

GDA Leadership Weekend

Group Leaders Learn You Can Teach Veteran Puppy Raiser New Skills



Meighan Howard with GDA Instructor Dave Ponce and South Bay Puppy Raiser Group Co-leader Bob Sheehan.

Joan and Ron Shaw may be raising their 18th puppy for Guide Dogs of America, but every year they learn something new about what it means to be a puppy raiser at the GDA Leadership Weekend.

Organized by the Puppy Department, the annual three-day weekend provides GDA the opportunity to give the Group Leaders and Co-leaders from the nine puppy raiser groups information, guidance, resources and experiences for them to share with their puppy raiser groups. It is also an occasion to thank these dedicated volunteers for everything they do to support the puppy raiser program throughout the year.

While there is time for fun and socializing in the evenings, the days are busy and filled with information and activities that have been thoughtfully planned to be both meaningful and memorable.

“We do something different every year, but the most eye-opening activity of the weekend is always when the leaders have the opportunity to work with the trainers and the guide dogs,” said GDA’s Canine Development Manager and Licensed Guide Dog Instructor Yvonne Martin. “When working with dogs that have just come in for training, our Group Leaders quickly learn that the dogs are not at the same level of readiness. They see how important it is that the basics have been established before the dogs come in for formal training.”

Every year, the weekend includes an outing during which the leaders are paired with a guide-dog-in-training. This year, the group of 25 went to a local mall with the dogs and their trainers. For the first half of the day, they learned how to make turns, how to give the dog directions and how to take direction from the dog. In the afternoon, they all were blindfolded. With their guide by

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You’ve Got Questions, We Have the Answers

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Guide Dog Teams

When we asked our graduates what questions they are most frequently asked when they are out working with their guides, we found some questions required more in-depth responses. While graduates and their guides are often stopped by inquiring individuals, some questions can be challenging. We have created this new list of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) so that we can share them with you. Reading this list may spark questions of your own. If we receive enough reader questions, the list of FAQs may become a regular feature in the newsletter. You can use the enclosed envelope to send us a question or you can email Lorri Bernson at lmbernson@guidedogsofamerica.org.

Q. How long can a guide dog work?

A. On average a guide dog will work until it’s around the age of 9 or 10, health permitting. Many dogs of this age begin to have health issues and their pace

FAQs continued on page 3

Graduate Question

When our guide dog teams are out and about, they are frequently asked questions about their guides. We thought our readers may have some of the same questions, so we asked our graduates: What question are you most often asked while out working with your guide dog?

Vet's Corner

Some everyday over-the-counter products and home remedies can do double-duty and be used to treat you and your dog, while there are others that should not be used because they can be harmful to your dog. Dr. Julie Langhans from GDA's Vet Department shares some of the most common "dos and don'ts." This information should be used as a general guide. When in doubt if a product should or should not be used, always consult your veterinarian.

Human remedies and everyday products that can be used for dogs and are guaranteed to be found in almost every home are:

- **Witch Hazel** a natural disinfectant and astringent that can be used to clean your pet's minor skin irritations, cuts and scratches
- **Betadine** a topical antiseptic that can also be used to clean cuts and scratches and to prevent bacterial infections for minor abrasions and burns
- **Rubbing Alcohol** can be used topically for cooling paw pads, armpits and groin areas on an overheated dog
- **Aloe Vera** a non-toxic, temporary treatment to relieve hot spots, bites, clipper burns and other skin irritations and will not harm your pet if ingested
- **Flour, Baking Soda or Baby Powder** everyday products that can be used to treat nail injuries and work well to stop a bleeding nail
- **Baby Sunscreen** can be applied topically to protect your dog from the sun, however, it is best to use products designed specifically for dogs.

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I have a sign on Willow's harness that says, "Do Not Feed or Flirt with Me." The question I get most is, "Can I flirt with you then?"

— Karen McIntyre

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South Bay Puppy Raiser Group Leader Brian Matthews.

their side and a trainer nearby, each was asked to use the skills they had learned in the morning and locate a specified store in the mall.

