilled Guide Dog

The journey of a GDA guide dog starts in our nursery and continues throughout their life with their blind partner.

Along the way, the puppy has daily interaction with people and encounters new and gradually more challenging environments. All of these experiences contribute to building the puppy's confidence, giving him the best possible start to becoming a trusted guide dog to a blind partner.

Here we take you from puppyhood to graduation, which is both an ending and a beginning. Graduation marks the end of two years of training and the beginning of a side-by-side partnership of new experiences and adventures for the new guide dog team.



Born GDA Nursery

1 to 4 weeks

Socialized in the nursery by trained volunteers.



4 weeks

Begin to have supervised outside playtime in a playground that is specially designed to promote the puppies' development.

Puppies play on equipment and with toys and experience different surfaces. They also are introduced to their yellow, "puppy-in-training" bibs.

7 weeks

Litter moves to the Head Start Program, which is administered by the Puppy Department. Here, they are introduced to more advanced play structures and toys. Puppies start learning basic commands, like sitting for their food.



8 weeks

Puppies go home with their volunteer puppy raisers; in the puppy raisers' care, they are taught basic obedience commands, good house manners and are well-socialized in many settings they may encounter as guide dogs.

9 to 10 weeks

For the next six weeks, the puppies and their puppy raisers attend Puppy Kindergarten provided by GDA and have structured classes and puppy outings/field trips until they are six months old.



6 months

First kennel stay at GDA, which is typically a half-day. The puppies will regularly visit the kennel starting with stays of one to a few nights. By the time the puppy is one year, she is visiting the kennel at least once a month and staying for up to a week.

9 to 10 months

Evaluation by the Canine Development Team to check on the puppies' progress and identify any areas that may need work.



14 to 18 months

Turn-in time.

Puppies return to GDA for their formal guide dog training.

2 years

(approximately)

Spend three weeks with new partner in class before graduating and leaving the school as a guide dog team.



Merchandise

Shop GDA!

Check out new and popular merchandise from Shop GDA! Go to guidedogsofamerica.org, then click on **Shop GDA!** Merchandise is also available for purchase by calling (818) 833-6429 or at GDA's new retail store. Several of our newest items are featured here.

Charcoal Heather Hooded Zip-front Sweatshirt



Made in the U.S.A., this snuggly sweatshirt features the GDA logo stitched in white on the front. Color: Charcoal heather with white drawstrings. Unisex Sizes: Large-3XL. Material: 50% Polyester, 37% Organic Cotton, 13% Rayon. Price: \$50 (does not include tax or shipping and handling).

2018 GDA Lapel Pin



This year's pin features a Labrador Retriever with the words "Guide Dogs of America" are stamped around the circle with the years "1948-2018" stamped on the bottom of the circle to commemorate GDA's 70th anniversary. Made in the U.S.A., the pewter-toned metal pin is 3/4" round. Price: \$8 (includes shipping and handling).

Charcoal Hoodie



Cozy and comfy, this 100% organic cotton hoodie is made in the U.S.A. The pullover sweatshirt features the GDA logo stitched in black on the front. Color: Charcoal. Sizes: Unisex Sizes: Small-2XL. Price: \$50 (does not include tax or shipping and handling).

Baseball Hat



Blue and white with a breathable mesh back and Velcro adjustment, this new baseball hat features the GDA logo in white on blue fabric. Made in the U.S.A. Price: \$20 (does not include tax or shipping and handling).

Men's Polos



Available in Black and Striped Black. GDA logo stitched in white on the sleeve. Polo is 100% polyester and made in the U.S.A. Sizes: Medium-4XL. Price: \$40 (does not include tax or shipping and handling).

2018 Quilt Raffle



This year's quilt, "Doggie in the Window," was made by The Orange County Quilters Guild. The group continues the tradition of providing a raffle quilt to benefit GDA. The patterns for each of the dogs were created and donated by Maryann Hertel of Made by Marney. The quilt measures 60" x 70".

Tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10. Tickets available for purchase at GDA. Tickets can also be purchased by mail or phone. Send your check to GDA postmarked by Dec. 1, 2018, or call GDA at (818) 833-6429. Tickets will be mailed to you using the return the address on your check or address provided at the time of purchase by phone. Drawing will be held at the GDA December puppy raiser holiday party. Winner does not need to be present.

GDA Las Vegas Charity Weekend

Tailgate-themed Charity Banquet and Fundraising Events Score BIG for GDA

The more than 1,100 attendees at the tailgate-themed, 37th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet may have been wearing jerseys and attire from all different sports teams, but it was clear that everyone who attended had come to cheer on one team... GDA.

Banquet guests were entertained by comedian Peter Berman; motivated by a video from Demaurice Smith, head of the NFL Players Association (NFLPA); and inspired by GDA graduate Thomas Olzak and his guide dog, Goliath. In keeping with the theme, several former NFL players attended the event, including Ainsley Battles (Pittsburgh Steelers), Tony Berti (San Diego Chargers), Damien Anderson (Arizona Cardinals) and Larry Centers (Arizona Cardinals, Washington Redskins, Buffalo Bills and New England Patriots). Also during the banquet, Dale Hartford, Tom Gentile and Sito Pantoja were awarded the prestigious "Gift of Sight Award" for their support of and dedication to GDA.



The banquet capped off the three-day fundraising event. Among the activities and highlights were the 37th-annual Golf Tournament, which attracted 205 players, including former football players Larry Centers, Damien Anderson and Melvin Fowler, as well as two past GDA presidents. This year, a new contest hole was introduced. For a donation, players took their "shot" using an air canon. In addition to raising additional money for the school, it helped many players improve their hole score.

Participants could also hit the road, riding in the 17th-annual Hawgs for Dogs motorcycle ride, which drew more than 60 riders and featured a new route through the "Valley of Fire." At the sixth-annual Sporting Clay Event, 63 shooters took aim for a day of shooting.

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 the sponsors, attendees and volunteers for their generosity of spirit that have made this event a huge success for nearly four decades.



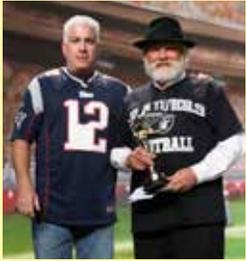
A Special Message From A Special Guest



"Thank you for the opportunity to represent the NFLPA at the William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet. My NFL career ended due to an injury, and it was difficult transitioning from playing to my life after sports. I personally relate to the struggle to redefine your life after something you took for granted is taken away. To see the dignity, camaraderie and support Guide Dogs of America provides to the visually impaired is truly inspiring. Attending the banquet reminds me that it's not what happens to you in life that matters, rather it's how you respond. For nearly 70 years, Guide Dogs of America continues to support men and women from all walks of life and help them reclaim their independence after partially losing or completely losing their ability, or having never been able to see. Thank you for inviting me, and I look forward to next year's banquet."

— Ainsley Battles

Gift of Sight Honorees



Dale Hartford

This was the first time since 2010 that Dale Hartford attended the Las Vegas Charity Weekend as a guest. Hartford retired last year as president and director of Guide Dogs of America (GDA). During his tenure at GDA, Hartford oversaw the expansion of the Sylmar campus, a doubling of financial assets, and an increase in student graduations.

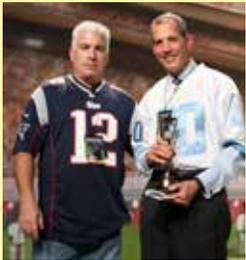
Prior to his responsibilities at GDA, Hartford served as an administrative assistant for the Eastern Territory, a position he was appointed to in 2004. During this time, in addition to his regular duties, he directed the successful organizing of the employees of AK Steel and the chartering of IAM Local Lodge 1948.

Hartford was appointed as a special representative in the Northeast Territory, becoming a grand lodge representative (GLR) in 1990, following a four-year term as the directing business representative of IAM District Lodge 99.

