

GUIDE DOG NEWS

2021
ISSUE 2



*ELLA WITH HER
K9 BUDDY, LAFFERTY*



**Guide Dogs
for the Blind**



Guide Dogs for the Blind

A NON-PROFIT,
CHARITABLE
ORGANIZATION

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Guide Dogs for the Blind follows the guidelines recommended by the Council of U.S. Dog Guide Schools and the International Guide Dog Federation for the humane care and training of our dogs, and the instruction and services offered to our clients.

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On occasion, GDB will share donor information with like-minded non-profit organizations to better fulfill our mission. If you do not want your information shared, please email us at donations@guidedogs.com.



Please recycle
this newsletter!

GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

Greetings,

At Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB), we have always adapted to thrive. Our ability to be nimble and innovative has allowed us to continue providing services in the face of unprecedented challenges, grow our mission, and prepare for the future.

With your support during the pandemic, we focused on new and innovative ways that we could deliver our mission. We embraced technology, quickly adjusting to a virtual environment across the organization and deepening connections with our constituents via Zoom video chats, webinars, and online curricula.

We held virtual inclusive experiences like Camp GDB, Puppy Raising Fun Week, and our Holiday Celebration that removed barriers of distance, travel, and cost.

Additionally, we have created several online educational opportunities to expand our client outreach efforts, including a three-part online learning series called “Path to a Guide Dog.” This seminar covers topics that help potential applicants and blindness professionals alike learn about guide dog mobility. We plan on incorporating this into our traditional service offering even after the COVID recovery.



As we ramp up our in-person Guide Dog Mobility Training and Orientation & Mobility Immersion Programs, we are continuing to utilize virtual technology where it makes sense to do so. For example, GDB veterinarians are providing telemedicine consultations for new clients to discuss their guide dog’s medical history. Another exciting program is called “Ready, Set, FORWARD!” for youth who are blind or visually impaired, their families, and professionals in the field of blindness and visual impairment (see pages 4-5).

Thank you for helping our entire GDB community continue to thrive and to deliver on our mission despite the challenges of COVID. Because of you, our team is ready for the future!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Benninger'.

Christine Benninger
President and CEO

YOUTH PROGRAMS THAT CHANGE CHILDREN'S LIVES

We believe that everyone deserves to move through the world safely and confidently, and to live the life they want to live. Life can sometimes be isolating when you are blind or visually impaired. That's why we offer several free programs to engage youth and their families so they can find a community of support here at GDB, and to be as prepared as possible to partner with a guide dog.

Guide Dog Lifestyle Workshops provide hands-on workshops for youth interested in guide dog mobility. The **K9 Buddy Program** matches specially selected dogs to become wonderful pets and companions, and **Camp GDB** is an annual summer camp for youth ages 14-17 to learn more about the guide dog lifestyle. "Parents tell us the positive impact our programs are having on their children and teens," says Jane Flower, GDB's youth outreach specialist. "They're literally life-changing."

In April, GDB was thrilled to launch **Ready, Set, FORWARD!**—a series of new online learning opportunities for youth and young adults who are blind or visually impaired, their family members, and professionals in the field of blindness and visual impairment.

Workshops Include:

- **The Canine Connection—Is Your Child Ready?** Open to parents and family members of youth who are blind or visually impaired.
- **The Ruff Life Academy—Harnessing your Pawtential:** A week-long youth academy open to teens and young adults who are blind or visually impaired ages 14-24.
- **Wags & Wisdom:** A panel discussion with current guide dog users about the successes and challenges of having a guide dog in high school, or on a college campus. Open to all.

**GDB'S YOUTH OUTREACH
SPECIALIST JANE FLOWER
AND HER GUIDE DOG, PILAF.**





K9 BUDDY PROGRAM



*GUIDE DOG
LIFESTYLE WORKSHOPS*



CAMP GDB

“GDB is committed to assisting blind and visually impaired youth and the community that supports them so they can be as well informed and prepared as possible to make that decision to cane or canine when the time is right,” explains Jane.

To learn more about GDB’s youth programs, please visit our website at [guidedogs.com/youthprograms](https://www.guidedogs.com/youthprograms).

