



Spring 2015 volume 30 number 2

## The Difference A Guide Dog Has Made In The Life Of Their Loved One

Family Members Share Stories



*Louis and Paula Castro with guide dog Jeanie*

not have imagined. Watching them with pride are their loved ones — a husband, a father and a daughter — who have graciously shared the difference they have seen in their graduate since he/she has returned from GDA.

### **There is nothing she can't do**

When the doctor delivered the news to Paula and Louis Castro that she would lose what vision she had left, the couple could do nothing but prepare for the loss. They just thought they would have a little more time. Eight days, four laser surgeries and two injections later, Paula Castro's vision was gone.

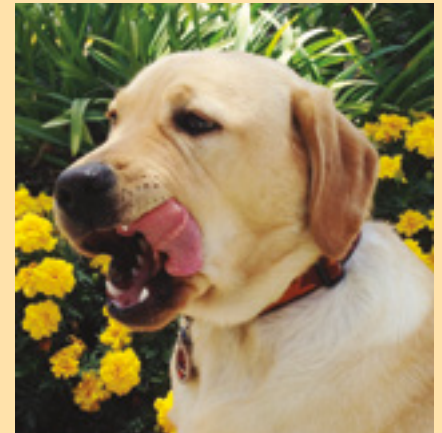
"When Paula lost her sight, I no longer left on overnight trips for work. I worried about her and her safety," said Castro. "Even though she knew how to get around using her cane, she wasn't comfortable going out alone. It was her idea to get a guide dog and what a change it has made for her, for me and for us. There is nothing she can't do."

For many of our students, stepping away from their day-to-day life for 28 days to train with a new guide dog and live on the Guide Dogs of America campus also means leaving behind loved ones during that time. Like the students, their loved ones are filled with anticipation of what life will hold for the new team when they return home. This is especially true of graduates and their family members who are experiencing for the first time, the newfound freedom, independence, mobility and confidence that having a guide dog adds to the life of a blind person.

For the past two years, first-time graduates Paula Castro, Sean Landgraf and Tina Sutton have been building their bonds with their new guide dogs and living life in ways they could

### **Vet's Corner**

## **Dental Care and Your Dog**



Home oral hygiene can make a tremendous difference in your dog's comfort and health. Periodontal disease is one of the most commonly diagnosed health problems in dogs. Left unchecked, periodontitis can lead to painful infections and in severe cases, become life-threatening because harmful mouth bacteria can enter the bloodstream and inflame other parts of the body.

Brushing disrupts the bacterial film known as "plaque," which is the cause of periodontal disease and is the single most effective means to maintaining your dog's oral health.

**Vet's Corner** continued on page 3 »

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## **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.

As Paula Castro suspected, there were times she was sure her husband was following her on a route. That has changed with her guide dog Jeanie in the picture.

"Watching Paula and Jeanie work together and seeing how Jeanie thinks and anticipates situations and obstacles has given me so much peace of mind," said Castro. "Having Jeanie has given Paula the confidence to push far outside her comfort zone. Before, Paula would not have taken the city bus or metro. Now she'll take the Greyhound and travel to Las Vegas to see our kids and grandkids."

Paula and Jeanie keep a busy schedule. They staff the front desk for volunteer services at an area hospital and they visit patients. Paula also represents the blind community as a competitive rower on a dragon boat traveling team. Next year, they will compete in Australia.

"Paula wouldn't do what she is doing now without Jeanie. Her self-confidence has improved tremendously," said Castro. "We are doing more and more things together. Life, while changed forever, is getting back to our normal."



John and Sean Landgraf with guide dog Lexy

### It's phenomenal

John Landgraf had certainly seen a lot of changes in his son Sean since he graduated with his guide dog Lexy. When the father and son ran into an old family friend he knew others were seeing a difference too.

"My friend couldn't believe it was Sean," said Landgraf. "He remembered him as a shy and unhappy teen. Now he was seeing a confident, smiling young man. He kept saying to Sean, 'I am so proud of you.'"

