



Guide Dogs  
of America



Tender Loving  
Canines

## The Puppy Raising Exclusive

### MESSAGE FROM THE PUPPY DEPARTMENT

It takes a village to raise guide and service dog puppies, and what a wonderful village we have. We can't thank our puppy raising community enough for the love, care, and training they share with our dogs.

### A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our team at Guide Dogs of America (GDA) is hard at work **Building for the Future**. We just broke ground on full renovations of our kennel and breeding centers, which will improve the health and safety of our facilities, and create a more comfortable experience for our dogs. These state-of-the-art renovations are essential to the continuing success of our organization.

Putting guide/service dogs into the hands of those that need them continues to be our top priority. We have been holding service dog trainings with reduced class sizes to allow for social distancing. Meanwhile, our blind and visually impaired clients have been receiving in-home trainings.

**This edition of our newsletter is dedicated to our volunteer puppy raisers.** They are the cornerstone of this organization and are some of the most selfless, committed, and compassionate people I have ever met. It takes a special person to foster an eight-week-old puppy knowing it's only temporary. It's a 24/7 job, full of sleepless nights, accidents in the house, and chewed-up furniture. But, without the love and training that our puppy raisers provide, our program could not exist. Their work truly changes people's lives. On behalf of myself, our staff, and our clients — thank you.

—Russell Gittlen, *President*



Because of our raisers, puppies — born to fulfill a special purpose — learn to feel safe in the world. Because of our raisers, puppies blossom from rambunctious little ones into confident, well-mannered dogs. Because of puppy raisers, people in-need experience the amazing transformation that comes with a highly skilled working dog.

Raising puppies amid a pandemic has not been easy, but our raiser community has handled it with grace and creativity. From makeshift obstacle courses for puppies during the stay-at-home order, to Zoom® puppy trainings, our raisers were steadfast in their commitment to helping us transform lives, one puppy at a time.

We remain humbled by the continued support of everyone who is a part of our amazing village — donors, area leaders, puppy raisers, breeder hosts, campus volunteers, supporters, and our fellow staff members. We're excited to see what new puppy fun unfolds in 2021!

With gratitude,

**Stephanie Colman**

*Puppy Program Coordinator*

**Carol Ann Heinis**

*Canine Development Lead*

**Hanna Belyea**

*Canine Development Assistant*

## GUIDE DOG GRADUATES

(puppy raiser in parentheses):



### In-Home Trainers

- Christy Moon and Hazel (Bob Ruby)
- David Steinmetz and Rufus (Hollander Family)
- Kim Pomatto and Beau (Wette Family)
- Luetta Johnson and Gouda (Alexis Beamon)
- Teresa Blevins and Mamba (Yang Family)
- Tony Davis and Eazy (Greg Mountain)
- Tyanne Wilmath and Ian (Madrigal Family)

## SERVICE DOG GRADUATES

(puppy raiser in parentheses):



### Class #03

Top Row: Ruben Hinojosa and Simba, Bill Redmond and Tika, Tracey Pitter and Timon, Suzanne Schultz and Nala.  
 Bottom Row: Satpal Kalsi and Bolt, Weslee Gomez and Bo, Amy Taber and Liberty, Amanda Ball and Bear.

Instructors: Erin Vejar, Stephanie Santos, Nicole Maples



### Class #04

Leigh Abbott and Aries, Ronaldo Leynes and Canela, Ana Penagos and Helani (Durning Family), Messina Fotinos and Proxie (Stayton Family).

Instructors: Erin Vejar and Victoria Cavaliere



## Building for the Future

### Kennel and Breeding Center Renovation

With more than 250 puppies-in-training and hundreds of working dogs, our kennel and breeding centers are the heart of our campus. That is why, this year, we are **Building for the Future** with a full renovation of our Kennel and Breeding Centers. Using state-of-the-art technology, we plan to create an environment that meets the industry's highest health and safety standards. Creating a healthier, safer, and more comfortable environment will allow our dogs and staff to focus on their greater purpose — transforming lives.

To kick off this project, we need help! Sponsors of this project will have their name placed in these new areas and at the entrance.