"It was a great learning experience to go out to the mall with dogs that were on the verge of being matched with a blind student and learning to work the dog in harness," said Brian Matthews, who leads the South Bay Puppy Raiser Group with his wife Nancy. "Holding on to the harness and putting your trust in the dog to lead you around obstacles was very challenging. It gives you such an appreciation for the program and what our guide dogs mean for someone who is blind."

No two years are the same, but the weekend always includes dog behaviors

and dog handling skills. All of the instruction and information the Group Leaders receive during the weekend — whether on an outing, listening to a lecture, or observing a guide dog evaluation by the Training Department — is intended to reinforce the importance of adhering to the puppy raiser program.

"Our Group Leaders are an extension of the Puppy Department," said Puppy Department Manager Louise Henderson. "There is a lot of responsibility that goes along with this volunteer position to which each of them devotes countless hours interviewing potential puppy raisers, planning group meetings and outings, working on basic obedience with their puppy raisers and staffing booths at events on behalf of GDA."

Joan Shaw, who started the Montana puppy raiser group when she and her husband, Ron, relocated there several years ago (she started and led the San Diego group previously), said that being a part of these weekends make her a better leader. "Every time I go, it's just amazing. Every year they are building on what we did and what we learned the year before. It makes us more well-rounded as leaders and better able to help our puppy raisers. I go back to my group and I am stronger as a leader."

Martin has been coordinating the activities for the Leadership Weekend for the past six years. All year long, she attends seminars and lectures, reviews materials and meets with the various departments to create a weekend that will benefit the Group Leaders, and in turn the school and its program.

The weekend wrap-up talk with the group is all Martin needs to start thinking about next year.

"We had 25 people at the Leadership Weekend, and I think each of them walked away with a different a-ha," said Martin.

"Each of them is a veteran puppy raiser, but they always feel there is more to learn. We are so fortunate to have these dedicated and enthusiastic individuals." 🐾



Montana Group Leader Joan Shaw with GDA Instructor Tiffany Andrews.

slows down. This allows the dogs to enjoy a well-earned retirement.

Q. What happens when it's time for the dog to retire?

- A. At GDA our graduates are actually the owners of their guide dogs. If the graduate cannot keep the dog themselves, the dog often returns to its original puppy raiser's home, where it spent its first 18 months.



Q. How does a guide dog know when it's safe to cross the street?

- A. Dogs do not know when the light is green or red. It is up to the blind handler to listen to traffic patterns so that they know the traffic is going in the direction they want to travel. At that point, the person tells the guide dog, "Forward," and if the dog sees the street is clear, he will proceed with the command. If he sees an obstacle that may endanger the team, his training of "intelligent disobedience" comes into play. This is when the dogs are trained to disobey the command if they think it is unsafe. At that point, the person has to listen to and figure out what might be in the way and give the forward command again once the obstacle, whether it's a hybrid car, a bicycle coming or an obstruction in the line of travel (such as a puddle or traffic cone) is identified. All of this takes place prior to stepping into the street.

Q. Why should guide dogs not be given people food or table scraps?

- A. Because these dogs are on a strict eating and relieving schedule and trained to leave any food on the ground, it is best not to tempt them by letting them have anything other than their dog food. This way, the dog does not become "food-distracted," which could put the team in danger if the guide dog was lunging for food and, therefore, taking the team out of the line of travel.

Q. When is it OK to pet a guide dog?



- A. As with any dog, you should never pet a dog without asking his owner. Even more so with a guide dog, as the petting could be a distraction to the dog. When you see a guide dog in harness, you should not pet it, as the dog needs to remain focused on its work and not be distracted by the temptation to

be social. They know that when the harness is on they are working, and when the harness is off, they can be "off the clock."

Q. Does the guide dog ever get to play?

- A. Yes. When the guide dog is not working in harness, such as when they are at home, they get to play just like any other dog. There are some rules, however, one of which is to not play with tennis balls as that could lead to a distraction when they are out working. As with all dogs, they need to be careful with interaction with other animals. Make sure that the other playmates are non-aggressive and that vaccines are up to date.

