



Fall 2015 volume 30 number 4

## You're Never Too Old

GDA's 'No Upper-Age Limit' Policy Keeps These Three Graduates Going and Going and Going



Dave Dowland and Ralphie

When Guide Dogs of America was founded more than 65 years ago, one of the founding principles was that no one would be denied a guide dog from the school based on his or her age. Joseph Jones, with the help of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM&AW), founded our school and established the policy because he had been denied a guide dog from other schools due to the fact that he was "too old." Jones was only 57.

Since then, GDA has graduated many students in their 60s, 70s and, yes, well into their 80s. Three recent graduates — all now in their 70s — prove every day that those who denied Jones a dog were just doggone wrong.

**"Ralphie keeps me young and keeps my heart ticking."**

Dave Dowland graduated from GDA with his first guide dog when he was 43. Today, he is 70 and graduated just last year with Ralphie, his fourth guide dog.

"I use a guide dog because I want to keep myself healthy and in good shape," said Dowland. "I would not like life without a guide dog at all. I can walk 5 to 10 miles a day with Ralphie and still have energy. With a cane, I can walk only a couple of miles and be stressed out."

Dowland confessed that in class he and Ralphie were "pretty speedy." In fact, there was a bit of good-natured competition between Dowland and one of his younger classmates.

"There was a young man in our class, about 25 years old," Dowland said. "He thought he could pace us, but Ralphie is quite an active dog. At first, I thought he was a bit fast for me but I kept up and realized he was the perfect speed for me."

**You're Never Too Old** continued on page 2 »

### Puppy Corner

## Choosing a Collar and Leash for Your Dog



Walking into the local pet store, it appears the choices are endless when selecting a collar or leash but, essentially, these "accessories" all serve the same basic purpose — to keep your dog safe and under control. So whether the leash and collar you choose is basic black or brown, or if you opt for something in a vibrant color or playful print to add a little fun to function, there are a few key considerations that should go into making an informed purchase.

**Puppy Corner** continued on page 3 »

## Mission Statement

Guide Dogs of America is dedicated to its mission to provide guide dogs and instruction in their use, free of charge, to blind and visually impaired men and women from the United States and Canada so that they may continue to pursue their goals with increased mobility and independence.

This active team can oftentimes be spotted along the pedestrian trails by the river close to Dowland's home — but, by no means, is this team a pair of homebodies. Since graduating just over a year ago, they have traveled to Boston, Dallas and Tulsa.

"He fits well under the seat when we travel by plane," Dowland said. "He is very good at travel and always enjoys a new challenge."

The team has settled into a nice routine, which includes plenty of walking and frequent outings with friends and play time at the end of the day.

"Ralphie keeps me young and keeps my heart ticking," said Dowland. "I look forward to many years with him. If we work together until he's 10 years old, I'll be in my late 70s, I am very encouraged that it's an option for me to get another dog from GDA."

**"GDA didn't care that I was age 60 or older."**



*Bob and Chris Diller with Kayla and Nike*

Chris Diller's career as a teacher was cut short due to an eye disease (macular degeneration) when she was in her mid-50s. The condition progressed rapidly and left her with very limited vision. She decided to retire but she wasn't ready to slow down. She and her husband Bob were on an outing when they met a group who shared their love of animals and who happened to be volunteer puppy raisers for GDA.

Diller and her husband had always had a dog, but she had never considered a guide dog. After that chance meeting, she started to research GDA.

"GDA didn't care that I was 60 or older," Diller said. "Before I even went to class, I met a man who lives by us and, at 80 years old, he had just graduated with his second guide dog from the school. I thought to myself, this is for me!"

"GDA never thinks someone is too old, as long as you are mobile enough to work your dog and take good care of your dog," Diller said. "I found that to be true both times I was in class."

At 62, Diller graduated with her first guide dog, Kayla.

"Being back home with Kayla was so freeing, for both me and my husband," Diller said. "He no longer had to shuffle along with me, and I could go shopping and explore where I wanted to and then say to Kayla, 'Go find Bob,' and she would."

