

Trainers In Training

Meet the GDA apprentices

What does it take to become a guide dog trainer? For starters, a love of dogs and the desire to help people who are visually impaired to achieve greater independence and mobility, as well as a good pair of shoes (or several).

Currently, GDA has three women in various stages of the three-year guide dog trainer apprentice program. While the end-goal and the training are the same, what brought this trio to their chosen career and their experiences along the way are unique to each.



First-year apprentice experiences what it's like to temporarily live in total darkness

Tiffany Brundy is a first-year apprentice but she's been training for her new career for years. Brundy, who has raised nine GDA puppies-in-training, was attracted to the job by her love of dogs and wanting to help people who are visually impaired experience the freedom that comes with having a guide dog.

In the first year, there is a lot of learning and experiences that serve to prepare a sighted person to better understand and support the students who come to campus.

"In the first two weeks, I spent most of my time observing the trainers on their routes," Brundy said. "Then, I was given the opportunity to walk under blindfold with a dog in harness for the first time. It felt like we were walking very fast but it was actually just a regular pace. It was exhilarating."

Her next week into the training was to wear a blindfold for seven days, in order for her to experience living in darkness.

"The first couple of days I had to use a cane. I had no confidence and I ended up with a lot of bruises," Brundy said. "I got my dog on the third day and I was much more confident but still very nervous. I realize that I am not duplicating how a blind person must feel as I knew that my darkness was temporary, and I gained some good insights."

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Puppy Corner

A guide to smart socialization



By **Stephanie Colman**

Who doesn't love a puppy? The sweet smell of puppy breath, the adorable antics, and the world of opportunity that typically presents itself when dealing with a young, moldable mind. Raising a puppy is a big responsibility.

Socialization is a huge part of raising any dog and when it comes to socializing a puppy, how you do it matters — a lot! Focusing on the relationship between you and your puppy is key to success. When the relationship is solid, socialization is easier because the puppy trusts you to keep him safe.

Keep in mind that it's easy to accidentally overwhelm a puppy. Making smart choices about when and how to socialize becomes especially important so as not to lose time helping the puppy recover from a bad experience.

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Mission Statement

To empower the blind and visually impaired to live with increased independence, confidence and mobility by providing expertly matched guide dog partners.

It is this kind of training that helps GDA's apprentices gain a better understanding for and appreciation of the big and small obstacles a person who is blind faces daily.

Before working directly with the students, an apprentice starts by working with a string of dogs, continuing alongside with an instructor.

"The day starts with feeding the dogs and then taking out each dog on a route, once in the morning and again in the afternoon," Brundy said. "The best part of every day is seeing the dogs learn and develop. When the dog can problem solve, it's incredible. For example, if we are stuck behind an obstacle and the dog chooses the right way to go around the obstacle, it is so rewarding."

As her training progressed, Brundy started to work directly with students. "I like hearing their stories. It helps me to better understand their individual needs," Brundy added.

Preparing to work with her first group of three to four students, with one of the instructors helping her, Brundy eagerly anticipated the arrival of the first class she would work with.

With pride, Brundy shared that two of the dogs that she trained recently graduated.



Second-year apprentice appreciates the progress shown in the small things

Kelsey Horst was working as a receptionist at a grooming salon when her mom suggested she talk to one of her friends who volunteers at GDA. Soon Horst found herself volunteering in the kennel department. It was during this time that she learned about the

apprentice program and submitted her resume.

Now in her second year of apprenticeship, Horst is discovering just how much there is to learn.

"The biggest surprise for me was the way you build up the training. Starting with little things like stopping at curbs. It's so gratifying to see the dog progress through training," Horst said. "When something isn't clicking right away, and then the dog gets it, it so incredible to see the light switch on."

Horst loves her job and finds it rewarding.

"It can be something really small like seeing the dogs run around in community playtime and being really into it, and then the dog you've been training comes to you immediately at the first recall. It's a great feeling," she said.

In addition to training the dogs, it is the responsibility of the apprentices and instructors to train the students on how to work with and care for their dogs.

"I am working on how to best explain things to someone who is visually impaired. Something as basic as describing how to make a left turn can be a challenge," Horst said. "It's a lot for the students. The stress of being in class, getting

a new dog, adjusting to dorm life. We work very hard at addressing each person's needs and making it a positive experience. I've learned a lot about working with people."

In addition to training the dogs and getting them ready to be partnered and working with students when they are in-class, there's a lot that goes on behind a desk.