Q. Do guide dogs get motion sickness when traveling?

- A. As with any dog, there is the chance of motion sickness. If that were to happen, the dog would be given medication. The dog would not be worked while on the medication due to potential side effects that may hinder the dog's alertness. During this time, the blind person will either go with a sighted guide or use their cane.

Q. Do guide dogs travel with their owners? Where does it fly on the airplane? If you're on a cruise ship, where does the dog go to relieve?

- A. As with all working service dogs, accommodations are made when our graduates travel with their guides. For example, when traveling on an airplane, the dog lies down under the seat in front of its owner, and there is not added cost. When traveling on a cruise ship, the cruise line designates an accessible, mulch-filled square space on an outside deck for the dog to relieve.

Q. How does a blind person know when their guide dog needs to relieve him or herself?

- A. They are trained not to go while in harness. Guide dogs are on a very strict eating schedule so that the owner knows the dog's timing to relieve. On occasion, the dog might get off schedule and need to relieve at an unexpected time. Each dog is different, but, as our graduates get to know their dog during the initial time of bonding, they become familiar with their dog's unique way of letting them know they need to go. While out working, just as in the home, the guide dog will posture himself or pant a bit more, or change his pace in a way that informs their handler that he needs to relieve himself. Because of the close bond that the dog and the person have developed, the person knows their dog's signal.

Q. Who picks up after the guide dog?

- A. While in class, the students are instructed on how to find and pick up after their dog. It involves knowing the posture that the dog is in while relieving.

Everyday products formulated for humans that can be harmful to dogs and should not be used or administered include:

- **Fluoride toothpaste** contains ingredients, such as Xylitol and fluoride, that can be toxic if swallowed by your pet
- **Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs** including medications such as Tylenol (contains Acetaminophen) or Advil (contains Ibuprofen); all prescriptions and medications meant for humans can cause harmful results if ingested by dogs
- **Sugar-free gum** contains Xylitol, which is a sugar substitute and considered the most toxic to dogs
- **Shampoo** designed for humans contain chemicals that can irritate your pet's skin

In addition to over-the-counter items that you should not give your dog, there are several products "on the counter" that your dog should not eat. We all like to give our dogs a special treat from time to time, but treats and snacks should be limited to those specially formulated for your dog. Some "no-no" reminders for your pets include:

- **Corn on the cob** can cause intestinal obstruction; some dogs are allergic to corn and can suffer intestinal effects as a result
- **Chocolate** can cause severe toxicity in your pet
- **Onions** contain a chemical that breaks down red blood cells, causing severe anemia in dogs
- **Grapes and raisins** can cause kidney failure, as well as other less severe symptoms (diarrhea and vomiting)
- **Apple seeds, cherry pits, and other fruits** contain cyanogenic glycosides that cause poisoning

Dr. Julie also reminds us that these tips are not a substitute for veterinary prevention, diagnosis or treatment. Only your vet can provide you with advice on what is safe and effective for your pet's health and wellness.

Ride For Guides

More than 450 riders participated in the 8th Annual Motorcycle Ride for Guides on May 22, 2011. All the riders were revved up for the scenic, 80-mile ride that began and ended at GDA. In addition to the riders, puppy raisers and puppies-in-training greeted riders at stops along the way. Thank you to everyone who participated and volunteered. We are already looking forward to next year's ride.



The question that I am most frequently asked is, "Are you training a dog?" I take that as a compliment of our agility as a guide dog team. I thank them and explain that I am blind and Rawhide is a genuine, trained guide dog. Then they tell me how handsome he is, and I tell them that the school does its best to match the dog with the handler.

— Paul Jordan

An Apprentice "Graduates"



Join us in congratulating Bryan Young. Upon completing his three-year apprenticeship, Bryan took and passed the State Board test, officially "graduating" from apprentice to licensed guide dog instructor. Congratulations Bryan!