Diller retired Kayla last year. At age 69 she returned to GDA for her second guide dog Nike.

"I love to be on the go but I don't move fast," Diller said. "The trainers chose dogs for me that were calm and were content walking at a slow pace. Both times, they chose the perfect dog for me."

And she has both of those perfect dogs with her and her husband. She and Nike are continuing to build their partnership, and Kayla is enjoying her retirement as the family pet.

**"Having a guide dog never crossed my mind, until I met a GDA puppy raiser."**



*Donna Bennett and Havana*

At 74 years young, Donna Bennett received her first guide dog, Havana, from GDA in October 2014.

"Having a guide dog never crossed my mind until my friend and I were in a pet store and we met a woman who was training a puppy for GDA," Bennett said. "We talked for a bit, and the woman suggested that I think about getting a guide dog. I told her I couldn't because I still had some vision. She explained that

many guide dog users have low vision and then she offered to take me to the next GDA graduation."

Bennett also was receptive to the idea of a guide dog because she had moved from her home in another state to a retirement community and was finding it difficult to meet people and to be her active and social self in her new surroundings.

"As a person with low vision or total blindness, people don't talk to you when you are walking around with a cane. With Havana, everybody in my community knows who we are," Bennett said.

As an extremely independent woman, Bennett has found even greater freedom having her guide dog Havana.

"We fly to see my son in Oregon and take the train to see my daughter in Santa Maria," Bennett said. "I am active in my church so Havana goes to church with me and I take her up on the stage when I address the congregation."

Another benefit for Bennett is feeling younger.

"I wasn't as active as I had been and I was starting to feel and see age creep up on me," Bennett said, "I had put on a few pounds and my aches and pains were more pronounced. Now, I've lost the extra weight, and walking and being active keeps me from getting stiff. I walk faster than I did with a cane, and my friends can't keep up with me. In addition to mobility and independence, my dog makes me look good and feel great." 🐾



## Leashes

When choosing a leash, the first thing to think about is where and how you will be using it. Is it for everyday walks and outings or for training? Then consider the following:

- **Material:** Leashes are usually made from nylon or leather. Both materials are tough enough to restrain an adult dog, yet lightweight enough for use with a puppy. Nylon is typically less expensive but if you have a dog that chews or pulls, consider investing in a leather leash as it could save money in the long run.
- **Width:** If your dog chews or is strong and a puller, the leash could snap. Pick the right width and strength of leash for your dog or puppy. This may mean having to upgrade when your puppy grows, but this is to be expected. Get a light leash for smaller dogs, so it doesn't impede their movement, and a nice, thick, strong one for your fully grown, larger dog.
- **Clips:** A leash is only as good as the clip that keeps the dog attached to his collar and to you. A strong and reliable clip will help ensure that your dog — especially a large, strong dog — does not break free if he decides to suddenly head in the opposite direction or chase after something. Stainless steel or brass clips are best, as they resist corrosion, which can lead to weakening over time.

### Leash Types:

- **Standard:** This is the most straightforward style with a loop on one end and a clip on the other. A 6-foot leash is the most common length. It allows some slack, without there being so much slack that the bottom of the loop drags on the ground or gets tangled around you or your dog's legs.
- **Training:** A 10- to 15-foot leash is perfect for training. It allows for control but with enough distance for important obedience practice such as long sits, long stays and recall commands.
- **Retractable:** These leashes are popular; however they can actually train your dog to pull. When walking away, the dog is pulling on the leash to extend it and is rewarded by getting to where they want to go. When extended, the thin "cord" can also get tangled around legs (human and dog), trees or other objects and can result in injury.

## Collars

In addition to helping you keep your dog safe, collars also provide a place to hang your dog's identification tags, which contain his name and yours, a phone number and proof of rabies vaccination. In the event your dog does get loose, a collar with ID tags attached is more likely to result in a happy reunion. (Microchipping your dog provides an extra level of protection in case your pet loses his collar and tags.)

