

# GUIDE DOG NEWS

2022  
ISSUE 1

*BELOVED ACTRESS  
AND GDB SUPPORTER  
BETTY WHITE WITH HER  
GOLDEN RETRIEVER, PONTIAC,  
WHOM SHE ADOPTED FROM  
GUIDE DOGS FOR  
THE BLIND.*



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](mailto:donations@guidedogs.com).

# GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

Greetings,

2022 marks Guide Dogs for the Blind's (GDB's) 80th anniversary! Throughout the year, we'll observe milestones and introduce new services that bring our mission to life. We recently launched a new podcast called "Central Bark," and our Canine Heroes event in October will celebrate our anniversary. We're also looking forward to paying tribute to our dear friend, Betty White, who passed away last December.

GDB was founded in May 1942 to provide guide dogs to World War II veterans who lost their sight from injuries sustained in

the war. Today, we're the largest guide dog school in North America, partnering nearly 16,000 people of all ages and from all walks of life with guide dogs. Through it all, innovation and the support of our amazing community have been paramount to our culture.

One of our most exciting goals for the future is to expand our K9 Buddy Program, currently available in ten Western states. The program matches youth who are visually impaired with specially selected dogs to become companions, in preparation for the guide dog lifestyle. Our bold vision is to place K9 Buddies with families free of charge throughout the entire U.S. and Canada.

As we work toward our goal to serve clients more broadly, we plan to offer more educational workshops about the guide dog lifestyle, including many offerings designed specifically for youth. And we'll continue to grow our Orientation & Mobility Immersion Program to help more people gain the skills necessary to live life more independently with a cane or a guide dog.

Stay tuned. We're just getting started!

With gratitude,



Christine Benninger  
President and CEO



## REMEMBERING BETTY WHITE

Betty White was a dear friend, dedicated supporter, and ambassador for Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) since 1986. We loved and admired Betty's passion for animals, her incredible sense of humor and sass, and her generosity of spirit.

"Betty was a one-of-a-kind friend we will never forget," says Christine Benninger, President and CEO of GDB. "To celebrate Betty's incredible life, we have named one of our Golden Retriever puppies *BettyRose*, as one way to honor her and as a nod to Betty's iconic character from *Golden Girls*."



During the past three decades, Betty sponsored guide dog teams, graced us at countless events, and appeared in public service announcements urging people to support GDB. She also advocated for those with disabilities like blindness and was a strong proponent of diversity and inclusion. Like us, Betty believed that everyone deserves to move through the world safely and confidently—to live the life they want to live. We are forever grateful for Betty's many contributions to our life-changing mission and look forward to honoring her amazing contributions to GDB later this year and beyond.