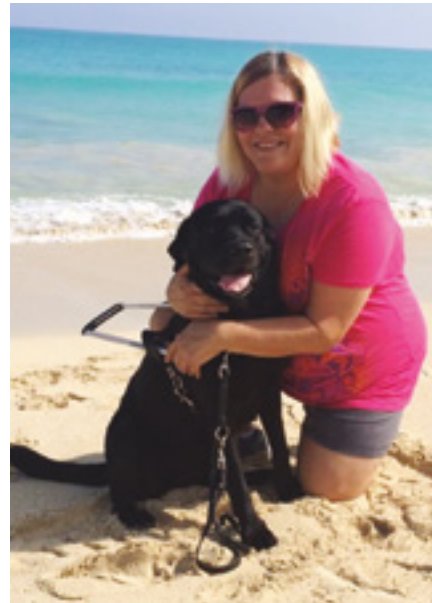
But no one could be more proud of Sean than his father.

"It's phenomenal," said Landgraf. "The day he and Lexy came home from school, Sean wanted to go to the store and to take the bus. As a visually impaired teen, he didn't get to experience the freedom of being able to drive and go places on his own. Lexy has given him that freedom he was missing."

Since graduating from GDA with Lexy in 2013, Sean also graduated from music production school. Sean's dedication and advancement through the program was recognized by the school, which presented him with its first-ever student award.

"The school had never given out a student achievement award. Sean was the first to receive such an honor and he is the reason the school has a formal awards program today," said Landgraf. "Sean always had the ability and talent, but having Lexy has given him the focus, confidence and purpose that helped him to realize his potential."

Landgraf has observed many positive changes in his son. "Having a guide dog has made Sean's life easier in many ways, but it also comes with a huge responsibility," said Landgraf. "He is as much responsible for her well-being as she is for his. He has matured a lot these past two years and I know that caring for Lexy has been a big part of that. It sounds cliché but it's not, a guide dog does change the life of their partner. It is incredible to see the positive changes having Lexy has made in my son's life."



Tina Sutton with guide dog Basha

### She's been on more vacations than I have

Even though Tina Sutton had been using a cane since childhood, she never felt comfortable using it and often chose not to. When she started to fall more frequently, her family told her it was time to do something different. Sutton decided it was time to get a guide dog.

"She would walk my daughter to school and I was getting very concerned because she would trip and fall a lot,"

said Sutton's daughter, Jessyica Curiel. "When I heard she was going to get a guide dog I was very excited. Since having Basha, her guide dog, she hasn't fallen."

Another worry the family no longer has is Sutton being stuck waiting for one of them to come home and take her places.

"With Basha, she goes everywhere she needs or wants to go and on her schedule," said Curiel. "It's freed her from having to ask the family. In fact, she'll say to me, 'Thanks, but I don't need your help, I can do this on my own with Basha.'"

And Sutton and Basha stay busy.

"Everyone knows mom and Basha," said Curiel. "They were even asked to cut the ribbon at the grand opening of a national pet store in our community."

But they don't keep all of their activities local. Sutton rides in tandem bike races, and she and her sighted partner will be traveling to international competitions later this year. And there are vacations for her and Basha.

"She's taken Basha on a cruise, and to Mexico and Hawaii," said Curiel. "I think Basha has gone on more vacations with her than I have."

Basha has fit right into Sutton's multi-generational household, which includes three family dogs.

"Basha is a big part of our family now. I couldn't imagine my mom not having her," said Curiel. "She is a perfect addition."



Here are some important tips to keep in mind when brushing your dog's teeth:

**Start early and brush often.** Start a dental care routine as early as possible in your dog's life so he gets used to the feeling of having his teeth brushed and inspected. Puppies have 28 deciduous teeth that typically fall out by about six months of age. By this time, your dog should be getting his teeth brushed regularly. Grown dogs can learn to become comfortable with teeth cleaning, but make things easier for yourself by working with your dog as a puppy.

**Pick the right toothpaste.** This is very important. Do NOT use regular human toothpaste for your dog. Most human toothpastes contain fluoride, which is poisonous to dogs. Look for toothpaste that is formulated for dogs. It is available at most pet stores or ask your vet.

**Brushing for beginners.** Start by placing a small amount of the toothpaste on your finger and let him taste it, then run your finger gently along his gums. Use a "finger brush" or special long toothbrush designed for use on dogs. When starting out, using a finger brush can help ease your dog into the routine, as these do not feel as awkward as hard brushes. Start by brushing near the upper back teeth and angle slightly up so the bristles get under the gum line. Work from back to front, making small circles along gums. The enzymes in the toothpaste help dissolve tartar so no rinsing needed.

**Chew bones and chew toys to clean teeth.** In addition to brushing, there are many synthetic bones and chew toys that are specially designed to strengthen your dog's gums and teeth. Make sure you're providing safe objects for your dog to chew on. Hard objects can cause broken teeth. These chew toys, however, are not meant to replace regular brushing.

