

### **A Newsletter for Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Rehabilitation Professionals, Teachers and Service Providers in the Field of Blindness and Visual Impairment**

Thank you for referring qualified clients to Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB). We appreciate it!

Visit <http://www.guidedogs.com> where you'll find important information, and where applicants to our training program can apply easily online. Our services are offered free-of-charge to qualified applicants who are blind or visually impaired.

We invite you to learn about our [K9 Buddy Program](#), matching our dogs as pets with children and young adults who are blind or visually impaired. Our [K9 Buddy video](#) says it all!

And now, you can hear interviews with our experts on a variety of interesting topics. Learn what goes on behind the scenes at by listening to [www.guidedogs.com/podcast](http://www.guidedogs.com/podcast); also available through iTunes. Be sure to spread the word!

*If you're receiving a printed copy of Canes and Tails, you can now receive it via e-mail! Help us save resources by sending your e-mail address to: [canesandtails@guidedogs.com](mailto:canesandtails@guidedogs.com). You'll be able to click on the links to be taken to additional resources.*

*Please share our information with your colleagues, with agencies, and with your clients.*

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### **On a Roll with My Guide Dog Annie**

*By: LaDoris Kelsey, GDB Graduate*



Getting a wheelchair was the most horrible thing I could imagine happening. Now not only was I blind, but I had a whole new disability to get accustomed to. My world was limited before to what I could experience through sound and touch, and when I had to use a wheelchair, the ground also disappeared from my perception.

I had been working with Guide Dogs for 22 years and I vividly remember the first time I walked at night when

my remaining vision didn't help me; that sense of freedom made me cry. After I got the wheelchair (and could not use a Guide Dog) I had many accidents, like driving off a curb and breaking my toes on my door. I made corrections as I learned to use the chair but I never felt at ease.

In May of 2006 I went to the Oregon campus to train with Annie, where I got to experience that freedom again to go wherever I wanted. Once the harness was in my hand the transformation was instantaneous. Annie was awesome, and I knew that if Michele Pouliot of Guide Dogs for the Blind had trained Annie, she was going to be perfect. I had to forget everything I learned in my previous Guide Dog classes except for basic dog care. It is a hard program and it is challenging- you have to really *want* it. You also have to learn a whole new way of performing all the guide work tasks that had become so natural to me over 22 years.

I have been so profoundly moved by how Annie has given me back my will to live that I volunteer to talk to perspective applicants for the wheelchair program. The program is amazing, and I am so glad that I have had the chance to work with a Guide Dog again.

### **Additional Information about the Custom Needs and Wheelchair Training Program**

*Watch our video ["Custom Needs and Wheelchair Training"](#)*

Guide Dogs for the Blind's Custom Needs Training program was first developed in the early 1990s. It involves schooling a dog to perform extraordinary tasks in addition to standard Guide Dog training. In 2004, a new Wheelchair Guide Dog program was introduced in response to requests from several GDB graduates.

The research and development department developed specialized training techniques and equipment for Guide Dog work with a power wheelchair. Five wheelchair Guide Dog teams have successfully completed training since 2004 and are successfully working in the field.

The resources required to produce a wheelchair Guide Dog team are numerous. Training a wheelchair Guide Dog requires an additional four to six months of custom training after the dog completes the standard Guide Dog training course. The client's class program for wheelchair training requires up to two weeks of on-campus training followed by one to two additional weeks of training in his/her home area.

The [Custom Needs and Wheelchair Training](#) program helps address the needs of blind and visually impaired individuals who must rely on wheelchairs for mobility. Criteria and assessment programs evaluate potential candidates identified through follow-up services or applicant requests. Potential candidates are informed of the criteria and the need for a specialized home interview to assess their potential. To date, we have gathered and discovered much information in regards to developing effective wheelchair Guide Dog teams. We have also identified physical and emotional characteristics essential in a wheelchair student to ensure his/her likelihood of success in this very challenging type of Guide Dog travel.

- The Wheelchair Guide Program trains 2-4 wheelchair Guide Dogs per year
- GDB graduates get priority for Guide placements; however we also serve guide dog users from other programs and first time Guide Dog applicants. The wait time for confirmed and accepted wheelchair applicants can be up to two years due to the extensive training each dog receives
- Viable applicants require the use of a wheelchair for at least 75% of their mobility. A wheelchair Guide Dog requires wheelchair work numerous times each week to maintain responses. Wheelchair applicants require full upper body movement and control to effectively follow a wheelchair Guide Dog's movement. (Able to fully bend forward from the waist and return to an upright position without needing the use of hands to do so)

- Applicants are expected to acquire a suitable power wheelchair through their own resources, or attain charitable assistance in purchasing such a wheelchair. Power Wheelchairs models that have been successfully used: Jazzy Model 1121 , Quickie Free Wheeling F-11 & Invacare
- GDB recently expanded to serving first time Guide Dog users with wheelchair Guides. The program is limited to training one first-time client per year. Training a first-time wheelchair Guide Dog client requires two weeks in-residence training at the Oregon campus and up to an additional two weeks of in-home training
- Commonly, a wheelchair traveler (independent with cane) will require 1-3 months of practice following harness movements (Juno) before being ready to work with a wheelchair Guide Dog. This means that most applicants will receive an additional home “readiness assessment” by a wheelchair instructor, after being accepted for training by the Student Selection Committee (SSC).