***"Betty's legacy of compassion, activism, and love of the human-animal bond will live on for years to come."***

—President and CEO Chris Benninger

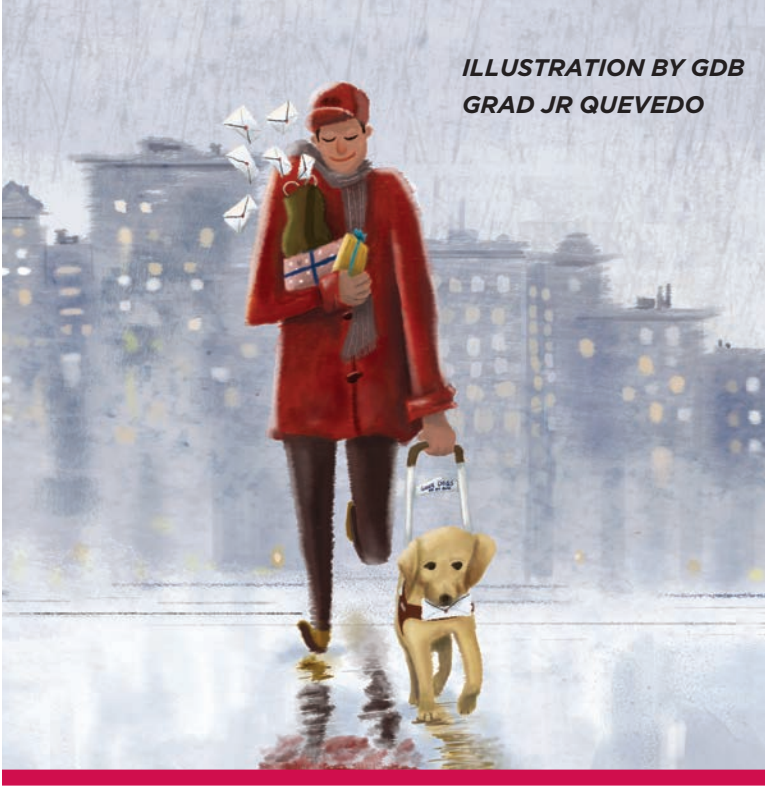


**CHECK OUT "CENTRAL BARK"  
AT GUIDEDOGS.COM/PODCAST!**

## NEW PODCAST LAUNCHED

As we embark on our 80th year, GDB is celebrating with the launch of a new podcast! "Central Bark" shares the stories and conversations that bring our mission to life. Join host, Theresa Stern, a GDB alumna and Vice President of Interdisciplinary Client Services and Engagement, as she and special guests discuss how lives are changed every day through the partnerships created between people, dogs, and communities at Guide Dogs for the Blind. Tune in and tell a friend!

ILLUSTRATION BY GDB  
GRAD JR QUEVEDO



## CELEBRATING CLIENTS, CANINES, AND HOLIDAY CHEER!

More than 1,000 households attended Guide Dogs for the Blind's Virtual Holiday Celebration on December 5, 2021, which raised more than \$430,000 for our programs.

**Radio and TV personality Liam Mayclem** and **GDB Alumna and Vice President of Interdisciplinary Client Services and Engagement Theresa Stern** hosted the event that captured GDB's mission in action. **Matching funds** from the **ROMA Charitable Foundation** and the **David and Leah Robinson Fund** provided a great incentive for people to donate. Special thanks to **GDB grads Graham Norwood** who performed an original song, **and Carina Comer** who wrapped up the festivities with a virtual holiday baking demonstration.

## SAVE THE DATE

### 80TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION CANINE HEROES GALA

October 29, 2022 (San Francisco)

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

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# LOVE IS A FOUR-LEGGED WORD

For GDB clients Rob and Christine Moreno, the guide dog lifestyle means more to them than increased mobility, independence, and inclusion. It also led to their “happily ever after” love story!

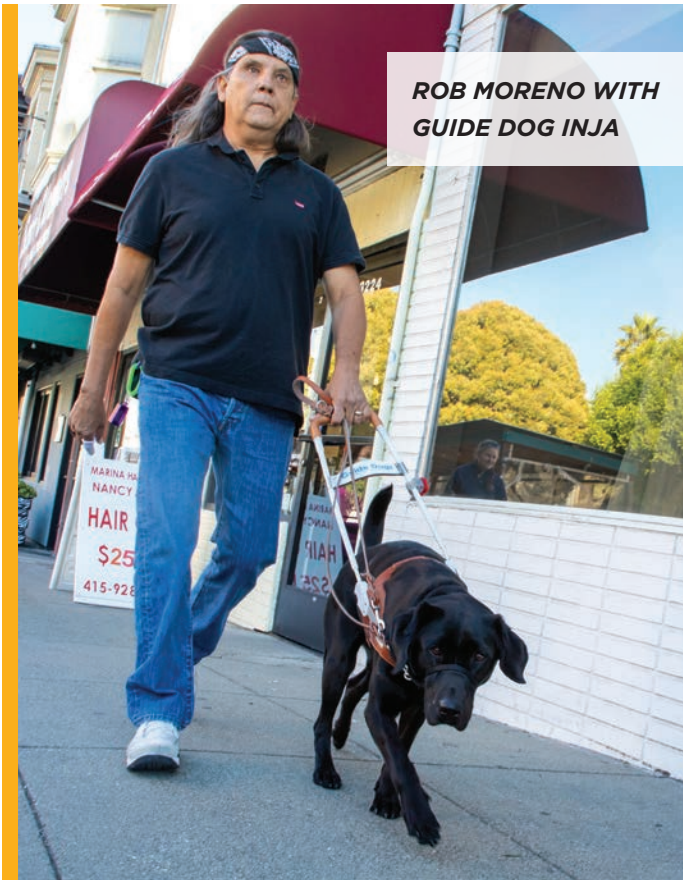
The two met in college decades ago, but lost touch over the years. Rob had joined an elite unit in the military, but at the age of 22, he lost his eyesight in a car accident. “When I realized I lost my sight, everything was pulled out from under me.”

