﻿﻿Guide Dog News

**2022, Issue 2**

**COVER**

Photo: Meet guide dog puppy Oak, GDB’s first pup born in 2022, the year of our 80th anniversary.

**Greetings from the CEO**

Greetings,

Spring is here—a time of new beginnings! Meet Oak, the first pup born in our Puppy Center during our 80th anniversary year. Oak is the traditional symbol for 80th anniversaries and represents strength, longevity, resilience, and knowledge. We think he’s already growing into his name.

With your ongoing support, Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) continues to lead the way with innovative ventures that will help meet our clients’ needs over the next 80 years. This year, we launched The Gard Furlong Canine Research Program, a groundbreaking research and development program made possible by a generous multi-year pledge from Elizabeth Gard and Tom Furlong. Like many donors, the two began their GDB journey as puppy raising volunteers. Their extraordinary gift will help improve the success and longevity of GDB program dogs. Learn more on page 4.

We also highlight our Puppy Transformation Project that helps pups like Oak reach their full potential as guides, K9 Buddies, or breeders. This pioneering work is moving us toward our goal of having more of the dogs we breed serve more clients.

Additionally, we profile clients Megan Borella and Kevin Leong, both of whom were partnered with K9 Buddies when they were children, and now as young adults, they both have guide dogs. Megan and Kevin will likely have six or more guide dogs throughout their lifetimes. Thanks to your support, we can provide our clients with a lifetime of care and support so they can continue to live more abundant, inclusive lives. Thank you! Together, we are unstoppable!

With gratitude,

Christine Benninger, President and CEO

P.S. - Be sure and listen to our new podcast, “Central Bark” at guidedogs.com/podcast

**Donor Spotlight: A Family Affair**

Ever since she was a child, Elizabeth Gard wanted to raise a guide dog puppy. It wasn’t until she was an adult that her wish came true.

“I was a Girl Scout leader and invited Guide Dogs for the Blind to speak at a meeting. Two wonderful volunteers came with dogs and explained what it was like to become a puppy raiser. Later, my younger daughter Katie said, ‘I’m nine. I meet all the qualifications. I want to raise puppies.’” The puppy raising seed was planted.

A few weeks later, Elizabeth picked up her older daughter Paige from school and a puppy raiser was there with her dog. “There were a lot of signs telling me the time was right to fulfill my youngest daughter’s dream and my own childhood dream of raising a guide dog puppy.” Elizabeth’s husband, Tom Furlong, was on board and so was Paige. After the entire family underwent training with their local puppy club, they received their first charge: a black Lab puppy named Phoebe, who was later partnered with an 18-year-old client. “Her mother thanked us for raising such a wonderful dog and said she could now be at peace knowing that her daughter was safe,” recalls Elizabeth. “To know you are having such an impact in someone’s life is a bit overwhelming. I’m not aware of any other organization that has this kind of an impact.”

The family went on to raise seven puppies. As their involvement grew, Elizabeth and Tom became even more impressed with GDB’s supportive and collaborative community and became donors. “The dedication of everyone throughout the organization is tremendous. From the Development team to the veterinarians, kennel staff, community field reps, and the volunteer puppy club leaders, everyone is working toward one goal.”

When Elizabeth and Tom learned about GDB’s efforts to build a new Residence Hall on our California campus, they wanted to help. In subsequent years, they supported the new Puppy Center and the courtyard adjacent to the center, now known as the Elizabeth A. Gard Courtyard.

Most recently, they made a significant multi-year pledge to launch The Gard Furlong Canine Research Program. This extraordinary funding will support a research and development program that will provide recommendations to improve the success and longevity of GDB program dogs.

GDB President and CEO Christine Benninger says the new program will support the organization’s strategic initiative to increase the success rate of guide dogs to serve more clients and provide relevant industry knowledge to support innovation and improve guide dog welfare worldwide. Funding from The Gard Furlong gift will help GDB hire a Canine Research Manager to oversee studies focusing on improving the health, well-being, and success of GDB dogs, through analysis of large data sets of canine genetics, breeding, behavior, and medical traits. “This program will ensure reliability and sustainability of our client and dog programs. It’s the first time GDB will have a person specifically allocated to a research-based role,” says Chris.