"We do weekly dog reports assessing each dog and its progress, telephone reports, puppy file reviews, and phone interviews with prospective students. We also work closely with the instructors on matching dogs with students," Horst said. "Every day is different, and I like the variety."



Third-year apprentice has learned a lot about dogs, people, and herself

Alejandra Maldonado had a lot of experience with animals and volunteering, including being a puppy raiser for GDA. She knew that she wanted a career working with animals and she reached out to the instructors to learn more about what it takes to be a guide dog trainer.

Now in her third year, Maldonado is taking on more difficult situations and challenging dogs. By early next year, she will be a full-fledged instructor.

"It's gone very fast. There is so much to learn. I didn't think it would be easy, and every step of the way has been rewarding," Maldonado said. "I've learned a lot about the dogs, about people, and about myself. Every client that comes in, every dog and every guide dog team is different — and you have to adapt to them. You get close to your students. You want them to tell you how they feel. What's working for them and what's not. You want them to succeed and that is my job."

For Maldonado, working with the dogs was more familiar than working with people.

"It's something you don't think about right away that part of your job is training people," Maldonado said. "One of my early challenges was learning how to speak to the students and understand the different personalities. You have to be very Zen and be able to adapt. You are teaching them, showing them, and then you are going to expect — but everyone is different. I've learned so much about people and I have been so inspired by our students."

Maldonado finds the work stimulating and the variety of tasks interesting.

"I have so much fun working the dogs and I love the change of scenery and being able to work outside and be active," Maldonado said. "There is always something. It makes coming to work every day fun and exciting."

The following six tips, based on Guide Dogs of America's (GDA) puppy raising program, can help pet owners maximize opportunities for socialization throughout their dog's puppyhood and adolescence:

Start early! It's been proven that early neurological stimulation benefits puppies in a variety of ways, from improved cardiovascular performance to stronger adrenal glands, better stress tolerance and improved resistance to disease.

Find a well-run puppy kindergarten class. An increasing number of pet owners — and behavior-savvy veterinarians — are recognizing the value of well-run puppy kindergarten classes designed for puppies as young as eight weeks old. It is recommended that puppies have at least one set of vaccines at least seven days prior to the first class, and a first deworming.

Maximize home-based socialization or other "safe" options. There are numerous opportunities for socialization right in your own home. People often think socialization has to involve leaving the house, but any new experience counts as socialization. If your vet has advised you to wait to enroll in a puppy kindergarten class until your puppy is fully vaccinated, use your imagination and create fun, safe experiences for your puppy at home.

Develop a relationship. Bonding with the puppy and building a meaningful relationship is critical to the success of your partnership with your puppy. Of course, we can use toys and treats to help support a relationship, but it's important to engage in meaningful interactions where our attention is a key part of the reinforcement package. Don't be a Pez dispenser! When you reward with food, offer genuine praise. When you pet your puppy, pay attention to his body language so you learn which type of contact he likes best. Develop silly, interactive games you both enjoy — and think beyond the typical "dog games" like tug and fetch, which can become more about the toy than the interaction with you. When you're out with the puppy, pay attention to the puppy! Any good relationship is about mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other. A dog-owner relationship need not be about the human's ability to "control" the dog in a dominate-subordinate schema.

Think of the goal as working to meet the dictionary definition of "relationship," ... "the state of being connected." The relationship is paramount to successful socialization.

Keep it up. While a puppy's early socialization period lasts from seven to 16 weeks, thoughtful ongoing socialization, as a core part of a puppy's — and adolescent dog's — training is important for creating a well-balanced, well-trained animal. Guide Dogs of America puppies-in-training engage in ongoing socialization throughout their time with puppy raisers, which lasts until the dog is 16 to 18 months old.

Don't accidentally teach bad habits in the name of socialization. Socialization should not be a free-for-all where the puppy is allowed to run up and greet as many people as possible! Encouraging the puppy to partake in every possible human interaction (assuming he's comfortable with the idea to begin with) can backfire, as the puppy starts to expect attention from everyone.

We teach our puppy raisers to ask the puppy for an age-appropriate amount of self-control before they greet a person or explore a new environment. The goal is for the dog to acknowledge the person holding the leash in order to earn permission to interact with the person. GDA uses the cue, "Go say, 'Hi'" as a way to use socialization with humans as a reward for acknowledging the handler.

