

d PHIL SINGER
OR and EDUCATION CEN



partners
Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines



A Renewed Sense of Peace

LORILEI – ORBIT & NERO TRANSITION

Surrounded by sand dunes in the Middle East, I never could have imagined the path I would travel next. My name is Lorilei, I was an Army linguist/translator during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and I am a combat-injured veteran.

On average, a veteran dies by suicide every hour of every day. Luckily, I did not become a statistic. This is the story of how you saved my life...twice.

My time in the Army left me with multiple sclerosis and PTSD. Wartime exposure to toxic sarin nerve gas permanently damaged my nervous system. My sensory system is easily overwhelmed, and outside input feels out of proportion to me. Everything from bright lights to sounds to the sensation of wind completely distracts me.

Continued on page 2

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to each of you. I hope this message finds you happy and healthy and looking forward to the new year. Together in 2022, we continued to build a bright future for Guide Dogs of America and Tender Loving Canines (GDA|TLC), all made possible by our wonderfully dedicated staff members, volunteers, puppy raisers, graduates, fundraisers, and donors. We could not do it without you and extend our gratitude for the vital role you play in the organization and in all our accomplishments.

This year we were excited to get back to doing what we do best – uniting folks with life-changing service dogs. We held eight graduations and partnered over 50 service dog teams. In addition, our dedicated team banded together for “the year of programs.” This year the mission was to improve the school. We met frequently, held deeper discussions, and made significant progress. We are on our way and look forward to sharing more with you as we reach new heights.

2022 also saw some top-notch fundraising in action.

The Kourpias K-9 Classic raised over \$100,000.

Festivities were in full swing as we brought back Open House, hosted Dinner in the Dark, and held our annual charity banquet in Las Vegas. All were huge successes and contributed significant funds to our program, as did the almost 100 other fundraising events we organized across the U.S. and Canada.

Having students back on campus this year emphasized the true importance of our mission. There are many who need our help, and no matter what we do, we can always do more. Together, we are going to let every veteran, child with autism, and person who's blind know that, even in the darkest of hours, there is still hope, and there will always be a home for them at GDA|TLC. 🐾



Continued from page 1

Stimulation is difficult for me to process and sometimes even painful. This impacts my ability to multitask, and something simple like a quick conversation in the grocery store, easy for most people, can overwhelm me and cause me to shut down.

When I returned from service, my symptoms began piling up, and I found myself sitting in the psychiatrist's office. Despite being on medication and having weekly therapy, I still had intrusive thoughts of ending my life. Life was too much. I was in hell and reaching an emotional boiling point.

"You need to start looking for a service dog," my psychiatrist suggested. I shook my head, not believing that would help, but deep down, I knew I was running out of options. Something was needed to free myself from the mental and physical pain I was in. After reaching out to several organizations, I felt a glimmer of hope when I contacted GDA|TLC, and that glimmer grew to a happy spark when I was offered a match with my first service dog, Orbit.

There is no other way to say it, Orbit saved my life. GDA|TLC trained Orbit to perform assistive tasks that helped mitigate my PTSD. He immediately made life easier. Simple things, like retrieving objects when I felt weak or providing balance support for my vertigo, made a huge difference. No matter what I needed, Orbit instinctively knew how to help, even with my most complex and challenging symptoms.

Providing deep-pressure therapy was one of Orbit's specialties. Deep pressure applied to the human body can help calm the nervous system, and my furry friend became my personal weighted blanket. Whether he



was leaning on my leg while I stood in line at the store or sitting with his chin on my lap while I waited for a medical appointment, Orbit would calm my nervous system. I felt relaxed enough that I could proceed with my day. As time passed, Orbit learned my body language and would offer help without my asking. He delighted in being helpful.

Orbit's companionship encouraged me to try new things. At first, it was just about getting out of the house. Knowing I could request pressure from him if I became overstimulated gave me the confidence and resilience I needed to succeed. My PTSD also causes hypervigilance, meaning I always look over my shoulder and locate doors and exits in case I need to escape. Having Orbit made me feel safe because I knew he had my back. As our bond grew, we became more daring. Together, we rediscovered my love for the great outdoors, visiting meditation gardens, parks, art galleries, historic sites, and California missions. I even signed up for an art class.