This year, The Gard Furlong Canine Research Program will launch an annual Canine Health and Longevity Survey to track medical trends and flag important genetic conditions to guide breeding choices of all GDB dogs. The Program will also establish benchmarks for reproductive excellence and develop a theriogenology-focused externship for veterinary students through a formal partnership with UC Davis.

“We’re excited to see how the Program contributes to the overall success rate of the dogs and gets more teams out there,” says Elizabeth.

Standalone quote: “I always tell people that GDB receives no government funding and relies on donor support. We’re proud to fund the initial launch of this program and hope other funders offer additional support.” -Elizabeth Gard

Photos:

* Elizabeth Gard and Tom Furlong with a yellow Lab guide dog and a yellow Lab breeder dog
* Elizabeth Gard with CEO Chris Benninger

**Client Spotlight: A Lifetime of Care and Support**

At Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB), providing a lifetime of care and support is central to our mission. For some, that starts with pairing young clients with a K9 Buddy dog, and then eventually providing them with a guide dog. That was the case for 23-year-old Megan Borella who began her journey with GDB in 2004, when she was in grade school. Her parents thought Megan could benefit from our K9 Buddy Program, which matches specially selected dogs to children and young adults who are blind or visually impaired. Our K9 buddies introduce a child to the responsibilities of caring for a pet and can also contribute to sensory development, motivating a child to learn and enhancing self-esteem.

At first Megan was nervous around dogs, but our pups’ calm and affectionate personalities soon won her over. Eventually, she was paired with her K9 Buddy, Nikka.“Nikka was just a great family dog, really calm and fun to be around,” Megan says. “I had such a positive experience and would definitely recommend the K9 Buddy program.”

Nikka remained Megan’s constant companion and a beloved member of the Borella household until she passed away at the age of 14. After graduating from UCLA and establishing a successful career in the technology sector, Megan decided it was time to apply for a guide dog. That’s when GDB paired her with Gallagher. Megan says her journey with Gallagher has been transformative. “I have been a cane user since I was three, but the transition to a guide dog has been such an exceptional journey, in large part due to the guidance of GDB’s staff, who went above and beyond to train both Gallagher and me how to be a successful team.”

Kevin Leong had a similar journey that began with our K9 Buddy Program. As a youngster, Kevin was paired with a K9 Buddy named Kelly. Kevin was the only student in his school with a visual impairment. “I had a really tough time in school. Having Kelly as a companion made it a lot easier for me.”

When Kevin decided to get a guide dog, he wasn’t sure that another dog would be as incredible as Kelly. But he says his guide dog Fender exceeded all expectations. “I wanted a very playful, but calm and relaxed dog that would really be there for me. GDB did a great job (selecting Fender) and I am very blessed to have both dogs in my life now.”

Standalone quote: “I am very, very blessed, and I look forward to being able to travel a lot more. We are going to have some fun!” -Kevin Long

Check out videos featuring Megan and Kevin at guidedogs.com/client-videos

Photos:

* Megan Borella with guide dog Gallagher
* Kevin Leong with guide dog fender

**Help provide a lifetime journey of love, care, and support!**

We need your help so we can continue to provide all of our client services free of charge.

* $50 helps provide a leash and grooming supplies
* $100 helps provide transportation for one client to one of our campuses for training
* $250 assists with the costs of a “Puppy Raising Kit” for a puppy raiser volunteer
* $500 helps provide veterinary care for a guide dog or K9 Buddy
* $1,000 helps cover the cost of training for a guide dog team

**Puppy Transformation Project**

Why does one puppy become a successful guide dog, breeder dog, or K9 Buddy and another one does not? “That’s the big question we’re trying to understand,” says Kristin Lucas, GDB’s Canine and Community Operations Officer. In 2017, GDB launched a Puppy Transformation Project to determine what factors comprise this “secret sauce” so GDB can serve more clients without breeding more dogs.

