



GDA's 'It' Factor

Graduates Feel the Love and Share the Love

What is it that makes someone choose Guide Dogs of America for their first guide dog and what keeps others coming back time after time? We asked our graduates to tell us, in their own words and through their personal experiences, what "it" is. As it turns out, "it" is everything. From the care and professionalism of the instructors and staff, to the perfect match made with their guide dog and the camaraderie found in class. From the daily meals, to the comfortable private rooms. From the big picture, to the little touches. Read on to learn from several of our graduates what makes GDA feel like home — whether it's their first time or like coming home.

"I could not have asked for better preparation for this great independent mobility choice."



"My experience with receiving my first guide dog Boone and the training with him was positive and highly educational. Between the support I received from the trainers, staff and my classmates, and the great match between me and my guide, I could not have asked for better preparation for this great independent mobility choice."

— Dan Kysor

"I received my first guide dog from GDA in 2004, and that class changed my life forever. I built confidence as a blind traveler with my new guide, made new friendships that are still strong to this day, and I learned so much about myself. I left GDA feeling like I had a whole new family and I could take on whatever came my way with my new guide by my side."

— Cari Shields

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President's Message



We have been busy at GDA putting the finishing touches on our Visitor and Education Center, which includes a new GDA merchandise store and offices for several of the staff. We are excited about the opportunities that will come to GDA as a result of having this new space.

For our students, the new building also offers another environment for the teams to experience while walking a route on campus. We also have changed to a 21-day training program, which has been very well received by our students.

We are in the process of updating our technology capabilities, including a re-designed website, and having podcast, live-streaming and webinar

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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.

Congratulations Graduates

Class #396



Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Front Row from left to right: Matthew Cooper and Sauly (*Wendy and Larry Solomon*), Brittney Mejico and Paddington (*Audrey Rohrer*), John Albarran and Annie (*Nancy Hawthorne and Roy Nitschke*), Thair Knoles and Curri (*Monrene Malmstrom*), William Shilling and Laddy (*Chelsea and Oliver Levenson*), Mark Overland and Judge (*Debby and Larry Cross*), Helen VanSlyke and Niles (*Tom and Judy Reilly*), Sandra Remson and Portia (*Ramone and Monica Espana*), Laurel Hilbert and Aero (*Hannah Rosenthal*), Marian Allen and Sargeant (*Vikki Mele*)

Instructors: Back Row from left to right: Alejandra Maldonado, Melinda Romero, Steve Burkman



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capabilities. These upgrades will expand the ways in which we communicate with the GDA community and beyond.

I am very appreciative of the great staff that I inherited, as they have a tough job each day and always give it 100 percent. I want to thank all the volunteers and donors because, without you, GDA would not exist. The tireless efforts of the volunteers is an example of what America is made of: great people doing great things.

We have a lot of work ahead of us and, with your support, we can continue to build upon the great program that we have.

If you are ever in the area, we hope that you will stop by and see all that's new at GDA.

Class #397



Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Front Row from left to right: Anne Inkret and Haven (*Jeff and Suzanne Breaux*), Jose Ruiz and Panama (*The Hughes Family*), Donna Ramos and Harlo (*The Segal Family*), Jeannie Green and Juma (*Marielle Angers*), Sharlene Ornelas and Shia (*Monica Morris*), Robert Sheff and Jefferson (*Paula Urbom-Shope*), Zachary Penor and Ripley (*Butch and Karen Reyburn*), Dana Anderson and Holland (*The Wurts Family*), Daniel Matney and Merlin (*Tom and Judy Kovaric*), Jason Johnson and Kelso (*Cindy Valancius*)

Instructors: Back Row from left to right: Jamie Hunt, Steve Burkman, Linda Hawes



In Memory

It is with sadness that we mark the passing of graduate:
Barbara Bubier — Class 371.5

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

Francis — Class 339
Jeanie — Class 377
Noble — Class 363

Patience — Class 351
Voight — Class 347

Don't Let Spring Showers Wash Out Puppy Playtime



Rainy days don't have to put a damper on playtime with your pooch: There are plenty of simple activities to help keep your dog mentally and physically active while indoors. The best part? The majority of these activities don't require any special toys or equipment. Just you, your dog and a bit of creativity.

Get Back to Basics — All dogs should have a reliable sit, down, stay, drop it and come here. Even well-trained dogs need a refresher course in basic obedience now and then. A good training session can be just as exhausting as a long romp outside. The mental focus required when training will tire out your dog, while also keeping him entertained.