Frequent (ideally daily) brushing is recommended to maintain optimal dental health. Almost all dogs will eventually accept brushing. The key to success is to be patient and gradual in your approach. If your dog starts to resist brushing this may be a sign of a dental issue, in which case consult your vet.

## Donor Spotlight

Newlyweds That Began Their Life Together by Giving to GDA Continue Legacy



It was the late 1980s, and newly married John and Lin Riggs were making some of their first decisions as a couple. When it came time for him to designate a charity under the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), which would deduct a contribution from each of his paychecks to the charity of his choosing, Riggs consulted his wife.

"I looked at the list and I went right to Guide Dogs of America," said Lin Riggs. "I had experience being with blind people throughout my life. My mother had vision loss from an early age and, growing up, I knew several people who had served in Vietnam and lost their vision. As soon as I saw Guide Dogs of America, I knew it was the charity we should give to."

The Riggs' continued to designate GDA as their CFC donation over the years. Nearly 20 years after that first decision to support the school, the couple decided again that Guide Dogs of America would continue to benefit from their support and named the school in their trust..

"You want to give someone else the opportunity to enjoy life more and to give them the ability to live their life to the fullest. A guide dog does that," said Riggs. "The person also gets the unconditional love from their guide dog. I have always had a dog and I know how important that love is and how much better it can make your life."

When she is asked about why she chooses to give her money to a cause that benefit animals rather than people, Riggs is quick to correct them.

"Guide dogs are for people. Our donation gives the dog purpose and a job, but the dog gives the person freedom and independence. What more would you want to do with your money?"

## Puppy Raising By the Numbers

**250-300** Active puppy raisers

**12** Puppy raiser groups

(Southern and Central California — Sylmar, San Gabriel Valley, South Bay, Orange County, Westside, San Diego, Ventura and San Luis Obispo; Washington State — northern and southern; Montana and Colorado)

**22** Puppy "go home" days per year

**\$35** Puppy "go home" pack

(Outfits a puppy with a leash, collar, I.D. tag, bowl, toy and puppy raising manual)

**#1** Question every puppy raiser is asked: *How can you give him up?*

**#1** Answer: *Knowing the puppy's purpose, how could I not?*

## 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 as a way to recognize and honor the generosity of those who have included the school in their planned giving. Providing life income gifts and bequests lets your gift continue working beyond your lifetime to help

others achieve their goals with increased mobility and independence through a partnership with a loyal and loving guide dog. Charitable organizations are not subject to gift or estate taxes so your gift continues to support the causes close to your heart, like Guide Dogs of America, without being diminished by the IRS.

You will receive our special "Partners In Trust" crystal jar as a way of thanking you that you can display proudly, knowing the difference you are making in the lives of others through supporting Guide Dogs of America. Please call Rhonda Bissell at (818) 833-6432 for more information.

## Save The Date GDA Las Vegas Charity Event

Nov. 19-21



Mark your calendars for the annual Las Vegas Charity weekend Nov. 19-21. The weekend will kick-off on Thursday, Nov. 19, with the Hawgs for Dogs ride and the sporting clay event. Friday morning, Nov. 20, foursomes will tee off at Angel Park for the golf tournament. The weekend will conclude on Saturday evening with the 35th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet at Bally's Hotel & Casino. Invitations will be mailed early this summer and details posted on the GDA website.

## Volunteer Opportunity: GDA's Puppy Department Spreads The Puppy Love

### Puppy Raiser Groups Extend Beyond Southern California

At any given time, there are approximately 250-300 GDA puppies-in-training living in the homes of our volunteer puppy raisers. Among those puppy raisers are individuals and families who are raising their very first GDA puppy, as well as dozens of others who have raised 5, 10, 20...or more.



In the past, most of these volunteers have come from the Southern California area. As GDA's program has grown, so has the number of puppy raiser groups and the opportunity for those interested in becoming volunteer puppy raisers. Currently, there are puppy raiser groups in California (from San Diego to San Luis Obispo), as well as Washington, Montana and Colorado.

Puppy raisers range from families with kids to empty-nesters, from full-time workers to retirees, and from people with pets to those who haven't had a pet in many years. But they all have one thing in common: the desire to raise a puppy that will, hopefully, one day go on to help a blind individual lead a life of greater independence and mobility.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a volunteer puppy raiser for GDA, contact Puppy Department Manager Louise Henderson at [lhenderson@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:lhenderson@guidedogsofamerica.org) or (818) 833-6441.