Sarah Blevins is GDB’s Director of Puppy Raising. Her team oversees upwards of 3,000 puppy raising volunteers in 10 Western United States. “We know that a dog’s DNA is critically important to their success. That’s why we breed our own dogs so that they have the genetic traits and good health to do this important work. But we’ve also found that how a puppy is raised can make a profound difference in how successful they are when they return to campus for training.”

One of the biggest findings revealed that when puppy raisers understand that their socialization and time with the puppy matter, statistically that puppy will have a better chance at succeeding. Given this revelation, Sarah’s team examined what other factors help predict a successful puppy raiser. They found three primary factors make a difference:

* Puppy raising leaders who are adaptable teachers.
* Puppy raising volunteers who enjoy receiving constructive, timely feedback.
* Consistent puppy training by all people in the home.

Sarah says the project also challenged some of GDB’s assumptions. “We thought the environment a dog was raised in—such as the city or country—might be a key factor in predicting how successful a dog would be in a particular environment. It wasn’t. This project helped us set aside many of our assumptions and look at the program with a fresh perspective.”

Moving forward, Sarah says GDB will strive to provide puppy raising volunteers with consistent, informative onboarding information, so that every volunteer can feel supported and be more successful from the beginning. For example, her team has developed a better screening and onboarding process for puppy raising volunteers, launched new online training materials, and initiated updated protocols to head off potential issues pups may develop in their raiser’s homes.

Prior to the Puppy Transformation Project, 38 to 42 percent of GDB’s dogs became guides, breeders, or K9 Buddies. Today, that percentage is between 45 and 47 percent. “Each percentage point we gain translates into serving more clients and stewarding our donor dollars more effectively,” explains Kristin. “We believe the Puppy Transformation Project will lay the groundwork so that a majority of our dogs will reach their full potential in our program as guides, breeders, or K9 Buddies.”

Photo: Golden Retriever guide dog puppy

**Give with Crypto**

GDB is pleased to partner with The Giving Block, one of the world’s largest cryptocurrency donation services, to support our life-changing mission. The Giving Block enables our organization to accept over 70 cryptocurrencies.

“This opportunity gives a new generation of supporters the ability to use their crypto as a force for good and help people who are blind or visually impaired lead more abundant, inclusive lives,” says GDB Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, Sherilyn Dacquisto.

Learn more at guidedogs.com/crypto.

**GDB’s Online Gift Shop Gets a Glow-Up!**

Our online gift shop has recently undergone a number of significant changes to enhance the shopping experience for our community. The store now has a fresh look and feel, and many behind-the-scenes upgrades to the store’s infrastructure. We worked with a team of web developers, as well as two different digital accessibility consulting companies, to maximize the usability and accessibility of the store where possible. As part of GDB’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, the updates to the store include gender-neutral product categories, sizing, and descriptions, larger and clearer images, and a faster checkout. As our software vendor makes accessibility updates in the future, we plan to roll them out in a timely manner. Happy shopping! guidedogs.com/shop

**Save the Date**

80th Anniversary Celebration Canine Heroes Gala: October 29, 2022 (The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco)

For more info, visit guidedogs.com/events

**Leaving a Gift in Your Estate Plan**

Our Legacy Society honors supporters who make gifts to GDB in their estate plans, whether by will, trust, or beneficiary designation on a bank, retirement, or stock account, or life insurance policy. These gifts help ensure that our clients can continue to enjoy the rewards of partnership with a guide dog throughout their lives. “My daughter has had five guide dogs, all at no cost. Leaving a provision in our trust to benefit GDB is such a meaningful thing for us to do when you consider how much the program has benefited our family.” —Fred George

For more info, please call our estate planning team at 800.295.4050 ext. 4073 (Joan), ext. 4169 (Tom), or ext. 4456 (Erin).

Photo: Fred George with Daughter Maile and her Guide Dog, Flanders.

**Thank You to Our New and Continued Supporters, January 1-March 31, 2022**

Honoring the generous major donors who contribute $5,000 or more annually.

Leadership Circle and Friend’s Society members

Honoring the generous donors who contribute $5,000+ annually.