He adapted to his changed circumstances, learned how to travel safely with a white cane, and accomplished a great deal in his professional life. Then, after 27 years of navigating the world using his cane, he started to explore the possibility of life with a guide dog. That’s when he reconnected with Christine, who has been blind since she was five. She had been paired with guide dogs from GDB for many years and suggested that Rob give us a call.



Fast forward a bit, and Rob was matched with his first guide dog in 2006, and he also began dating Christine. They married in 2014, and Rob calls Christine his “one true love.” Rob recently was paired with his third guide dog, *Inja*, and was very happy with the training he received at our California campus. He also appreciated that after completing our on-site training, Beth Hamilton, a Field Service Support Specialist, came to their home in Tucson to help introduce his new dog to his wife’s guide dog and continue training on his home turf.

“Having Beth come out and reinforce everything I learned on campus and apply it to my routes here was awesome. She really brought all my training full circle. I really do feel like GDB has my back.”



**ROB MORENO WITH  
GUIDE DOG INJA**

## DONATE TODAY TO CREATE POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Your support will help more people like Rob and Christine enjoy the greater freedom, opportunity, and inclusion that come with the guide dog lifestyle.

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your donation or donate online at [guidedogs.com/newsgift](https://www.guidedogs.com/newsgift).

Now retired from the Veteran's Administration (VA), Rob continues with the VA as a volunteer, helping others access VA benefits. Having a guide dog has been life-changing for Rob. "In the past, I wasn't as active. I wasn't as involved. Now, I'm leading the way with a lot of agencies and groups, and I attribute a great deal of my success to the confidence I get with my guide dog."

Christine sums up the tremendous impact that the guide dog lifestyle has had on both their lives. "We're married and we're best friends. We are very blessed. I can't even put into words all of the joy that Guide Dogs for the Blind has made possible in our lives."

Rob adds: "GDB has been around for 80 years. Think how many lives they have impacted! Guide Dogs for the Blind and their donors have been like angels to me, and they always will be."

- ▶ **\$50** helps pay for a leash and grooming supplies for a guide dog
- ▶ **\$100** helps pay for a veterinary examination
- ▶ **\$250** assists with the cost of a "Puppy Raising Kit" for a volunteer puppy raiser
- ▶ **\$500** helps pay for a guide dog harness
- ▶ **\$1,000** helps support a guide dog team

## HELPING CLIENTS QUALIFY FOR A GUIDE DOG

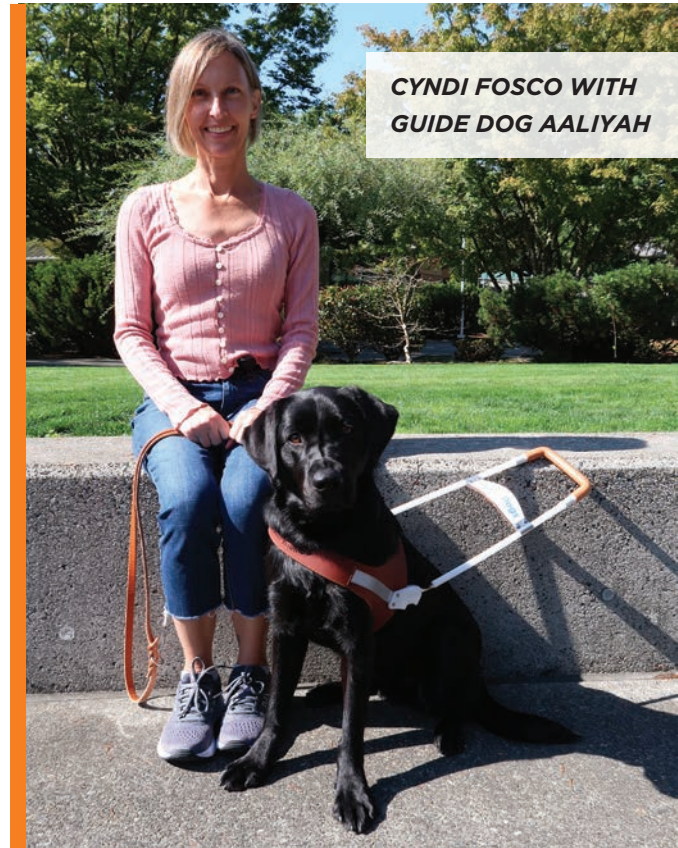
Every year, GDB receives hundreds of applications from people seeking to be paired with a guide dog. Unfortunately, approximately 40 percent of the people who apply lack the orientation and mobility (O&M) skills to qualify. Agencies serving people who are blind or visually impaired that teach these skills lack resources and may not sufficiently emphasize the non-tactile travel skills necessary to work with a guide dog.