Indoor Fetch — Use safe, soft toys for a game of indoor fetch to get your dog moving, while giving you an opportunity to work on commands like "drop" or "give." Make the game more challenging by asking your dog to perform a basic command, like "sit" and/or "stay" prior to throwing the toy.

Get Nosy — Keep a handful of empty shipping boxes on hand and put a few pieces of kibble or treats in some, leaving the others empty. Place the boxes around an open area in your house and have the dog search for which ones have the kibble in it. As

your pup gets better at it, begin stacking the boxes or put one inside the other. It's a great way to use your dog's natural smell instinct. This activity also has been shown to help build puppies' confidence as they succeed at finding the food.

Stair Climbing — If your dog is young, healthy and not prone to hip problems, the stairs can provide great aerobic activity. To get the most exercise from this game with the least risk to your dog's joints, start at the bottom of the stairs. Put your dog in a "sit-stay" and throw the toy up to the top landing. Don't overdo, as 10 or so repetitions should be plenty to tire out most dogs.

Hide & Seek — Have your dog sit and stay while you go find a hiding spot. Call him once you're hidden and praise him enthusiastically when he finds you. This game can really tire out your pup as he rushes around searching, and it's good for reinforcing the "come" command.



Tug of War — Playing tug is great for teaching your dog some basic impulse control, and it is extremely tiring, both mentally and physically. Make sure your dog has a good "drop it" or "leave it" command and have some fun with it. (If your dog gets too rowdy or starts mouthing, it's time to stop the game.) Contrary to popular belief, there's no evidence that tug promotes dominance; in fact, it helps build confidence, and studies have shown that letting your dog win some of the time shows that you're fun to be around and makes them want to play even more.

Doggy Pushups — This exercise is a great way to keep your dog in shape and helps work on two important commands. Asking your dog to move from a "sit" into a "down" and back again in a fast sequence will get his blood pumping and tire him out.

Taking it Easy — One of the easiest ways to keep a dog entertained is to put a treat inside a durable toy with an opening, such as a Kong. Spread a small amount of peanut butter or add some plain yogurt or broth with a bit of kibble and freeze it. This activity will keep your dog occupied and give him something to work for.





"My time at GDA was a well-organized and structured learning experience. The professional and knowledgeable staff worked as a team making sure that all students' learning styles were addressed based on degrees of blindness and mobility skills. After becoming blind, I received cane training and the world opened to me. After my experience at GDA, WORLDS have now been opened."

– James Jay

"After my experience at GDA, WORLDS have now been opened."

"I live in Florida, and all my transportation was covered by GDA. I was picked up at the airport by friendly staff. I was oriented to my surroundings carefully when I arrived. Every day, three healthy meals were provided and the cook made sure that my special dietary needs were met. We had a laundry to take care of our own clothes. There was Wi-Fi and TV, too. Since all these everyday needs were met, we could give ALL our attention to the reason we were there, to meet our new partner and best friend!"

– Terri Klein

"When I talk about GDA, it's only in superlatives."

"This comes from the perspective of working with GDA for training of three guides over the last 30 years. I keep returning because its guide dogs always surpass my expectations. I particularly like how the instructors break the class into pairs or small groups when we are on our walks. This allows us to receive immediate and encouragement in the moment. Plus, the training lectures support what the next task will be, as each experience builds on what we learned previously."

– Jeffrey Jenkins

"When I talk about GDA, it's only in superlatives, about their kindness, generosity and professionalism.

Whenever I speak publicly about Bria and GDA's training, I say that, 'If people lose faith in humanity, they can find it again with a visit to GDA.'"

– Sonja Wolf



"I could write books about how GDA has helped me. I really enjoyed the changes in the program, especially the little things, like being able to go around the mall by myself while still in training to let me feel confident that I could do it, but I also knew that if I needed it, I had that safety net of the trainers to fall back on. I feel that GDA helped to prepare Pali and me to conquer the next chapter in both our lives."

– Katrina Stanley

"I could write books about how GDA has helped me."

"Guide Dogs of America changed my life. Six years ago, I was united with my best friend Tyler, and my life hasn't been the same since! The training experience at GDA was amazing, and the food was fantastic! Can I say 'five-star rating'? The staff are wonderful caring people who are very attentive to everyone's needs. The fellowships made during class are lifelong. I look forward to going back when I need another guide dog."