Champions $500,000+

Elizabeth A. Gard and Thomas J. Furlong#

Soulmates: $100,000-$499,999

Granite Solutions Groupe#

Bille Sarzin#

Heroes: $50,000-$99,999

Anonymous

Partners: $25,000-$49,999

Annica and James Newton Howard

Daisy Jones

Lassonde Family Foundation\*#

The Chris & Melody Malachowsky Family Foundation

Bob and Jeri Williams

Jaime S. Winkler Charitable Fund

Companions: $10,000-$24,999

Companions: $10,000-$24,999

Alice Shaver Foundation

Anonymous: In Loving Memory of Bob Norton

Renato Baserga

Bergen Foundation

Vicky and Marshall Berol

Janice and Tom Berthold

Aiko Bevans

Don Bloyer

Bryn Mawr Trust

Richard and Melissa Colburn

Diane Delbridge

Delta Gamma Foundation

Christina Federlein

Gamma Phi Chapter of Delta Gamma Fraternity at Arizona State

Rebecca Gaples

Yvonne Gee

George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation

Randy Gottfried

Mario Barbieri Charitable Foundation

Carolyn Hacker

Irmy Haugen

Invesco

Binny Kuriakose

Lieselotte Schlago Area of Interest Fund

Patricia and Richard List

Marin Community Foundation

The Masimo Foundation

Ms. Valerie Nagle

Bonnie Sommerville

Von and Barbara Summers

The Optimist Club of Country Club

The Oregon Community Foundation

The Schuler Family Foundation

The Seattle Foundation

Friends: $5,000-$9,999

Anonymous (2)

Sally Avenson

Fred and Joan Baker

Benefaction Foundationt

Paula Block

Robert and Diane Butler

R. Douglas Butler

Steven and Debbie Cohen

Community Foundation of the North State

Ms. Edna M. Coutts

Maris Cowgill

Sloan Danenhower and Jacob Samuels

Michael and Denise Deleray

Karol Denniston

David and Alaina Divine

Dmarlou Foundation

Sarah and Grayson Fitzhugh

Linda and Dan Fowler

Mrs. Gerda Franzen

Albert Good

Mrs. Leslie Groussman

TJ and Jill Harbrecht

James and Kimberly Hendrix

Bonnie and Tom Herman

Diana Hirzel

Carole Howard

Wayne and Laurell Huber

James J. Santiago Trust

Patricia Joseph

Linda Kenny

Martha Kinkaid

Donna Kirkwood

J. Leitz

Kristine Long

Susan and Warren Lortie

Marshall and Mary Brondum Special Assistance Foundation, Inc

Georgianne and Paul Meade

Eri and Eric Minoura

Northwest Natural Gas Company

Miyo Okubo

Orange County Community Foundation

Christina Parry

RC Ornametal LLC

Kent Rickabaugh

Joyce Sanborn

Meg Santel

Carolyn and Jesse Stone

Stacey Taylor

The Depolo Foundation

Tony Thomas

Clem Underhill

Catherine Whittington

Betsy Zern

#Multi-year commitment

\*Canadian donor to Guide Dogs for the Blind International

**New Legacy Society Members, January 1-March 31, 2022**

Recognizing the vision of those who have included GDB in their estate plans.

Margaret Louise Anderson

Anonymous (3)

Howard and Astrid Butcher

Jeanette and Joe Cunha

Lisa Gilmartin

Dolores and Leo Gross

Arthalene and John Hopkins

Elena Marie Lau

Janet MacAdam

Robert Meltzer

Patricia Monk

Jo Ann Mueller

Barbara and Jim O’Neill

Joy Pedroja

Marc Proulx

Lauren Sellyei and Anthony Termini

Laurie Smith

Bill and Joan Truncali

Cheryl Ware

**You Can Make a Difference**

Send a tax-deductible donation today by mailing a gift or donating online.

* U.S.: guidedogs.com/newsgift
* Canada: gdbinternational.ca

Contact us at 800.295.4050 ext. 4160 or visit our website at guidedogs.com/waystogive to learn how you can:

* Make recurring gifts from your bank account, credit card, PayPal, IRA or DAF
* Make a stock gift
* Name GDB in your will
* Donate cryptocurrency
* Make an honor or memorial gift
* Have your employer match your gift
* Donate your vehicle (call 877.DOG.CAR1)

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.