■ Silver:		
Single Kennel Dedication		\$6,000
■ Gold:		
Puppy Pen		\$25,000
■ Platinum:		
Section of 10 Kennels + Community Area		\$50,000

If you are interested in being a part of this important project, contact us at **(818) 833-6429** or go to [give.guidedogsofamerica.org/kennel2021](https://give.guidedogsofamerica.org/kennel2021)



# Rehabilitating through Raising

We all know the power that service dogs have in providing comfort, mobility, and independence, but did you know that they also transform the lives of incarcerated individuals?

Our service dog puppy raising program operates in prisons and allows incarcerated participants to practice responsibility and develop social skills while giving back to the community. The invaluable rehabilitation that our program provides, prepares participants for a better life after prison.

“The help we give heals so many. To do this from prison fills my heart with overwhelming joy and gives my life meaning and purpose. It inspires me to do more...”

—Incarcerated Trainer

## THE PROGRAM

We currently train service dog puppies at three institutions: Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego, CA, The Brig at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, CA, and Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, CA.

### Participant Requirements:

- Minimum of 24 months remaining on sentence
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Discipline free for 12 months
- Remain discipline-free
- Pass screening and interviews with staff
- **No crimes against animals**

Our service dog puppies live in prison for two years, going everywhere with their trainers (meals, church, school, etc.). Participants are responsible for feeding, relieving, grooming, and, of course, playing with their puppies.

The incarcerated trainers attend weekly classes with our

instructors to learn everything from, potty training, to teaching their puppy over 50 complex service cues.

Once a week, we pick the puppies up from prison to socialize them in public settings. Additionally, volunteers take the puppies' home on weekends to give them experience in a household setting.

## WHO BENEFITS?

### ■ Improving the Correctional Facilities

Correctional facilities are typically divided by race or gang. “In our program, teamwork is non-optional,” says program director, Victoria Cavaliere. Teaming unlikely individuals together for our puppies and their greater mission bonds the general population. Furthermore, our program requires inmates and custody staff to work together, which helps improve the guard/inmate relationship. **Correctional facilities with programs like ours report a significant decrease in violent incidents.**

### ■ Rehabilitating Incarcerated Individuals

We only teach the incarcerated trainers humane, evidence-based, positive reinforcement training techniques. They never give a hard correction to their puppy. Positive reinforcement teaches participants an effective communication method. An incarcerated trainer shares, “If people want to argue and fight, I just walk away now. **If I can be patient with a crazy dog, I can be patient with you.**”

As you may know, an eight-week-old puppy is not easy to manage! The responsibility of raising and training a young puppy allows participants to discover their potential. Fewer than 50% of participants reported feeling responsible before our program; **100% said they felt responsible after.** Success found in raising and training puppies builds personal confidence, one participant says, “I’m amazed all this capability was in me. I’m not dumb like I thought I was. I have something to contribute to the world. I’m more valuable than I thought.”

### ■ You — The Community

Training service dogs in prison is also very cost-effective, which means more veterans, children with autism, and





facilities can receive our life-changing partners. One participant drives home the importance of our program, “These dogs have taught me so much about myself, and have played a major role in my growth as a person. They taught me how to be compassionate, thoughtful, caring, responsible, and committed. This program has given me a different outlook on life, and I would not be the man I am today without it.” **The statistics speak for themselves —since the Prison Program’s inception, we have not had a single participant re-offend in the community.** 🐾



## How can I give my puppy up?

BY: JEN BUEHLER

Besides “Oh my gosh, he’s so cute,” the comment I get the most as a puppy raiser is, “How can you give him up?” To be honest, when I started raising puppies, I wasn’t sure. I even remember asking how to prepare for the inevitable heartbreak of “turn-in day” during the first interview. The GDA area leader simply replied, “Go to graduation.”

A few weeks later, I was at my first graduation. The graduating teams’ puppy raisers spoke first. I immediately started crying. The raisers talked about picking up their little bundle of love and expressed the joy found in giving their puppy a solid foundation. Most of all, they spoke about the love and bonds formed along the way. I realized that the

raisers didn’t hurt any less than I would. Being a successful puppy raiser meant getting attached.

**Next, the graduating students spoke and my whole outlook on raising a puppy changed.** Their stories were all the same. They shared how grateful they were that every opportunity and adventure was now possible because of the new “eyes” at their left side. They could once again experience the smallest things that we sighted people take for granted.

**“At that moment, I realized that these people need my puppy so much more than I do. I would do everything I could to help.”**

—Jen Buehler

Camp.” You’ll see videos of her and Kirby walking through hotels, down busy streets, and even traveling on planes and trains. Because of my Kirby, her life is filled with confidence and independence. Her spirit’s energy is renewed.