In Memory

It is with sadness that we note the passing of the following guide dogs for their dedication to ensuring the safety and independence of their partners.

Enya – Class #321

Patrick – Class #318

Rugby – Class #320

Takara – Class #334

GDA In Full Bloom At Annual Open House

The theme of this year's Open House, which was held on Saturday, June 11, was "June's in Bloom" and GDA was in full bloom. We welcomed several hundred guests. Friends old and new joined in the day's events, which included the always-popular Puppy Trials and Silent Auction. We hope you enjoy the photos on this page featuring some of the highlights from the day and that you'll make plans to join us next year.



There's always a line for a pooch smooch.



Everything is coming up puppies.



Puppy-in-training in full bloom.



Puppy-in-training demonstrates obedience skill.



Prepping for the puppy trials.



Blindfolded person with trainer experiences what it feels like to be led by a guide dog.



Taking a puppy break.



All smiles.



GDA Flower Power!



Even the bubbles were in bloom.



Dog tired puppy in training.

Donor Spotlight

Conrad Dratwa – A Life Dedicated to the Spirit of Giving

For 25 years, Conrad Dratwa has used his ingenuity and resources to benefit Guide Dogs of America. Dratwa's interest in GDA began at his local Chamber of Commerce, where he met a woman raising a GDA puppy and asked her questions about the organization. Impressed with the work of GDA, Dratwa and his wife began making donations, but they wanted to do more. That's when they came up with the creative idea for a "Christmas in July" party at their home. Complete with a decorated Christmas tree and holiday fare, guests would surely feel the spirit of the season, but the couple wanted their guests to embrace the spirit of giving. At the request of their hosts, all of the 40 to 50 guests who attended each year brought the same gift – a donation to Guide Dogs of America. Some guests went above and beyond expectation by asking their companies to match their contribution. The party was a tradition for many years.

Although no longer hosting "Christmas in July" parties, Dratwa continues in his commitment to GDA as a donor. He attributes his generosity to his upbringing. "I try to give whatever I have and help GDA out as much as I can," he said. "I was brought up that way." Dratwa's generosity and his commitment to GDA led him to become a Partner In Trust. Thus, he will continue to give to the school through planned giving beyond his lifetime.

Conrad Dratwa's idea is just one of the ways that some of our donors have found to help raise funds for GDA beyond their personal means and to introduce more people and companies to the school. We're hoping that, by sharing stories such as his, it might spark a new idea of fundraising from our readers, which will benefit Guide Dogs of America's program.

I am asked if he can fly in the main part of the plane. I answer, "Only if he can fit in the overhead compartment." (I get laughs and more questions.)

— Darin Dobson

"Can I pet your dog?" is the question I am asked most frequently. I have to tell people, "No, he's working right now."

— Elizabeth Rene

"Day With The Trainer" Raffle Winners

Congratulations to Lisa Colorado, Al Grenier and Marissa Greenberg. These three lucky individuals will spend a day with our trainers and go behind the scenes at Guide Dogs of America and experience how it feels to be led by a guide.

Holiday Card Photo Contest Winner

Thank you to everyone that submitted photos to our first ever Holiday Card Photo Contest. We had several wonderful photos from which to choose. The winning photo was taken by Bob Stegemann of puppy-in-training Kyra and was submitted by Bob and his wife, Kathie. Check the GDA website (www.guidedogsofamerica.org) soon for how to order this beautiful holiday card.



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.

2011 GDA "Trike" Raffle



This year, the GDA motorcycle is a trike — a 2011 Harley-Davidson Tri Glide UltraClassic. Donate \$5 for a raffle ticket and you could be the lucky winner. Increase your chances with a \$20 donation — you will get

five raffle tickets. For more information and photos, please visit the photo gallery at www.guidedogsofamerica.org.

Complete and return the order form on this page to purchase tickets. Tickets can also be purchased at GDA or from our secure website (www.guidedogsofamerica.org) through Nov. 13, 2011. The winning ticket will be drawn on Nov. 19, 2011 at the Guide Dogs of America Annual Banquet in Las Vegas. (Winner need not be present to claim prize.)