Additionally, GDA puppy raisers are taught to strike a balance between opportunities to let the puppy socialize with strangers and opportunities to practice building the puppies' ability to resist the distraction of people in the environment, as it's a critical skill for working guides who must ignore people when leading their partners. They're also taught not to let the puppies socialize with other dogs while on-leash, again, to help prevent the puppies from becoming overly distracted by the perceived opportunity to interact with other dogs. This is great advice for pet owners, too.

Stephanie Colman is GDA's puppy program coordinator and a freelance writer. A longer version of this article recently appeared in the May issue of Whole Dog Journal.

A Goodbye Wag Of The Tail



After almost 30 years with GDA, Tami Johnson hung up her leash this past June, but will soon pick up another leash as she pursues a new endeavor... a dog walking business in her hometown.

Johnson started her career in the veterinary department and expanded her responsibilities to include making the perfect match placements of GDA's career change dogs into loving homes.

She will be missed by all the people (and puppies) who knew her. Please join us in wishing Johnson well and the best of luck in her new business.



Join us in wishing Director of Training, Dan Rollings, well as he embarks on a new adventure. An East Coast native, the move allows him to be closer to family. We're grateful for the expertise

he brought to the GDA community and wish him well in his next chapter.

Lending An Arm?

Tips for being a sighted guide



Being a sighted guide to someone who is blind or visually impaired does not come naturally for most people — from how to ask the person if they need assistance, to how to help them navigate streets, buildings or crowded rooms. Depending on how one looks at it, “guiding” may appear easy or intimidating. In either case, knowing how to “lend an arm” (or elbow or shoulder) in a way that puts both the individual needing assistance and the person providing it at ease is a great first step.

Now, follow these steps to help you guide safely and with confidence:

- Introduce yourself and communicate clearly when offering assistance. Keep in mind that not everybody

requires guided help, as — in some instances — it can be disorienting and disruptive. Always respect the individual’s wishes.

- Ask the person how you can be of assistance. Often, having the person grab your elbow is much better than physically reaching out.
- Relax and walk at a comfortable, normal pace. Stay one step ahead of the person you are guiding, except at the top and bottom of stairs and to cross streets. At these places, pause and stand alongside the person.
- Mention any potential hazards that lie ahead and say where they are. Point out curbs and steps as you approach them and say whether they go up or down.
- When you are acting as a guide, never leave the person in “free space.” When walking, always be sure that the person has a firm grasp on your arm. If you must be separated briefly, be sure the person is in contact with a wall, railing or some other stable object until you return.
- If you are guiding someone into a seat, place their hand on the backside of the chair in the direction that it is facing before they sit down so they can orient themselves. When helping a visually impaired person into a car, place one of their hands on the door handle and tell them the direction that the car is facing so they can locate the front edge of the seat.
- Say when you have finished providing assistance and are leaving them; make sure they are comfortable with your departure.

On a separate but related note on etiquette, always announce yourself when entering or leaving a room when there is a visually impaired person present.

GDA Grad Inspires Television Show To Air On CW Network

Guide Dogs of America is honored to receive support from CW Good



Guide Dogs of America is honored to receive support from CW Good, the philanthropic arm of the CW Network. Its participation has come in the form of sponsorships, as well as through building awareness of the work that GDA does. It is dedicated to educating the public on the incredible role that a guide dog can play in the life of someone who is visually impaired.

Last summer, GDA graduate Lorri Bernson spoke at a meeting of CW executives, during which she explained, in depth, about what GDA does and how her guide dog changed her life. In that meeting, an idea was formed: to create a TV show about a girl who is visually impaired and works at a fictitious guide dog school. Bernson’s visit was the catalyst to the new CW series, “In the Dark.” Perry Mattfeld, who has also starred in the TV show “Shameless,” will play the lead role of Murphy, a sarcastic but brilliant blind woman who sets out to solve the murder of her best friend. Murphy, of course, is accompanied on this mission by her trusted guide dog.

The series is scheduled to premier early next year. Stay tuned.

Did You Know?

Fetching answers to frequently asked questions

What does it mean to “retire” a guide dog?



There are a few reasons why someone might retire their guide dog, and each situation can vary.

Typically, a guide dog user retires his or her dog when the dog approaches the age of 10.

It is taken into consideration that, like people, dogs’ reaction and response times may slow down with age. It’s possible that making fast decisions may not come as quickly and, therefore, possibly put the team at risk. The dog may also tend to lose its drive and willingness to work with the same enthusiasm. It also may be that a dog retires early due to health issues that he or she develops over time.