- **Fit:** A collar should ride high on your dog's neck, not loose so that it slides down near the top of his shoulder blades. A collar should be snug with enough room to fit two fingers between your dog's neck and his collar. For your dog's safety, the collar should not be loose enough to slip over his head. Check collar size frequently on growing puppies. A rule of thumb when fitting your puppy or dog is to use measure his neck, then add two to three inches.

### Collar Types:

- **Flat:** This is your dog's "everyday" wear. Often made from nylon, flat collars generally have plastic or metal quick-release closures. A ring is attached to the collar, which is the place to attach ID tags, as well as your leash.
- **Chain-slip or "Training":** This is an effective training tool when used correctly and on appropriate-sized dogs. Have a dog trainer show you how to use it correctly. Correct usage involves a quick "tug-and-release" action (as opposed to a steady pulling) that tells the pet which behavior is desired. These collars should only be worn during training sessions, never in a crate or when playing with another dog. To correctly place a chain slip collar on a dog, the top ring on a properly looped collar forms a letter "P" when you stand in front of the dog and pull it snug. If it forms the number "9", it is on backward and may not release immediately as designed, which may cause discomfort or gagging.

A final and very important note about leashes and collars: Regularly check the leash and collar for any damage and replace at the first sign or wear.



## In Memory

With sadness, we note the passing of GDA family members:

Elyse Allen – Class #350      Beverly Cox – Class #331

We also note with sadness, the passing of the following guide dogs:

Deidra – Class #339  
Ansel – Class #335  
Blaze – Class #338  
EJ – Class #343  
Fina – Class #352

Jet – Class #362  
Lark – Breeder  
Nigel – Class #333  
Ramie – Class #331  
Vector – Class #343.5

# Congratulations Graduates

Class #389



## Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Front row left to right: Emma Hernandez and Tink (Tom and Tracy Gruhot); Andre Green and Heath (Carl and Chris Peterson); Alex Biddix and Osmond (The Wild Family); Brittany Mejico and Nika (Ray and Terry Crawford); Constantine Greanias and Gem (Linda Barber); Lisa Belville and Paige (The Kennaman Family); Mike Edwards and Nelix (The Paxson Family); Richard Salazar and Princeton (The Miller Family); Gloria Patrick and Pippa (The Wurts Family); Renee Shamel and Gidget (The Metcalf Family)

**Instructors:** (back row) left to right: Linda Hawes, Chris Medina and Mindy Romero

Class #390



## Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Front row left to right: Robert Stigile and Shuli (The Wayne Family); Greg Steinmetz and Wiki (The Ames Family); Joan Savino and Trinity (John and Pam Revitte); Theodore Mike Slider and Brenna (Matt and Karyn Paul); Vivian Younger and Alani (The Hughes Family); Dan Kysor and Boone (Sue Munz); Cassandra Hernandez and Tagg (Laurel Schuman); David Roulston and Bernie (Larry and Wendy Solomon); Catherine Perry and Bentley (SarahJane and Chantal Chelin); Larry Crismond and Gandalf (Greg and Fiona Hahn)

**Instructors:** (back row) left to right: Linda Hawes, Jamie Viezbicke, Sean Chiles

## In-home Graduates:

Pat Franklin and Emma (Steve and Dee Hamilton)  
Instructor Steve Burkman

## New Employees

Caitlin Smith, licensed instructor

Dr. Thomas Cole, veterinarian (part-time)

## Good Job!



Jamie Viezbicke has passed all the requirements of the California State Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind and is officially a Licensed Instructor. Please join us in congratulating Jamie on her accomplishment.

## Keeping Up With GDA Online And On Social Media



*Partners* is published four times a year. It also is posted on the GDA website if you would like to read past issues or share the newsletter electronically with family or friends. Simply go to our homepage, [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org), scroll down to the "Partners Newsletter" icon on the right-hand side of the page and click!