## 2015 Raffles

To purchase raffle tickets, use the order form on this page or call GDA at (818) 833-6429.

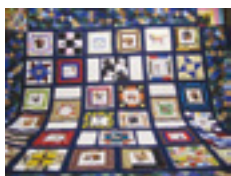
### Bike Raffle



This year, the GDA motorcycle raffle is for a Harley-Davidson Road King customized by Legends Vintage

Motorcycles. The winning ticket will be drawn on Nov. 21, 2015 at the Guide Dogs of America Annual Banquet in Las Vegas. (Winner need not be present to win.) Visit the GDA website ([guidedogsofamerica.org](http://guidedogsofamerica.org)) for additional details and photos. Tickets are \$5 each or five tickets for \$20. Ticket orders by mail must be received by Nov. 13, 2015.

### Quilt Raffle



This year's quilt, "Dogs Are The Spice Of Our Lives", was crafted and donated by the Santa Clarita Quilters Guild. The quilt measures 120" x 120".

Purchase tickets using the order form on this page and mail it to GDA postmarked by Dec. 3, 2015. Tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10. Drawing to be held on Dec. 12, 2015 at the GDA December puppy raiser holiday party. Winner does not need to be present.

### A Day With The Trainers



This extremely popular annual raffle prize takes you behind the scenes of GDA, where you will observe the trainers working with our incredible dogs. Two lucky people will spend "A Day with the Trainers,"

accompanying them on training routes; observing daily training exercises; and, after being blindfolded by a trainer, taking the harness in hand and being led on a route with one of our dogs to experience how it feels to be led by a guide dog. Winners must be at least 18 years of age and able to walk 4 to 5 miles (broken up) in one day near our campus.

Tickets are \$5 each or five tickets for \$20. Winners will be notified by or on June 19, 2015. The training day date to be announced after the drawing.

## Online Bidding For Great Goods To Benefit GDA

June 4-14



Bidding on items in GDA's ever-popular annual Silent Auction is now easier than ever with our new bigger and better online auction. Log onto GDA's Bidding for Good auction ([www.biddingforgood.com/guidedogsofamerica](http://www.biddingforgood.com/guidedogsofamerica)) from your computer, smartphone or tablet and let the bidding begin. Choose from an array of items, including travel, sporting events, dining and many other fun activities and items. The site will be open for bids from June 4 - 14 only. *Reminder: This year there will be no OPEN HOUSE due to anticipated construction*

### SPRING 2015 Order Form

**\*All Shipping & Handling is included\***

Mail this entire form with your payment.

#### Raffle Tickets

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2015 Quilt Raffle — \$2 per ticket or \$10 for 6       | \$ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2015 GDA Bike Raffle — \$5 per ticket or \$20 for 5    | \$ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Day With The Trainers — \$5 per ticket or \$20 for 5 | \$ |

**TOTAL ENCLOSED \$**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
required for credit card purchase 3-4 digit code

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

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

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

## In Memory

**With sadness, we note the passing of the following guide dogs:**

**Charlie** — Class 335

**Mimi** — Breeder

**Rose** — Class 357





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## 5th-Annual Holiday Card Contest Winner

Thank you to each and every one of you who took the time (and the photos) to enter the fifth-annual Holiday Card Contest. They were all beautiful, and it was difficult to choose just one. The winning photo of guide dog puppy Cassie was taken by one of our GDA puppy raisers Denise Brown.

Even though we can only use one photo for the holiday card, all photo submissions are kept, as we may have other uses for them.



## New Employee

Tom Kemper – Kennel Tech (part-time)

## Congratulations Graduates

Class #387



### Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Left to right: Karla Maradiaga and Elena (*Judi Gomez and Miguel Ola*); Randy Dowdell and Stanley (*Andy and Liisa Primack*); Giselle Hartman and Chloe (*The Dreyfuss Family*); Don Sorensen and Dino (*Keith and Nancy Pacheco*); William Murphy and Titan (*Morris and Cathy Makshanoff*); Rebecca Mendez and Corra (*The Barger Family*); Lisa Hauptfleisch and Doc (*David and Rebecca Smith*); Amanda Weare and Bria (*Nancy Hawthorne and Ray Nitshke*)

**Instructors:** Left to right: Steve Burkman, Melinda Romero, David Ponce