– Brent Avery

"My experience in class was awesome! I came in wanting nothing except a female black Labrador Retriever. I had my heart set on this. When dog issue day came around, I was matched with an awesome yellow Labrador Retriever. Thank goodness, I trusted the trainers and their experience in making matches. Radar truly changed my life."

– Paulette Wilson

"Going to Guide Dogs of America was one of the best experiences of my life."

"I received my third guide dog from GDA in 2010. All the trainers made class so much fun even with all the hard work to be done. The time spent working our dogs was long, but rewarding, and the downtime at the end of the day was relaxing and fun. The training was quite informative and left every student with the knowledge needed to go home with our dogs and work them with confidence. At the end of class, I almost didn't want to go home. Going to Guide Dogs of America was one of the best experiences of my life."

– Lynn Coats

“Having a guide dog is one of the best things that has happened to me!”

“I was impressed by several things when I was in class. First, the dogs had spent enough time with the instructors that they knew the dogs well from both the perspective of guide work and their individual personalities. This is important because they could offer valuable insight, which translates into a solid match and smoother, quicker bonding process for the guide dog team. Next, GDA has maintained its standards of doing things correctly and consistently — from daily training routes, to behavior at the dinner table and everything in between. It is for these reasons and many more that a GDA trained team is likely to be successful in the real world.”

– Andy Leach

“It’s been almost five years since we graduated from GDA, and I am enjoying my life with my guide dog, Windy, so much. GDA was a great experience for me. I bonded with my guide dog and I made connections with my classmates. I appreciated the quality time the trainers spent with us and how they helped us when we reached a bump in the road. Soon those bumps smooth and, with practice, the guide dog team is bonded. Having a guide dog is one of the best things that has happened in my life!”

– Lynn McLellan

“She gives me more independence and confidence than I’ve ever had”

“I’ll never forget the first day I met PJ. There was such a sweet gentleness about her, yet she was full of energy, and I could feel that she had much love to give. She gives me more independence and confidence than I’ve ever had before, and she has such a nice balance of being a hard worker, as well as being playful. I couldn’t be more grateful for my amazing dog and for my GDA experience.”

– Lauren Adams



“I really value the training I got at GDA. I have attended other guide dog schools, as Curri is my ninth guide dog. I found the training and other accommodations at GDA to be superior. Thank you for a wonderful experience and a great dog.”

– Thair Knoles

“Right from the first phone call, staff at GDA took the time to answer my questions and walk me through the application process.”

“Right from the first phone call, staff at GDA took the time to answer my questions and walk me through the application process. I appreciated the time they took to detail my travel arrangements and ensured that GDA staff were there to greet me at the airport. The professional staff provided comfort and care and really understood what different emotions you were going through. Special medical needs were addressed, as well as dietary requirements. Before you knew it, GDA started feeling like a home away from home. Then came the day I received Gracy. Even after five years, I still get that feeling of exhilaration when I bend down to put on her harness to go on our next adventure. Thank you GDA.”

– Mike Moore



Donor Spotlight: Wonderful, Generous Donors Leave Legacy Of Giving



Her Thrift Became Sizable Gift to GDA

Even as a young girl, Patricia "Pat" Custer was a dog lover. It was a wonderful surprise that she left her estate of more than \$1 million to Guide Dogs of America. Those who knew Custer were aware of her thriftiness, but all were amazed by how large a donation she gifted to GDA.

Custer began her career as a secretary at NBC in Hollywood, Calif. In 1973, she became the bookkeeper for the newly formed Corporate Productions Inc. (CPI) and stayed with the company the rest of her career.

When CPI moved to nearby Toluca Lake in the 1980s, she took on the unofficial duty of tending its backyard garden. After retiring, she could be found in the garden trimming the fruit trees and plants every weekend until her passing. She participated in the production of several fundraising videos for GDA. Custer always found it heartwarming to hear recipients with their new guide dog talk about the transformation they saw in themselves as the pairs became bonded working teams.



Being a quiet and private individual, one couldn't have known that Custer had quite a history within her own family. She left behind many articles and archival information showing she was a direct descendant of General George Armstrong Custer. Whether she was receiving postcards from Johnny Carson or part of an incredible ancestry, Custer remained resolved in her commitment to our charity.