Find GDA on social media too, we are always posting news and photos to our Facebook page and Twitter account. Also, check the up-to-date **News & Events** page on our website to see if there is an upcoming event in your area.

"Like" us on Facebook (**GuideDogsofAmerica**) and/or follow us on Twitter (**twitter.com/GuideDogsGDA**) or **@GuideDogsGDA**.



## Partners in Trust

The Partners in Trust Society was established by GDA as a way to recognize and honor the generosity of those who have included the school in their planned giving.

By thoughtfully naming GDA in their wills, trusts and life insurance policies, the members of the Partners in Trust Society ensure that their support of GDA will continue for years to come. We are forever grateful to them for remembering GDA in their estate plans — in any amount — and we are honored to be a part of their legacy.

For additional information about how you can leave a future gift to GDA, go to [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org), click on **How to Help**, then click on **Gift Planning** — or call Rhonda Bissell at (818) 833-6432.

Please note: The names that appear on this list indicate those individuals who have included GDA in their estate plans during this past GDA fiscal year (July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015).

Anonymous (5)  
Mary Dicato  
Mark and Pauline Moreaux  
Karen and Tom Olzak  
Barbara Jean Saunders  
Claire Schneck  
Sharon Schroader  
The Skidmore Family  
Colleen Sparks  
Elinor West

We are saddened that these Partners in Trust are no longer with us, and we honor their memory here for their gracious act of giving to GDA that will support the school long into the future:

Caroline D. Bleick  
Esther Brown  
Carol S. Cory  
Melissa Dennis  
Polly P. Duntley  
Nadine M. Gilbert  
Alpha Hammond  
Pauline Hornik  
Elizabeth F. Hutcheson  
James Jatras  
Florence W. Jones  
Virginia McCallum  
Teruko Orel  
Stottie Rethorst  
Robert Weston

## Donor Spotlight - Edith & Robert Hunio

### GDA Graduation Inspires Legacy of Giving



For Edith and Robert Hunio, all it took was attending just one graduation for them to know they wanted to support Guide Dogs of America and name the school in their trust. The Hunios were introduced to GDA by their friends in 1992 and have been Partners in Trust ever since.

“The ceremony brought tears to our eyes,” said Edith Hunio, whose husband Robert passed away in 2013. “After witnessing what the dogs did for these individuals,

Robert looked at me and I looked at him, and we thought that we have to leave something to the school. Within just about a week, we changed our trust to include GDA.

“It is more personal than giving the money to just any charity. In this case you know how the money will be used and who you are helping,” said Hunio, a lifelong dog lover. “We thought it was a marvelous organization that could do this for people and how wonderful it was for these dogs to feel useful, loved and cared for. I am sure the dogs know they are doing good for people.”

Hunio encourages anyone considering naming GDA in their trust to attend one of the graduations, which are held four times a year.

“If you go to a graduation, you can’t help but be so emotionally moved and inspired,” she said. “If you want to do good in the world, I don’t think there is any greater good that you can do than to give someone who has lost their vision a gift of a guide dog.

“To know that you played a part in helping to make someone’s life better... it’s a good thing to do. It is a wonderful organization, and I admire and applaud everyone involved in working with and training these dogs,” Hunio added.



# Fall Merchandise & Holiday Gift Ideas

Shop GDA Online

Whether buying a gift for someone else or something for yourself, you'll find lots of great GDA logo items at Shop GDA. Go to [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org), click **How to Help**, then click on **Shop GDA!** All prices include shipping and handling. Merchandise is also available for purchase by phone (818-833-6429) or at GDA.

Kids get in on the fun with the new "Fun to Raise a GDA Puppy." The unisex shirt is pre-shrunk 100% cotton and made in the USA. Colors: Gray or Purple. Sizes: Small, Medium, Large. Price: \$20 (includes shipping).



## FALL 2015 Order Form

Questions? Call (818) 833-6429 - **\*All Shipping & Handling is included\***  
Mail this entire form with your payment.