For example, the Ruff Life Academy allows participants to explore how to interact and communicate with dogs and how they communicate with us. “Participants explore how a guide dog might fit into their everyday routine and learn why independent living skills are so important when you live with a guide dog,” says Jane. “We really want youth who are blind or visually impaired to understand all of their options for living the life they want to live because when everyone is empowered to participate, our communities are stronger.”

**GUIDE DOG TEAM
EVER ARREOLA
AND *FALANTE***



“When I grabbed *Falante’s* harness, I felt like I had my freedom and independence back. GDB has done a great job teaming me up with her.” Ever particularly wants to thank GDB’s volunteer puppy raisers and instructors, as well as the donors. “The dedication and love that goes into it is just so beautiful.”

To learn more about the clients featured here, please visit our blog for stories and videos: guidedogs.com/blog.

Louise Yale, a GDB donor who has sponsored two guide dog teams in 2021, is proud to see the impact of her generosity. “I love knowing that my gift assists with the cost of creating a working guide dog team,” she says. “Guide dogs help GDB clients live a fuller life without limits.”



**ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY
IMMERSION PROGRAM CLIENT
ERIC METZLER**

“This program has given me a new lease on life. I have learned more here in four days than I have learned in the last two-and-a-half years of being totally blind.” Eric says he feels confident in being able to navigate his surroundings in a safe manner, and to go outside and explore. He plans to continue honing his skills for a year before returning to GDB for a guide dog.

K9 BUDDY TEAM ELLA AND LAFFERTY

10-year-old Ella says she feels “love, happiness, and safety” when she’s around her K9 Buddy *Lafferty*. Her mother Christy says the bond between the two has been a joy to behold. “Last year at Girl Scout camp, Ella was shy and withdrawn. After she got *Lafferty*, her experience at camp was totally different. She was playing with kids she didn’t know and engaging with people a lot more.”



GRADUATING TO GREATNESS

Donate today to help all of our GDB clients live the lives they want to live. Please use the attached envelope to mail your donation today or donate online at [guidedogs.com/newsgift](https://www.guidedogs.com/newsgift).

DONATE TODAY TO HELP CHANGE SOMEONE’S LIFE!

- ▶ **\$25** helps pay for a food bowl and fleece pad for a guide dog
- ▶ **\$50** helps pay for a leash and grooming supplies for a guide dog
- ▶ **\$100** goes toward initial vaccines and veterinary care for one guide dog puppy
- ▶ **\$250** assists with the costs of a “Puppy Raising Kit” for a volunteer puppy raiser
- ▶ **\$500** helps provide transportation for one client to and from class at one of our campuses
- ▶ **\$1,000** helps cover the cost of personalized in-home training for a guide dog team

GUIDE DOG TEAM CHARI CHAUVIN AND HAVILAND

Chari was over the moon when she met her new guide, *Haviland*. “She is a go-getter and super responsive. I couldn’t be more thrilled.” During their first walk together, Chari says: “It was that magic ease of movement that I don’t have using a white cane. It is mostly fluid and fast and confident and all around awesome.”



Social Distancing Poses Real Challenges for GDB Alumni During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone, but those who are blind or visually impaired have been compromised in ways sighted people may not realize. To help raise awareness of some of the issues, GDB's Alumni Association Board of Directors, in concert with our Marketing and Alumni Services Departments, launched a "Compassion During COVID" public campaign this year.

As part of the campaign, GDB Alumni Association Board Member Dorianne Pollack gave a first-person account of her everyday challenges in an article for the *Huffington Post* that is reflected here. Dorianne says it's difficult for people with visual impairments to adapt to social distancing and limited-capacity rules to curb the spread of the virus because they are communicated in a way that is impossible to observe.

"For example, in many stores and other places, there are now directional arrows, signage, and taped-off measurements to ensure distancing but you need to be able to see them to know they're there. Our guide dogs don't understand them, and our white canes can't feel them," explains Dorianne.

Public transportation is also challenging.