In 1984, Hartford was elected president of newly chartered IAM Local Lodge 2740. During his term of office, he also served as chairman of the shop committee, vice president of the New England Conference of Machinists and delegate to District Lodge 99. Hartford joined the IAM when he started work for S.D. Warren Paper Company as a Millwright-Welder in July 1982.

Hartford graduated from the Maine Maritime Academy in 1978 with a bachelor's of science in marine engineering.

Hartford and his wife Robin are the parents of four children and have five grandchildren. In retirement, the couple spends their time playing golf; horseback riding; and traveling in their RV with their dogs, Bailee and Buddy.



Tom Gentile

Tom Gentile was named president and chief executive officer of Spirit AeroSystems in August 2016 after joining the company in April 2016 as chief operating officer. It is with the support of community-minded organizations, like Spirit Aerosystems that donate time and money that GDA is able to deliver both experienced and first-time handlers a fully trained guide dog

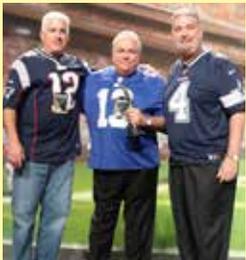
Prior to Spirit, he served as president and chief operating officer of GE Capital. Before this role, Gentile was president and CEO of GE Healthcare Systems, a \$14-billion diagnostic imaging business. He also served as president and CEO of GE Aviation Services, a \$7-billion global enterprise. Gentile began his career at GE in 1998, holding a succession of leadership roles across GE

Capital in the U.S., France, and Australia.

He has held numerous other leadership and strategy roles with McKinsey and Company, U.S. broadcaster CBS, and General Motors. In addition, Gentile was previously chairman and continues to serve on the board of InSightec, a global leader in non-invasive image guided therapy.

An active community member, Gentile serves on the governing boards of the Greater Wichita Partnership and the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), as well as serving on the AIA Finance Committee. Gentile is a champion of Spirit's Good Neighbor Fund employee-giving program and serves as a trustee of the ALS Finding a Cure organization.

Gentile earned his bachelor's degree in economics magna cum laude and an MBA from Harvard University, as well as studied international relations at the London School of Economics. Gentile and his wife, Julie, have three children.



Sito Pantoja

Sito Pantoja serves as the IAM general vice president assigned to transportation, a position he has held since January 2012. The transportation group consists of railroad and air transport members and is the largest sector of the IAM. Its members fundraise all year long, which enables us to continue to provide guide dogs free of charge to individuals throughout the USA and Canada.

Also in 2012, Pantoja was elected to serve on the Executive Board of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), a U.K.-based global federation of transportation unions representing millions of transportation workers around the world. He has served as chairman of the ITF's Civil Aviation Section Committee since 2010.

Upon becoming transportation general vice president, Pantoja was named the IAM's representative on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Rulemaking Advisory Committee (RAC), providing advice and recommendations to the FAA on rulemaking activity regarding aircraft operations, airman and air agency certification, and airworthiness standards.

Prior to his current position, Pantoja served as transportation administrative assistant, a position he was appointed to in 2005. In 1999, he was appointed to the Grand Lodge as a transportation department special representative and GLR shortly thereafter.

Donor Spotlight

Learning About Blindness Led Her to GDA



Carol Settimo's neighbor was losing his vision due to macular degeneration. Being not just a good neighbor, but a great neighbor and friend, Settimo offered to take him to the Braille Institute. It was there that she learned of the many adaptive services available to the visually impaired, including Guide Dogs of America (GDA).

She became so interested in GDA that she visited the school to see, first-hand, the work it puts into the training of guide dogs and the instruction in their use GDA provides for those with vision impairment. Today, giving to GDA is one of her top priorities.

A donor since 1995, Settimo took her support of the school to the next level by becoming a Partner in Trust and designating the school as a recipient of a portion of her estate.

"I give to GDA because I see that the funds go to where you think they are going. They go directly to the program," Settimo said. "I am amazed at the growth through the years, and I know it is only made possible by donations."