### Merchandise

**Children's Gray T-shirt — Size S-M-L \$20.**

☐ SM ☐ MED ☐ LRG \$

**Children's Purple T-shirt — Size S-M-L \$20.**

☐ SM ☐ MED ☐ LRG \$

**TOTAL ENCLOSED \$**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Credit Card** (check one) ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ AMEX

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ CVC: \_\_\_\_\_

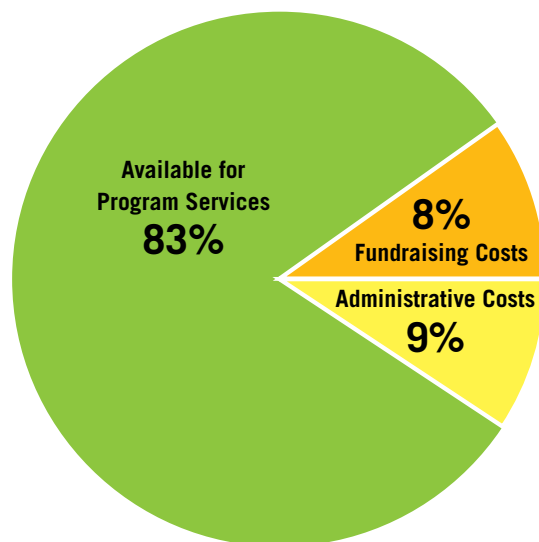
required for credit card purchase

☐ **Check** (make your check payable to **Guide Dogs of America**)

**Mail to:** Guide Dogs of America ATTN: Fall Merchandise Order Form  
13445 Glenoaks Blvd., Sylmar, CA 91342 **Or use the enclosed envelope.**

# GDA 2014-2015 Annual Report

The Guide Dogs of America 2014-2015 Annual Report is available online on our website:  
[guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org)



We are pleased and proud to share with you that 83 percent of all our funds raised during the fiscal year is available for Program Services. Administrative Costs and Fundraising Costs account for 9% and 8%, respectively (figures based on the 2014-2015 fiscal year).



## Give Monthly, Give Mobility

Guide Dogs of America prides itself in giving the gift of guide dogs at no charge to blind and visually impaired individuals in the U.S. and Canada. With your monthly donation, you can help us reach our goal of supplying the gift of mobility to at least 50 people each year. GDA receives no government funding and relies solely on donations from companies, organizations and individuals such as you. Your monthly gift will go toward the breeding, raising and training of our dogs, along with the instruction that each blind recipient needs in order to comprise a successful team. This method of payment ensures reliable, consistent income for our organization and, because the donation is made electronically, it is more cost effective for the school.

By giving monthly, you are giving mobility to those who need it. Please visit [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org), then click on **How to Help**, then click on **Recurring Donations**.

If you have any questions, please call (818) 362-5834.



# Making Your List, Checking It Twice

GDA has ideas for thinking outside the (gift) box

Skip the malls and shopping hassle with everyday and easy ideas for giving to your friends and loved ones, while giving to GDA. We also have ways for you to keep the holiday spirit of giving all year long, including online shopping options and grocery loyalty cards that give a percentage to GDA, matching employer gifts and monthly giving.



## GDA's Holiday Fund-a-Need Campaign — Dec. 1-13, 2015

Support GDA's Holiday Fund-a-Need Campaign and help fulfill the wishes of GDA's Puppy, Nursery, Veterinary, Kennel and Student Services Departments. The campaign runs Dec. 1-13. We encourage you to share this information

with your family, friends and co-workers and to share the link [biddingforgood.com/guidedogsofamerica](http://biddingforgood.com/guidedogsofamerica) on your social media. (Note: link only active during campaign dates.)

A gift for you... Your donation is a tax deduction, and the end of 2015 is just around the corner.

*Please note: This is NOT an auction; your donation will fund a GDA need.*



## Online Shopping

If you are shopping on Amazon, go through [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com).