After a few months together, Orbit and I checked "yes" on an invitation to a friend's wedding. When the wedding day arrived, Orbit provided calming assistance to help me get through. He even offered the bride a flower as she walked down the aisle. I could never have attended this event if it weren't for Orbit's help, and it is a memory I will never forget. We did it! My therapist was so amazed at my remarkable improvement that she began teaching her students about the value of service dogs for veterans.

Around six months ago, Orbit started exhibiting signs that he was ready to retire. While I love him deeply, I knew I needed to respect his wishes. I had so many tools at my disposal this time: community support, my medical support team, and medication, but there is nothing like having the assistance of a faithful service dog. Retiring Orbit was a devastating blow, and I crashed...hard.

While Orbit was still my best friend and provided some assistance in the home (the snuggles were nice), not having the canine support in public was crippling. Signs of my PTSD and MS reared their ugly heads:

“My therapist was so amazed at my remarkable improvement that she began teaching her students about the value of service dogs for veterans.”

—Lorilei

severe depression, hopelessness, trouble sleeping, and a loss of interest in things I once enjoyed. I stopped reaching out to others and started isolating myself at home again. Suicidal thoughts flooded back, but I held on. There was no way I was going to leave Orbit.

GDA|TLC gave me hope. I knew they had the expertise to find me a successor dog, and I trusted in the process.

About two months ago, my second service dog, Nero, joined our pack. I am amazed at how quickly my

symptoms have normalized with a service dog always by my side. I’m back to doing things I enjoy, getting out of the house, and meeting with friends. I have a renewed feeling of hope. Nero, Orbit, and I are a team of three. We know our roles, and we soldier on. Right now, Nero is the hero of my story, but Orbit will always be the one that showed me the way. I thank him by spoiling him in his retirement, and my heart warms to the unspoken bond of friendship these two dogs share.

Thank you to GDA|TLC and the donors who help to fund this incredible operation. I am still on this earth because of you and the volunteers, puppy raisers, inmate trainers, and staff at GDA|TLC. Life takes many twists and turns, but I can navigate them now with Nero by my side. I am grateful to share my experience with others in the hopes that they too will find a renewed sense of peace. I was given the gift of life back, and now I want to share that joy and positivity with others. 🐾

With gratitude,

Lorilei, Orbit, and Nero

PUPPY RAISING CORNER:

Jessica Calderon Employee Introduction

JESSICA CALDERON – PUPPY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

I started my journey with animals as a little child with a big heart, always rescuing strays. By the time I was in the fourth grade, I expertly knew how to bottle-feed neonate kittens. My love for animals never wavered, and I studied hard to achieve my Veterinary Assistant Certification. I worked in a veterinary clinic and then for an adoption/rescue organization as a caregiver, adoption specialist, and volunteer coordinator (as well as many other unofficial titles).

My passion for animals and the desire to help people is what led me to GDA|TLC. I love putting my problem-solving skills to use and inventing new ways to retain/welcome puppy raisers. It is a humbling and rewarding experience to be a part of something that truly changes lives. When I am not at work, I enjoy my growing family, menagerie of pets, and embarking on DIY projects to beautify my home.

If you are interested in helping raise a puppy to become someone’s perfect guide or service dog, please text “puppy” to 51555 to learn more. 🐾





Holidays of HOPE

SAVE THE DATE – HOLIDAYS OF HOPE

This holiday season give the gift of love, confidence, and hope with a donation to our Holidays of Hope fundraiser and transform someone's life with a service dog partnership. Special thanks to our friend Jane Huey and The Huey Family Foundation, who will match every donation up to \$120,000.

Help us expand our program and bring joy to veterans, people who are blind, children with autism, and vulnerable populations in facilities across the U.S. and Canada.

THE STATISTICS ARE STAGGERING:

- **Veterans:** We lose 20 veterans to suicide every day
- **Autism:** 1 in 54 children is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder
- **Blindness:** Only 44% of people who are blind/visually impaired are employed. 38% have turned down a job because of transportation concerns.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many companies offer a matching gift program to their employees. These programs match, dollar for dollar, charitable contributions made by an employee, doubling the donation made to GDA|TLC! If you are thinking of donating to GDA|TLC, enter your employer into the donation matching search bar on our donation page to see if they participate.