If you know of any candidates that would be eligible for the Custom Needs and Wheelchair Program (at no cost to them) please refer them to Guide Dogs by calling (800) 295-4050 or by visiting our website at guidedogs.com for more information.

### **Living Large with Lancaster**

*By: Caitlin Hernandez, GDB Graduate*



Having a Guide Dog has been really fun; it's lots faster and easier for me to get around. I especially see the difference when we're in crowds—it's so much easier to navigate. It's less of a hassle than constantly pulling a cane out of people's way.

Everyone loves *Lancaster*—kids and teachers alike. He's definitely spoiled, but surprisingly doesn't get distracted. The bond we started at the Guide Dogs for the Blind school has grown stronger. Even when people try to distract him, he looks to me for direction, as if to say, "Is it okay?" He's

got such a loving personality—he likes to flop in your lap and be pampered.

I love feeding him—he gets so excited! I feel like that's the least I can do for all he's doing for me. I have to work my schedule around his feeding and relieving schedules, so it has the effect of really keeping me in line, and has made me a more responsible person.

His raiser came out in September for a dog show and we had a chance to meet her. *Lancaster* got all psyched out. Now we continue to chat via e-mail. That's one of the benefits—just knowing that there were so many great people who helped bring him up and train him to be a Guide Dog.

My advice for someone who is considering a Guide Dog is to make sure you feel you can be responsible and you're ready for it. You can't just get a dog—you have to adapt it to your lifestyle. But the responsibilities are far outweighed by the dog—he makes going places so much fun! Everywhere you go is an adventure! I thought about the decision for a long time. You want to make sure you can use a dog to its fullest potential and really have a good life. I've heard people say, "I don't go enough places to have a dog." When you get a dog, sometimes, you take a trip to the store so you can keep the dog active. You can't just be a couch potato. They bring out the best in us.

*Lancaster* also attracts people—I can certainly say, people talk to me so much more than they did before. I think they didn't feel there was any common ground to initiate a conversation before. Now, people start talking about my dog; sometimes they relate to their own dogs. Usually the conversation just goes on from there. The important thing is they don't feel freaked out like they

did before. It heightens people's awareness of what a dog can do—they're amazed that he's so well-behaved and sleeps under my desk.

### **Additional Information**

Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) has always welcomed applicants to our training who are between the ages of 16 and 18 – what the law declares as "minors." The only difference in their application process is that we have required the approval of their parent or guardian, and maintain a connection with them throughout the training process.

Recently, we have reviewed our procedures with the intent of further protecting the safety of our young students and also reducing liability for adults housed with them. In the future, students who are minors will not be housed with adults. Options for their training will include: in-home training, training with other minors in a setting other than the GDB dorm, setting up the dorm to create a separate living area for minors, and using a combination of training in the GDB dorm when it is not occupied by a regular class followed by in-home training.

In addition, we will be giving consideration to applicants under the age of 16, on a case-by-case basis. Any application/interest from a minor received by GDB will go directly to the Admissions Manager. The minor, the family, and potentially the Orientation and Mobility Specialist who has worked with the youth will be contacted. The rest of the application process will be the same as for adults, with the exception of requiring approval from parent/guardian.

Our intent is to continue to service those qualified minors 16 and over, allow flexibility to provide service to qualified applicants under 16, and create an atmosphere for training that is safe and responsible for all of our students.

If you know of any referrals or have any question please contact Guide Dogs at (800) 295-4050 or log onto the web at [guidedogs.com](http://guidedogs.com) --we look forward to hearing from you!

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### **Santa Barbara Braille Institute and Guide Dogs for the Blind Host Youth Fun Day**

*By: Emily Simone, GDB Senior Field Manager*



This past summer, Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Santa Barbara Braille Institute (SBBI) collaborated to stage a youth related event called 'Youth Fun Day'. The purpose of this event was to give children who are blind or visually impaired the opportunity to learn about Guide Dogs for the Blind's programs and to interact with real working Guides and puppies in training. The event was attended by 13 youth (ranging in age from 7-22 years) from the SBBI Youth program, headed by SBBI's Youth Program Director Bob Quackenbush. Several of the children arrived with their parents, who also expressed interest in GDB's programs. GDB staff members Tami Shankle and I directed

the event. The event was well attended by puppy raising club members from the Tri-Counties area. Seven dogs were on hand including five puppies, a career change dog and a retired Guide. Puppy club leader's Jack and Linda Brey, Holly Cline and Marcia Heller represented Santa Barbara Sightseers Club. Leader Laurie Saldino was on hand from Ventura County Puppies with

a Vision—East and Leader Lori Weiss represented Ventura County Puppies with a Vision—South.