Because at GDA we give ownership of the dog to the recipient, it is up to the guide dog user to decide what is best for their dog and where it will spend the retirement years.

Some graduates keep their retired guides as pets. Some who are not in a position to keep the dog will have the dog spend his or her retirement with a family member or someone with whom the dog is already familiar and happy with. Oftentimes, the dog will make a full circle back to its puppy raiser to live out this leisure time of life.

Partners in Trust



Make your gift to Guide Dogs of America last a lifetime and beyond. The Partners in Trust Society was established by GDA to recognize and honor the generosity of those who have included 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.

As our way of thanking you, you will receive our special “Partners In Trust” crystal jar 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.



Miles For Money!

GDA was recently approved as a fundraising partner with Walk for a Dog by WoofTrax, Inc., a mobile device charity app that turns miles walked into money earned! Just download the free app to your phone (Android or iPhone), go to settings and select International Guiding Eyes, Inc., dba Guide Dogs of America, as your charity. Start the app each time you go for a walk. Donations are based on the number of “active walkers” using the app for GDA (an “active walker” is anyone who uses the app at least once a week for a minimum of a 1/4 of a mile). The more people who actively use the app for GDA, the more donations we can receive. So, spread the word, and let’s all get walking!

In Memory

With sadness, we note the passing of one of our graduates:

Ken Metz — In-home

It is with sadness that we mark the passing of the following guide dogs and a breeder:

Amos — Class 368

Farley — Class 355.5

Franko — Class 355.5

Kimball — Breeder

London — In-home

Webster — Class 399

Donor Profiles

Donor 'banked' on referral to GDA



Last year, David Lawless went to his bank and asked for advice about where to leave his money. To help them narrow the list, Lawless, who is blind in one eye, told the banker that he has always looked for opportunities to support the blind and shared that he has a lifelong love of dogs. Using those two criteria as a guideline, the search narrowed the results to a

short list that included Guide Dogs of America.

Now, Lawless is a GDA Partner in Trust and has left his estate to the school.

As for why he chose GDA: "First of all, it's a smaller organization and I liked that. It felt more personal than other organizations I had contacted," Lawless said. "Everything about my interaction with the school, from the very first call, was easy and the people all were very pleasant to work with."

Something that always gets the attention of prospective and new donors is the percentage of every dollar that goes directly to the program. Something on which GDA prides itself.

"I was pleasantly surprised by how far my money would go in helping to support the program," Lawless said. "GDA is a good steward of the donations it receives."

Lawless said his decision to leave his estate to GDA was an easy one.

"It's my belief that it helps when you have a personal connection to an organization," Lawless said. "Adding the pieces together was like putting together a puzzle. The organization, the community that they serve, and the dogs they raise and train are all close to my heart. It all fits, like a puzzle."

Guide Dogs of America is privileged to benefit from the generosity of caring individuals like Lawless. 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. 15-17

Mark your calendars for the annual Las Vegas Charity weekend Nov. 15-17, 2018. The weekend will kick off Thursday, Nov. 15, with the Hawks for Dogs ride and the Sporting Clay event. Friday morning, golfers will tee off at Revere Golf Club. The weekend will conclude on Saturday evening with the 38th-annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet at The Paris Las Vegas Hotel & Casino. This year, we will offer online registration for all events! Hardcopy invitations will also be available and mailed early this summer and details will be posted on the GDA website.



Merchandise

Check out new and popular merchandise from Shop GDA! Go to guidedogsofamerica.org, then click on [Shop GDA!](#) Merchandise is also available for purchase by calling (818) 833-6429 or at GDA's new retail store. Several of our newest items, including our holiday cards, are featured here.

Ladies' Cap Sleeve Tee Shirt



Made in the U.S.A., this soft tee features the GDA logo and a paw print on the front. Back reads: "Guiding with Confidence." Two colors: aubergine (purple) and gray. Sizes: Small—XXL. Material: 50% polyester,

25% cotton, 25% rayon. Price: \$20 (does not include tax or shipping and handling).