"I can't get on a public bus and ask my guide dog, *Dime*, to find me a seat, because many

seats are off-limits as part of the distancing. Of course, *Dime* can't read signs, so her years of precision training and practice are now rendered ineffective without intervention from a stranger, who might shout obscenities at me."

She says two things happen as a result of this lack of inclusion. "First, we are on the receiving end of a lot of chiding and humiliation in public. Secondly, we begin to self-isolate, because of the treacherous conditions of being out in the community."

Dorianne hasn't been totally devoid of contact with the outside world during the pandemic. Like many professionals she uses Zoom video conferencing. But because Zoom is a visual medium, it is not an effective replacement for in-person meetings for those who are blind or visually impaired. "It's the same as a conference call for us. We can't see faces or visual aids that people share."

Now that many Americans have been vaccinated, Dorianne is hopeful that "normalcy" might soon return. However, it could take months or even years before social distancing is eliminated. "For a blind or visually impaired person, the thought of enduring another year of this is agonizing."

Because of her own isolation, Dorianne reached out to other alumni at Guide Dogs for the Blind to see how they were faring. Her outreach confirmed that most everyone in the blindness community has struggled with the new barriers to their independence that COVID has created.



DORIANNE POLLACK WITH HER GUIDE DOG, DIME. DORIANNE LIVES IN FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA, WHERE SHE WORKS IN THE DISABILITY RESOURCES DEPARTMENT AT NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

Through talking with others, she was inspired to try to improve the situation. Working with GDB's Alumni Board, she organized a town hall meeting for alumni from around North America to share best practices and to enlist them to help educate the sighted public about their issues.

“While I don't like being a poster child for disability, I feel the pandemic has given me no choice. Every uncomfortable situation should be our opportunity to educate others.”

Another element GDB created for the “Compassion During COVID” campaign is a national radio public service announcement to help raise awareness in the sighted community that people who are blind or visually impaired may need assistance in understanding and adhering to social distancing.

“We all need to ask for assistance in some situations and we want clients

to feel empowered when they do,” explains Theresa Stern, GDB's vice president of outreach, admissions, and alumni services, noting that the word “assistance” is a more equitable word than “help.” “Assistance indicates you can do something with a little guidance.”

If you are one of the lucky ones who does not need help with social distancing, Dorianne asks that you reach out and ask someone with a guide dog or a white cane if they need assistance. “When you do, you'll be helping to keep us all included in the community at a time when many of us are feeling excluded. Collaboration and compassion could help us all to see each other more clearly, both now and when the pandemic is past us.”

LEADING THE WAY TO PROTECT ACCESS FOR GUIDE DOG HANDLERS



DUKE CASTRO
WITH HIS GUIDE
DOG, GRYFFINDOR,
AND GDB MASTER INSTRUCTOR
PAOLO POMPANIN

Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) advocates for public policies and programs that protect guide dogs and increase access, equity, and support for those with visual impairments. And we collaborate with all GDB stakeholders, peer organizations, and agencies that serve the disability community to create a unified, passionate, and impactful voice for change.

GDB is proud to sponsor California legislation (Assembly Bill 468) that would crack down on fraudulent service animals while protecting public access rights for people with legitimate service dogs like guide dogs. Rabih Dow, director of advocacy and outreach at GDB, says the bill addresses the growing online sale of fraudulent service animal certificates by unscrupulous opportunists. “These misleading business practices have caused innocent bystanders to get hurt by these untrained animals and curbed public access rights for legitimate service dogs.”

The legislation, if approved, could have far reaching implications for the service dog industry in the U.S. Visit our blog at [guidedogs.com/blog](https://www.guidedogs.com/blog) to keep up to date about this important legislation and how you can help.

SAVE THE DATE *in hope that we can gather together in person*

- **CAPS & TAILS** September 11, 2021 (Portland, OR)
- **HOLIDAY LUNCHEON** December 3, 2021 (San Francisco)

For more info or to register,
visit [guidedogs.com/events](https://www.guidedogs.com/events)

CANINE HEROES VIRTUAL GALA



Sunday, June 6, 2021

5:00 pm PT

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Learn more and register by visiting guidedogs.com/events

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