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Guide Dogs of America



Guide Dogs
of America



Tender Loving
Canines
ASSISTANCE DOGS

Guide Dogs of America Welcomes Tender Loving Canines Into Our Family

LETTER FROM RUSS:

I am pleased to announce that as of January 2020, Guide Dogs of America and Tender Loving Canines Assistance Dogs (TLCAD) have merged. TLCAD gives the gift of independence to veterans and individuals with autism by providing highly skilled service dogs. TLCAD also pairs facility dogs with professionals who serve populations that benefit from animal assisted intervention or therapy.

Our new single organization operates under the GDA umbrella, expanding the number of high-quality service dogs that we are able to provide. We can now put more dogs into the hands of people that need them.

Founded in 1999, Tender Loving Canines Assistance Dogs is a relatively young service dog program and brings seven extremely talented and dedicated employees to our team. Our newly merged organization will be headquartered at GDA's Sylmar campus; TLCAD will still maintain a presence at its current San Diego location. Until now, TLCAD's service area has been limited to only Southern California. **Working together, we are going to take our service dog program national.**

A key benefit of our merger is that it opens new doors for dogs in our program. There are some dogs in our guide dog training program that are better suited to perform a different type of service. They may now help veterans who are broken from war, assist individuals with autism, or provide therapy alongside professional handlers in healthcare facilities, schools and courtrooms.

Our program will continue to provide trained service dogs to qualified applicants, throughout the United States and Canada, at no cost to the recipient.

As the new decade begins and we embark on this exciting new chapter, we are looking forward to being able to enhance the lives of so many more people by achieving our new mission: *Transforming lives through partnerships with service dogs.* With our newly-expanded team—and your incredible support, we could not be more excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

Russell A. Gittlen

Russell Gittlen, President



Russell Gittlen, President,
Guide Dogs of America

A CLOSER LOOK

At Our Expanded Program



VETERANS

Our service dogs for veterans heal wounded warriors, helping them gain greater independence and reintegrate into their families and communities. Depending on each veteran's unique disability, the dog can help them in a variety of ways.

When it comes to helping a veteran with PTSD, the dog's job is to address symptoms: hyper-vigilance, anxiety, anger, depression, isolation. The dog might have to turn lights on and off, wake up veterans from nightmares, accompany the veteran in public places, and perform calming behaviors in the presence of triggers.

For veterans with mobility limitations, the service dog can retrieve and carry objects, press buttons and pull open doors, assist with prosthetic devices, and provide balance.

Veterans with traumatic brain injuries commonly suffer from short- and long-term memory loss. We train our dogs to remind our clients to take their medications. Additionally, the routine of having to take care of a dog, has been shown to be beneficial for veterans with memory loss.

FACILITY DOGS

Our facility dogs transform countless lives through therapeutic activities facilitated by their professional handlers in hospitals, schools, and courtrooms.

Together the facility dog team provides animal assisted intervention and therapy to individuals with disabilities, victims of crime, and other vulnerable populations.

AUTISM

Our service dogs support adults and children with autism in a variety of ways. They enhance communication, adaptive skills, and safety.

Autism service dogs wear a "squishy" handle attached to the service dog vest. The child with autism holds the grip while walking, and the parent or caregiver holds the dog's leash. We teach the team to move forward when the handle is lifted and to stop moving when it is released. When traveling with their parent/caregiver, an individual with autism will no longer have to be guided by another; they can move independently with their service dog.

Having a service dog can welcome new social opportunities and evoke language. The service dog helps reinforce communication skills when the individual has to give the dog cues.

Adaptive skills are also improved. This comes from the individual taking responsibility for caring for the dog, feeding, grooming, dressing in vest and leash. They also learn appropriate play and how to interact with a dog.

For those with autism, common sounds may be painful. Additionally, certain types of touch can feel extremely uncomfortable. The dog can address these issues by playing the game "squish" to calm them down—providing deep pressure (e.g., laying side by side or on top of the child). The dog also provides an outlet for soothing, tactile input, such as grooming and petting.

In typical service dog partnerships, the individual with the disability handles the dog. However, with autism service dogs a third-party handler such as a parent or caregiver is necessary. 🐾



"TLCAD is very excited to be joining the Guide Dogs of America family. We look forward to the new opportunities our combined efforts will bring to those in need of service dogs,"

**Victoria Cavaliere,
Executive Director of TLCAD**

TESTIMONIALS

Orbit Brought Me Back to Life

— LORELEI, TLCAD GRADUATE

"I am a combat veteran with chronic PTSD, and I have secondary progressive multiple sclerosis (SPMS). My brain and spinal cord have dozens of areas of damage that affect all aspects of my daily life.