Four GDB Alumni were also in attendance: Robin Libbee, with Golden Retriever “Gittle,” Bill Campbell with Yellow Lab “Traveler,” Sarah Potok with German Shepherd “Flan,” and Gail Paulson with Yellow Lab “Paulson”. During the first part of the program, the youth had the opportunity to interact with puppies of various ages. They learned grooming basics, including teeth brushing, and they were also offered opportunities to walk a puppy on leash (with the assistance of the raiser). For the second part of the program, the youth spent time talking with our GDB alumni about the responsibilities involved and the benefits and challenging of living the Guide Dog Lifestyle. We spoke with the parents about GDB’s K-9 Buddy program, which places career-change dogs from our program as pets to families with a child who is blind or visually impaired. Lastly, “Juno” (simulated Guide Dog experience) walks were offered by GDB staff and SBBI O&M instructor David Friedman and Jack Brey, a leader with the local puppy club. Box lunches were generously donated to this event by the Bank of Santa Barbara.

I would like to take this moment to acknowledge the efforts of everyone who was involved with this spectacular event. It was truly inspiring to watch these children have positive, even enthusiastic interactions, with very well behaved and calm program dogs. Several of the children voiced enthusiasm for getting a Guide Dog when they turned 16. Many of the puppy raising volunteers remarked how inspired they were by the children’s positive reception to the dogs and learning about the care of them. Several puppy raisers voiced a strong desire to see GDB’s K-9 Buddy Program flourish for the benefit of blind and visually impaired youth all over the country. This event was also an excellent opportunity to strengthen our positive relationship with The Santa Barbara Braille Institute. This organization offers exceptional service to its clientele and helped to make this a truly memorable event!

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### **Guide Dog Puppies and the Utah Foundation for the Blind Celebrate the Holidays**

*By: Aerial Gilbert, GDB Outreach Manager*



Paw prints in the snow! Last December, Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Utah Foundation for the Blind (UFB) hosted an event at the Disabled Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired for the families of UFB. Puppy Raisers and 30 puppies were in attendance with more than 25 families from the Utah Foundation for the Blind. Dinner was provided and activities followed, including reading Braille books to the puppies, puppy grooming, games, puppy walks, harness walks and info on the responsibility of dog ownership. The children collected stamps for participating in each activity and turned them in for our giveaways (stuffed puppy key chains and bracelets) that were a big hit!

Guide Dogs Community Field Representative Barb Deevers coordinated the event and was there to assist puppy raisers. Aerial Gilbert, GDB Outreach Manager was in attendance with her Guide Dog, Hedda, to talk to families about the Guide Dog lifestyle as well as the K9 Buddy program.

To investigate events like the Utah event please contact Aerial Gilbert, GDB Outreach Manager at [agilbert@guidedogs.com](mailto:agilbert@guidedogs.com) (415) 499-4030

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## What is it Like to Train at Guide Dogs for the Blind?



Now you can provide your clients with more information about what it is like to attend classes at Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Our video [Campus Life video](#) provides a great overview of day to day activities on our two campuses. From eating in the dorms to working on escalators, this video gives an in depth look into the overall student experience.

Enjoy!

Also be sure to check out [Hands on Lives](#) – an information blog by one of our graduates, Becky DeGeorge, who is a life coach with a Guide Dog. Here you can find topics and resources for parents of children who are blind and visually impaired.

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## Upcoming Advanced Orientation & Mobility Seminar Dates

- February 11-15, 2008
- April 21-25, 2008
- August 4-8, 2008
- September 8-12, 2008
- October 13-17, 2008

We're committed to fostering relationships with orientation and mobility specialists and agencies for the blind and visually impaired. Guide Dogs for the Blind offers free seminars on our California campus (room and board provided) to assist you in your work with the visually impaired. We acknowledge the importance of good cane skills and urge our candidates to obtain orientation and mobility training prior to applying for a Guide Dog. The seminars are accredited by ACVREP; participants receive CE credits.

Our [O&M seminars](#) are designed to educate participants to areas that will allow you to refer suitable candidates to our Guide Dog training program, as well as allow you to participate more fully in our application and assessment process. Participants are housed in our dormitory for the duration of the seminar, allowing you to mix with our students attending class and experience, first hand, the facilities offered by our school. Please call Guide Dogs to learn more and enroll!

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## CONTACT US

Call 800-295-4050