GDA will receive .5 percent of your total amount purchased all year (on most items). The first time you visit the site, you will be asked what charity you would like to support. Type in **Guide Dogs of America**. A drop-down menu will appear. Click on the first option, which will be **International Guiding Eyes, Inc.** Every time you shop Amazon in the future, go through [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). As long as you log in from the same device (computer, smartphone or tablet) you used previously, the site will remember GDA as your charity of choice. If you are shopping from a different device, you will need to choose GDA the first time you use it. Please share this information with your family, friends and co-workers. Thank you!

## Give to GDA as Your Gift to Family and Friends This Holiday Season

What do you get the person who has everything? You give in their name. A great gift idea and a very special way to support GDA during the holidays is to make a contribution in the name of your family and/or friends. Your contribution lets those important people on your list know how much you care about the work we do. It also lets them know they are remembered by you in a thoughtful way that makes them a part of giving the gift of independence and mobility to those who are visually impaired. A handwritten card with a special message will be sent to those you designate with your donation. For more information, call (818) 833-6429.

## Matching Gifts

Many companies offer a matching gift program to their employees. These programs match, dollar-for-dollar, charitable contributions made by an employee, doubling the donation made to Guide Dogs of America!

If you are thinking of making a donation to Guide Dogs of America, ask your employer if it offers a matching gift program.

## Year-Round Giving One Month at a Time

Many of our supporters make monthly donations to GDA using our convenient automatic donation program. At the beginning of each month, we automatically charge your credit card in the amount you specify. Call (818) 833-6429 with questions or to participate.



## CFC Pledge Card

You know what your pet means to you; now, imagine what this future guide dog will mean to a blind person.

Please designate #11873 on your CFC pledge card. Your CFC contribution helps us breed, raise and train extraordinary guide dogs. These intelligent dogs are provided free of charge and offer trustworthy assistance and companionship to visually impaired men and women as they strive to live their lives to the fullest.

## Tax-deductible, End-of-year Charitable Gift Giving

As you think about special holiday gifts for family and friends, remember that making charitable gifts to organizations such as GDA in their honor can be a heartwarming experience that also offers you tax benefits.

If you are planning to make a donation to GDA and would like to deduct the charitable contribution on this year's taxes (2015), you'll need to make your gifts by Dec. 31. For more information on end-of-year planning, go to [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org), click **How to Help**, then click on **Gift Planning**.

## If You Would Like to Lend a Paw...

GDA could not continue to fulfill its mission without your generous support.

For more information about how you can become involved in our mission, please visit the **How to Help** section of the Guide Dogs of America website, [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org). You can also contact us via e-mail at: [mail@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:mail@guidedogsofamerica.org) or by phone at (818) 362-5834.

## Taking A "Paws" To Give Thanks

Guide Dogs of America would like to thank all of our contributors, donors and volunteers. Without their generous support, we would not be able to change the lives of those who are visually impaired with the gift of a guide dog.



# Partners newsletter

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## Need A Puppy Pick-me Up?

Tune in to the GDA "Puppy Cam" to see the precious puppies in our nursery 24/7 in real time. From the homepage, [guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org), scroll down and click on the "Puppy Cam" graphic on the right-hand side.



## 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Card Contest

This Year's Holiday Memories; Next Year's  
GDA Holiday Card

Now is the time to start thinking about staging a holiday-themed photo of your dog to submit for our sixth-annual Holiday Card Contest. Say, "Puppy treats!"

### Submission Guidelines:

- All photos **MUST BE TAKEN IN HIGH RESOLUTION (300+ dpi)** and submitted via email as an attachment by Feb. 28, 2016 to [partners@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:partners@guidedogsofamerica.org)
- Winner will be notified on June 15, 2016 and will be posted on our website
- Please make sure that the email includes your full name, dog's name and your phone number
- All photo entries become the property of GDA
- Credit for the winning photo will be given