Canvas Beach Bag

Made in the U.S.A., this versatile and roomy bag measures 16" with a 10" diameter circle bottom. It features two side netted pockets, large zippered outside pocket, drawstring top closure, two strap handles and shoulder strap. Choose from goldenrod with black trim or goldenrod with royal blue trim. \$33 (includes shipping & handling)

Baseball Caps in Three Styles



Choose from three different styles of baseball caps.

A) Unstructured navy baseball cap with goldenrod GDA logo.

B) Military-style hat in black with goldenrod printing and off center GDA logo on brim.

C) Two-tone blue and goldenrod structured baseball cap with white GDA logo.

\$23 each (includes shipping & handling)



"From Puppies Into Partners" T-Shirts

T-shirts are 100% preshrunk cotton. Available in two colors: goldenrod with black logo and light gray with black logo (sizes S-3XL). \$23 (includes shipping & handling)

Quilt Raffle

A Perfect Patchwork of Pups 2011 Quilt Raffle



This year's quilt, "My Best Friend," was made and donated by the Santa Clarita Quilters Guild. The quilt measures a generous 99" by 110" and will fit a king- or queen-sized bed.

Purchase tickets using the order form on this page and mailing it to GDA postmarked by Dec. 2, 2011. Tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10. The drawing will be held at the GDA December puppy raiser meeting on Dec. 10, 2011. Winner does not need to be present.

SUMMER 2011 Order Form

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

Mail this entire form with your payment. To ensure your eligibility, please note the deadline dates for raffle ticket purchases.

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

To be eligible, entry must be postmarked by Dec. 2, 2011.

☐ Quilt Raffle \$

Trike Raffle Tickets — \$5 per ticket or \$20 for 5

To be eligible, entry must be postmarked by Nov. 13, 2011.

☐ Custom Harley-Davidson Tri Glide Ultra Classic \$

Beach Bag — \$33 per Bag (includes shipping & handling)

☐ Goldenrod with black trim \$

☐ Goldenrod with royal blue trim \$

Baseball Caps — \$23 per Cap (includes shipping & handling)

☐ A) Navy with goldenrod GDA Logo \$

☐ B) Black military style hat with goldenrod GDA Logo \$

☐ C) Two-tone blue with white GDA Logo \$

T-Shirts — \$23 per Shirt (includes shipping & handling)

Goldenrod with black logo

☐ SM ☐ MED ☐ LRG ☐ XL ☐ 2XL ☐ 3XL \$

Light gray with black logo

☐ SM ☐ MED ☐ LRG ☐ XL ☐ 2XL ☐ 3XL \$

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

Credit Card (check one) ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

Expiration Date: ____/____/____

Card Number: _____

Signature: (required for credit card purchase) _____

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

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

Congratulations Graduates

Class #369



Graduates (left to right): (Puppy Raiser in parenthesis) Rich Loback & Val (*Dick & Joan Freiheit*), Peggy Madrid & Wyatt (*Dolores Badow*), Tom Mitchell & Elton (*Melissa Hyams*), Wanda Jolley & Carley (*Kasey Nash*), Richard Orozco & Beacon (*The O'Gorman Family*), Ernesto Tabarez & Digby (*Richard & Helen Lau*), Crickett Patin & Da Vinci (*Charlie Coons*), Shawna Maxwell & Biwa (*Aki & Setsu Okada*), Daniel Huhn & Dakota (*Mary Deets*)

Instructors standing from (left to right): Sean Chiles, Mindy Romero, Dave Ponce



GUIDE DOGS
OF AMERICA

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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 our way of thanking you. We hope that you will display it 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.

The most common query we receive is, "How long does it take to train a guide dog?" Our favorite question though is, "How do I contact the school to ask about puppy raising a dog for someone like you?"

— Bill Schley

New Employees

Please join us in welcoming two new employees:

Mark Adams – Maintenance Superintendent

Kristy Olsen – Veterinarian Tech



Partners newsletter

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