SHOP GDA 75th Anniversary Pin

To purchase, go to "Shop GDA" on guidedogsofamerica.org, or call (818) 833-6429.

GDA|TLC 75TH ANNIVERSARY PIN

This year's 75th anniversary pin is a black and gold German Shepherd. The dog is symbolic of the first Guide Dog to graduate from Guide Dogs of America in 1948.

PRICE: \$8.00

Tax, shipping, and handling not included. If sending in a check, please call **818-362-5834** to determine the additional tax and shipping charges required for payment.



\$120,000
MATCH GIFT
EVERY DONATION
DOUBLED
THROUGH DEC. 31ST!

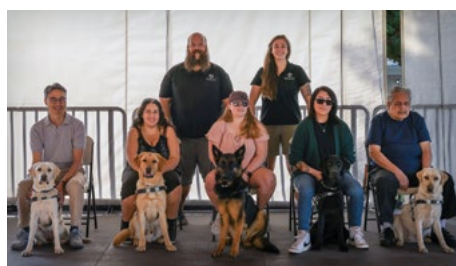
THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS JANE HUEY
AND THE HUEY FAMILY FOUNDATION





GRADUATES

(PUPPY RAISERS IN PARENTHESES)



GUIDE DOG CLASS #421

IN ROW: Eugene Kim & Opal (Rebecca De Paola), Sara Cadwell & Tycho (Theé Comeau & Jed Fuhrman), Madeline Babcock & Zuri (Alysoun Higgins & Family), Arielle Cavazos & Mango (Cheri & Bob Lauterbach), Tyrone Tagle & Jolie (Susan Hoffman)

INSTRUCTORS: Sean Chiles & Kelsey Horst



SERVICE DOG CLASS #10

BOTTOM ROW: Brennon & Poet (Diana Janke), Holly & Friday (Dave Mills), Hai & Tang (Brandon Langford), Donnell & Bennett (Emily Joelle), David & West (Sarah Barry), Michael & Flynn (Phil Barlow)

INSTRUCTORS: Sonia Parisi, Gretchen Chomas, Cheryl Herman

IN-HOME GRADUATES



VETERAN SERVICE DOG TEAM:

Lorlei and Nero (Kathie Diehl)

IN LOVING MEMORY

With sadness, we note the passing of the following graduates, guide dogs, service dogs, and breeders:

GRADUATES

- Cesar Palma Class #398

GUIDE DOGS & BREEDERS

- Abner Class #392
- Beacon Class #369
- Biwa Class #369
- Capri Class #377
- Carter Class #364
- Dublin Class #373

- Genie, Veteran Service Dog
- Gibbs Class #371
- Hasley Class #385
- Helus, Breeder
- Flynn, Breeder
- Kyla Class #384
- Nellie Class #367.5
- Nels Class #380
- Pax Class #367

- Rookie Class #359
- Sadie Class #372
- Thunder Class #367
- Van Class #388
- Willow, Veteran Service Dog
- Wizard/Batman Class #392



Guide Dogs
of America



Tender Loving
Canines

13445 Glenoaks Blvd.
Sylmar, CA 91342

TEL: (818) 362-5834

FAX: (818) 362-6870

E-MAIL: mail@guidedogsofamerica.org

WEBSITE: guidedogsofamerica.org

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

VAN NUYS, CA
PERMIT #2399

GET PARTNERS [DIGITAL EDITION]

If you would like to receive this newsletter by e-mail, simply go to **guidedogsofamerica.org** and click on the "Newsletter Sign-up" icon located at the bottom of the home page.



**OUR MISSION STATEMENT:
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH SERVICE DOGS.**

Cut along dotted line



MAKE A DONATION

If you would like to make a one time donation, please fill out the information below, cut along the dotted line and use the provided envelope to mail in your donation. If paying by check, please make check payable to **Guide Dogs of America**.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

☐ Cash ☐ Check ☐ Credit Card Donation Amount \$ _____ Phone: _____

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____



Donating to GDA|TLC has never been easier. Open the QR code reader or camera app on your phone and hold your device over the QR code to give or in your web browser type, **<https://give.guidedogsofamerica.org/PNL373>**