Two Very Special Ladies and a Very Special Gift

A daughter wanted to fulfill her mother's wishes, and GDA was honored to be the recipient of a gift of more than \$1 million. The daughter made the gift anonymously in loving memory of her mother.

Both mother and daughter have been long-standing contributors to GDA and have generously supported several programs and fundraising projects over the years. Their donations include sponsoring puppies-in-training; purchasing donor bricks that contributed to improvements around the GDA campus; sponsoring kennel and building enhancements; funding facility upgrades to the Puppy Pre-school and Head Start programs; gifting needed items for various departments; and donating items to our silent auction and Ride for Guides. Through the years, the pair traveled many times to attend GDA's open houses, graduations and other fundraising events across the country. Additionally, the daughter has included GDA in her estate plans, which offers GDA an ideal future gift.

Guide Dogs of America is privileged to benefit from the generosity of these caring individuals. Both gifts to our endowment will continue to support our mission to place extraordinary guide dogs with the visually impaired to enhance their lives. If you would like information about becoming a Partner in Trust, please contact Rhonda Bissell at (818) 833-6432.



Save the Date

GDA Las Vegas Charity Event — Nov. 16-18

Mark your calendars for the annual Las Vegas Charity weekend Nov. 16-18. The weekend will kick-off on Thursday, Nov. 16, with the Hawgs for Dogs ride and the sporting clay event. Friday morning, foursomes will tee off at Angel Park Golf. The weekend will conclude on Saturday evening with the 37th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet at The Paris Las Vegas Hotel & Casino. Invitations will be mailed early this summer, and details posted on the GDA website.



Online Bidding For Great Goods To Benefit GDA — June 1-11

Bidding on items in GDA's annual Silent Auction is now easier than ever with our new, bigger and better online auction. Logon to GDA's Bidding for Good auction 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 1 to 11 only.

New Visitor And Education Center Naming Opportunities



Several naming opportunities are still available for areas of the new Macki and Phil Singer Visitor and Education Center building. Learn more about how your donation can support this exciting new addition to the GDA campus by visiting our website at guidedogsofamerica.org or contact Rhonda Bissell at (818) 833-6432.



Naming opportunities include:

- | | |
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| GDA Store — \$10,000 NAMED | Flag Pole — \$25,000 NAMED |
| Audio/Visual Display 1 — \$10,000 NAMED | Board Room — \$50,000 NAMED |
| Audio/Visual Display 2 — \$10,000 | Courtyard — \$100,000 NAMED |
| GDA History Wall — \$15,000 NAMED | Apartment — \$100,000 |
| Break Room — \$25,000 NAMED | Lobby — \$150,000 |
| Serving Room — \$25,000 | Large Meeting Space — \$250,000 NAMED |

2017 Quilt Raffle



This year's make-you-smile quilt, "Happy Dogs Brighten Lives," was handmade and donated by the Santa Clarita Valley Quilters Guild. Every square features a unique design, and a special square on the back includes the quilters' signatures. The quilt measures 94" x 100".



Purchase tickets using the order form on this page and mail it to GDA postmarked by Dec. 1, 2017, or call GDA at (818) 833-6429. Tickets are

\$2 each or six for \$10. Drawing will take place at GDA's December puppy raiser holiday party. Winner does not need to be present.

SPRING 2017 Order Form

Questions? Call (818) 833-6429. ***All Shipping & Handling is included***

Mail this entire form with your payment.

Raffle Tickets

2017 Quilt Raffle — \$2 per ticket or \$10 for 6 \$ _____

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 Merchandise Order Form, 13445 Glenoaks Blvd., Sylmar, CA 91342 **Or use the enclosed envelope.**

Partners newsletter

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For any comments or questions, please email us at partners@guidedogsofamerica.org

New Employees

Jose "Tony" Alfaro — Kennel Tech



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SAVE THE DATE GDA's OPEN HOUSE Saturday, October 7, 2017



Please join us for Open House on Saturday, Oct. 7. This fun-filled day includes puppy trials, guide dog demos, puppy kissing booth, tours, merchandise, Kids' Korner, delicious food, and the ever-popular Silent Auction featuring hundreds of beautiful gift baskets and single items.

Admission to the Open House is free. There is food available for purchase. Gates open at 10:45 a.m. and close at 4 p.m. Events begin at 11 a.m. and end at around 3 p.m. We do ask that you leave your personal pets at home.

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.