Ladies Tank Top

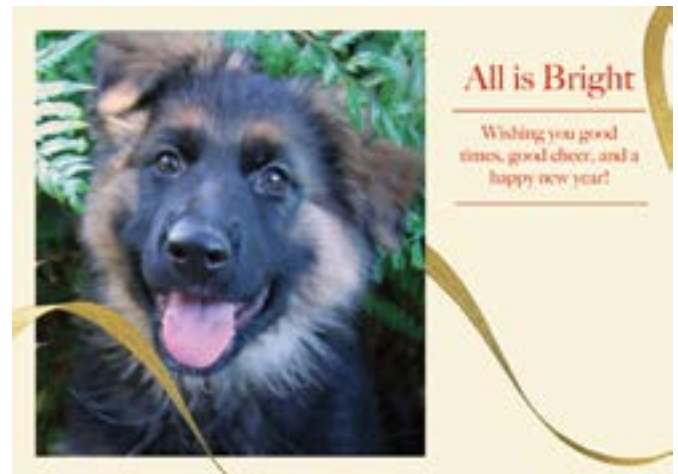
Keep cool and look cool in this new tank top. Made in the USA, the tank features a large GDA logo in the center surrounded by dainty vines and flowers, all in vibrant pink. Around the logo, in white lettering, are the words, "Making Teams Come True. Guide Dogs of America." Two colors: black and blue fog. Sizes: Small—XL. Material: 60% cotton, 40% modon. Price: \$23 (does not include tax or shipping and handling).

Kids Baseball Jersey



Let's play ball... or fetch! This new gray jersey with royal blue sleeves is sure to be a "hit" with kids. The playful design features an extra-large blue pawprint overlaid with the message, "Making Teams Come True," under the pawprint is the GDA logo in white and blue and the words "Guide Dogs of America." Made in the U.S.A. Sizes: Small —XL. Material: 100% cotton. Price: \$23 (does not include tax or shipping and handling).

GDA Holiday Card



Congratulations to Guide Dogs of America volunteer puppy raiser Karyn Paul. Her photos of GDA puppy-in-training Ziva are featured on not one, but two versions, of GDA's annual holiday card. We received so many great photos.

Card 1 message: All is Calm. Wishing you a holiday season filled with warmth and happiness.

Card 2 message: All is bright. Wishing you good times, good cheer, and a happy new year.

On the back of each card is a message from GDA: Our wishes for a peaceful new year.

This year, the cards are 5x7 postcards and are bundled 10 cards (with envelopes) to a pack. Price: \$10 plus tax and shipping and handling.

Tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10. Tickets are available for purchase at GDA. Tickets can also be purchased by mail or phone. Send your check to GDA postmarked by Dec. 1, 2018 or call GDA at (818) 833-6429. Tickets will be mailed to you using the return address on your check or the address provided at time of purchase. Include your phone number on your check. Drawing will be held at the GDA December puppy raiser holiday party. Winner does not need to be present.

2018 Quilt Raffle



This year's quilt, "Doggie in the Window," was made by The Orange County Quilters Guild. The group continues the tradition of providing a raffle quilt to benefit GDA. The patterns for each of the dogs were created and donated by Maryann Hertel of Made by Marney. The quilt measures 60" x 70".



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Get Partners In Your Online Mailbox

If you would like to receive GDA's *Partners* newsletter in your email inbox rather than your home mailbox, let us know. It will save more than trees; it will save printing costs and postage so, even more of every dollar donated can go to our program. Simply go to www.guidedogsofamerica.org/e-mail-newsletter-signup and fill out the form with your email address, as well as your mailing address, so we can take you off the postage newsletter list.

Congratulations Graduates

Class #404



Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

Front Row from left to right: Charlie Keener and Luna (*The Schultz Family*), Stan Holtman and Edge (*Butch & Karen Reyburn*), Terry Landsberger and Chip (*Kaitly Taylor*), Elaine Cowger and Arlo (*Larry & Debbie Cross*), Veronica Martinez and Koko (*The Ulstrup Family*), Janet Erikson and Chief (*The Lawrence Family*), Virginia Elliott and Spence (*The Neuman Family*), Matt Dierckens and Nela (*Lori & Alyssa Almeida*)

Instructors: Back Row from left to right: Jamie Hunt, Alejandra Maldonado, Sean Chiles

Check Out Our New Website



Our new website has been refreshed! It has a new updated look, with user-friendly navigation and fresh content. Take a look at guidedogsofamerica.org.

New Employees

- Sydney Fujishige — Full-time Kennel Tech
- Melissa Gonzalez — Part-time Nursery Tech
- Karyn Paul — Veterinary Administrative Assistant / Adoptions Coordinator
- Celia Salazar — Part-time Kennel Tech