Now when people ask how I could give my puppy up, I know just what to say... **“How could I NOT?”** 🐾

Most importantly, they were confident and independent and they no longer felt like a burden to friends and family. At that moment, I realized that these people need my puppy so much more than I do. I would do everything I could to help.

My first puppy, Kirby, graduated with Jill Anderson, who has become like family to me. Check out her Facebook page, “Jill Goes to Dog

**YOU KNOW YOU’RE A PUPPY RAISER WHEN...**  
You find puppy toys in the freezer.  
People don’t remember who you are unless you have your pup with you.



# The Amazing Raisers

When our puppy raisers aren't working on "sit," "down," or "get busy," they do amazing things with their lives. Meet a few of our Amazing Raisers!



**JIM KLIPFEL**  
Jim and his wife Jennifer are both teachers in Santa Clarita, California. The dynamic duo was first

introduced to puppy raising through their daughters' volleyball team and their first puppy, Abby, graduated as a guide dog! They are currently raising their second puppy, Kora.

Jim teaches AP U.S. History at Saugus High School, coaches the swim team, leads the science Olympiad, and is the Habitat for Humanity club director. His commitment led to being named one of California's "Teachers of the Year"—the most prestigious honor for public school teachers.

Jim says, "As a puppy raiser, I get to help by raising a puppy who will become a companion and a ticket to greater independence. It shows my students the natural high that comes with volunteering and serving your community."



**JASON MAYBAUM**  
Jason stars alongside actress Raven Symone as "Levi" on the Disney Channel show

"Raven's Home." At the beginning of 2020, Jason and his family toured GDA's campus with graduate Lorri Bernson and were convinced it was time to raise a puppy. Jason says, "Raising 'Wednesday' has brought my family even closer together — we all love training her together." Wednesday has already gained celebrity status amongst the show's cast and crew, and his coworkers love to help with the training process.

His family's commitment to GDA began by collecting and recycling cans as a means of fundraising. When the pandemic hit, they shifted gears, raising money by making and selling facemasks. Jason also donates all the money he makes on "Cameo," an app where people pay for personalized videos made by celebrities.



**HOLLY SJOGREN**  
A four-time puppy raiser, Holly Sjogren teaches 4th grade at Hope View Elementary

in Huntington Beach, CA. Her puppies have become an integral part of the school's curriculum- the PTA even sponsors her dog food! Students at Holly's school can earn "Make a Difference Tickets" for doing a good deed, which can then be redeemed for prizes like a picture with the pup or taking a walk with the pup. The grand prize is a daylong puppy visit to their class!

In 2020, Hope View Elementary won the distinguished "Golden Bell" award handed out by The California School Board Association. They were recognized for "Excellence in Education" because of their Positive Behavior Support Program with Holly and her pups. 🐾

**YOU KNOW YOU'RE A PUPPY RAISER WHEN...**

You use one-word commands on your kids... "Come," "Stay," "Sit!"

Your phone has more pictures of your puppy than your grandchildren!

**YOU KNOW YOU'RE A PUPPY RAISER WHEN...**

You can spend an hour talking about puppy poop.

You have kibble strategically stashed around the house, car, and yard.

**YOU KNOW YOU'RE A PUPPY RAISER WHEN...**

You find treats and empty poop bags in the washer and/or dryer.

You refer to your puppy as your child.

## SHOP GDA

To purchase, go to "Shop GDA" on [guidedogsofamerica.org](https://www.guidedogsofamerica.org), or call (818) 833-6429.

## 2021 LAPEL PIN

This year's pin signifies our merged organization with a Tender Loving Canine service dog hugging a Guide Dog of America.

**PRICE: \$8.00** + Shipping and handling





# Guide Dogs of America

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## GET PARTNERS [DIGITAL EDITION]

If you would like to receive this newsletter by e-mail, simply go to [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org) and click on the "Partners" icon, located on the bottom right side of the home page.



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

## PARTNERS IN TRUST

Make your gift to Guide Dogs of America last a lifetime and beyond. The Partners in Trust Society was established by GDA to recognize and honor the generosity of those who have included us in their planned giving. Visit our website, or please call **Rhonda Bissell** at **(818) 833-6432** for more information.

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Cash     Check     Credit Card    Donation Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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