GDB's Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Immersion Program addresses this critical gap so more people can learn to travel independently with a cane or a guide dog. Since the program began in 2016, more than 170 clients have completed the free, weeklong course.

Guide Dog Admissions Manager Ryan Garrett says before the program existed it was very difficult to tell an applicant they did not qualify for a guide dog. "Being able to refer people to our O&M Immersion Program is extremely satisfying. We can still help them access services in their local area, but we can also say we have this amazing program right here at GDB, and we can help you."

Recent GDB graduate Cyndi Fosco is such a client. She wanted a guide dog but needed to brush up on her O&M skills. She enrolled in our O&M Immersion Program and then was accepted into our guide dog training program with a host of new skills that helped her to be successful. She says her guide dog *Aaliyah* has brought joy and independence to her life. "Guide Dogs for the Blind has been so amazing. Phone calls, FaceTime interviews, emails of information and support, connections with others, travel arrangements, O&M immersion training—so many things—all in preparation for bringing *Aaliyah* into my life."

Another GDB client, Gustavo Sierra, wanted a guide dog to help him travel long distances for his engineering job on a military base as well as within city blocks without sidewalks. He also



CYNDI FOSCO WITH  
GUIDE DOG AALIYAH



wanted to learn new travel skills for walking through parking lots and large intersections. “I didn’t know what I didn’t know.” He says attending the O& M Immersion Program “really opened my eyes and enhanced my independence.” Gustavo is now enjoying life with his guide dog *Morris*, a yellow Lab. “With *Morris* I’m able to travel these difficult situations with confidence and ease.”

Marc Gillard, Director of Rehabilitation Services, who developed the O&M Immersion Program, says approximately one-third of first-time guide dog applicants who completed the program, like Cyndi and Gustavo, later received a guide dog or were accepted into training. “This program is opening new doors for people and changing lives,” says Marc. “It’s also helped us maintain closer relationships with more applicants from the time they call us until they hopefully get their guide dogs.”

In addition to helping new clients prepare for a guide dog, Marc says the O&M Immersion Program also trains current clients waiting for successor guide dogs. “We learned early on that we had several long-time clients who needed help refreshing their O&M skills. They may have had a loss of confidence due to a change in vision and are now in jeopardy of not qualifying for their next guide dog. It’s all about meeting clients where they are and helping them live the life they want to live.”

Marc says GDB’s goal is to continue to expand the O&M Immersion Program to accommodate



**GUSTAVO SIERRA  
WITH GUIDE DOG  
MORRIS**

more clients and eventually broaden the program to meet a variety of client needs. “We are committed to providing a lifetime of support to all of our clients. Because without the right support, people don’t just miss out on improved mobility, they miss out on living more abundant, inclusive lives,” he says. “To this end, we’re exploring a lot of possibilities.”



***“It’s all about meeting clients where they are.”***

—Director of Rehabilitation Services Marc Gillard

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October 1-December 31, 2021\*

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GDB is in my estate plan  Please send me suggested language to use in my will or trust.

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