It's not just seeing how the school uses the donations it receives to fulfill its mission. During her visits to the school, Settimo also was struck by the dedication of the GDA staff and volunteers to the development of the dogs from the time they are born until they graduate.

"I love learning about how GDA cares for the dogs and then reading about how having a guide dog has made a difference in the life of its new partner," Settimo said.

"I am really happy that I was asked to say something about why I donate to the school," Settimo said. "GDA is a strong organization and 100 percent helpful to those they serve. With GDA, you know that there is somewhere that you can leave your money and know that it will do good. It's a cause that I am happy to support, and I hope that my story will inspire more people to choose to donate or name the school in their trust."

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



In Memory

With sadness, we note the passing of the following graduates:

Mary Heid — Class 352
Rae Howell — Class 380
Don Kanallakan — In-home

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

Annika — Class 380	Netty — Class 353
Camry — Breeder	Nike — Class 385
Franco — Class 355.5	Nisha — Class 359
Kirby — Breeder	Verrina — Breeder
Molly — Breeder	

Graduate Update

Meet Harmony, N.C.'s New Mayor: GDA Graduate Daniel Lee Matney



It's been a busy and exciting year for Daniel Lee Matney.

Less than a year after graduating with his new guide dog, Merlin, Matney was sworn in as Mayor of Harmony, North Carolina. He took the race over the incumbent candidate who had held the position since 2011.

Matney's partnership with Merlin played a significant role in his decision to enter Harmony's 2017 mayoral race. "The confidence I have in Merlin to negotiate us through town, get me to meetings safely and quickly, and knowing he'll behave nicely wherever we end up were all important factors in my decision to run for mayor."

Matney started his campaign for mayor because he was inspired and encouraged by the town of Harmony; his experience at GDA; his amazing guide dog; and all the wonderful, generous people who touched his life. "I ran a fun campaign," he said. "I never expected to win. I just wanted to inspire and encourage the community and spread a vision of growth and unity here in Harmony."

Congratulations Graduates

Class #400



Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Front Row from left to right: Tony Atilas and Gisselle (*Andy Chesis*), Jill Anderson and Kirby (*Jennifer Buehler*), Leigh Lawhorn and Kaia (*Judi Paxton*), Catrina Dicterow and Tesla (*Arcadia and Mellanie Matthews*), Michelle Hellwig and Morgan (*Brian and Nancy Matthews*), Deborah Abare and Sierra (*Susan Hannan*), Leo Medina and Emily (*Sherry Dilworth*)

Instructors: Back Row from left to right: Alejandra Maldonado, Sean Chiles

Congratulations Graduates

Class #401



Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Front Row from left to right: Carole Regan and Valkor (*David and Ciria Schulz*), Charlie Wiggins and Glenn (*Gail Leonard*), Travis Spier and Tennyson (*Sara-Jane and Chantal Chelin*), Diane Fisher and Jane (*Andy and Liisa Primack*), Lori Bartz and Disnee (*Denise Brown*), Ben Medina and Cleo (*Bonnie Louvet*), Judith Lung and Kali (*Kyle and Ava Baldwin*), Adam Lawrence and Ollie (*Mark and Becky Robelotto*), Sherman Wiggs and Monet (*Tammy and Katie Hines*)

Instructors: Back Row from left to right: Kim Geczi, Linda Hawes, Jamie Hunt, Kelsey Horst

In-home Graduates (puppy raiser in parentheses):

Ken Davidson and Nakai (*Lily Hessel*)
Pam Metz and Franklin (*Torrie Zaccor*)
Dominic Sposeto and Koko (*Eric and Julie Ulstrup*)



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A Goodbye Wag Of The Tail



Meri Forman, breeding department manager, has retired. "After 28 years of putting GDA first, Meri is taking the time for herself," said Yvonne Martin, director of programs. "Meri has created a solid breeding program and provided GDA with

some of the best dogs in the industry. She is very well-respected in the service dog breeding co-op, as well as the guide dog school community. She will be missed."

Please join us in wishing Meri a long and happy retirement.

New Employees

Tiffany Brundy, Apprentice Trainer