TLCAD matched Orbit and me about one year ago, and my life is forever changed for the better. Orbit was custom trained for me as both a PTSD and mobility service dog. He is not to be confused with an emotional support animal. As an expertly trained, highly skilled service dog, Orbit goes above and beyond performing cues for me in specific situations.

Because of my brain injuries and PTSD, I often become overwhelmed by information or stimuli. The source could be anything from being in a store with fluorescent lights and crowds to leaf blowers and traffic noise.

Orbit helps me stay focused and calm in a myriad of ways. He lays his head on my feet (cue, "feet"), rests his chin on my lap (cue, "chin") and when I want a weighted blanket he rests in my lap (cue, "lap"). These specific cues are a form of deep pressure therapy (D.P.T.); this type of therapy has a very calming effect similar to being covered by a weighted blanket. It immediately makes me feel calm, softens my anxiety, reduces my heart rate, lowers my blood pressure, and helps me focus on the task at hand.

My PTSD is chronic as I suffer from complex trauma. I have good days and bad days. I am often overwhelmed while standing in lines, e.g., at the grocery store. In this instance, I cue Orbit to sit at my right (cue, "side") or my left (cue, "heel") then cue him to lean his head against my leg (cue, "lean"). This is so very helpful! While we are in line, Orbit and I look into each other's eyes. This has been scientifically shown to produce oxytocin, the stress-reducing bonding hormone. Now I actually enjoy standing in line!



Each day, I experience severely reduced cognitive ability and vertigo. Having Orbit at my side 24/7 helps my brain stay engaged and awake. If I feel unsteady when I stand, I cue Orbit, "brace," and he braces his body so that I can steady myself on his shoulders or hips. Since I have an injured brain, one of the benefits of having Orbit is that I have had to force my mind to multi-task. Having to learn a multitude of cues so that I can take Orbit everywhere with me has been very beneficial to my brain and well-being.

In addition, TLCAD provides outstanding continued support for Orbit and me. My balance has become more of an issue lately and TLCAD modified my service jacket to a balance harness.

While there is no cure for MS, I still have hope because I have Orbit. Orbit has been, literally, a lifesaver to me. My sense of HOPE and JOY have grown exponentially—even knowing that I may have a life of continued mobility loss. I know as a team we can not only survive but THRIVE. It's amazing to wake up every day looking forward to embracing the day ahead. Thank you TLCAD for giving me my life back." 🐾

TESTIMONIALS

Wesley and Mully, 8 Years in the Making

— A WORD FROM WESLEY'S FATHER

"My son Wesley was 13 when he received Mully, his autism service dog. It was an immediate game-changer. Mully took him out into the world and gave him newfound independence, a new means of social interaction (we always hear, 'Can I pet your Mully-dog?'), and sorely needed companionship. **Mully was a friend for a boy who needed one.**

We remember vividly a moment when Wesley and Mully shared an inflatable raft in the pool. We remember them walking in the village, Mully stopping at intersections, waiting for the light to change. We remember seeing them curled up in bed at night, fast asleep, Wesley's arm draped around Mully, who snored.

There was also newly found responsibility. Wesley was in charge of walking Mully, of feeding Mully, of taking Mully to the pet store for a bath. Mully, of course, led the way reminding me of the quote, "Wither you wander, I shall go too,"

It's now eight years later, Wesley is 21, Mully almost 11. With no small thanks to Mully (aka "The Mulligan"), our son is now a young man with a variety of interests. He has



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a desire for social interaction and an ever-increasing sense of independence and confidence.

Above all, my son has aspirations for the future. He is taking a class in Marine Biology at San Diego Mesa College. He volunteers his free time at Birch Aquarium, and he spent this last summer working 25 hours a week at La Jolla Kayaks. He has taken Mully with him to all of these places, introducing him and showing him off, because yes, even at nearly 11, Mully is a chick magnet.

The roles have changed somewhat between Wesley and Mully. Mully is happy to let Wesley be the leader now. He still loves accompanying Wesley out into the world but knows his job is for the most part done. He looks to Wesley for ball retrieving, affection and love – and yes, because some things never change, for food and baths.

One other thing hasn't changed at all... If you peek into my son's bedroom at night, you will still see Wesley and Mully curled up in bed together, Wesley's arm draped gently around his dog.

P.S. Mully still snores." 🐾

TRAINING

Creating Second Chances

TLCAD operates a puppy raising "prison program," which has been shown to dramatically aid in the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals. It was designed to meet the increasing demand for service dogs while providing an opportunity for education, rehabilitation, and community improvement.

TLCAD carefully selects who is allowed to enter their training program. Factors such as their conviction, sentence length, and behavior all play a role in the application

process. Research concludes that there are lower recidivism rates for inmates who train dogs. **Since its inception, TLCAD has not had a participant in their prison-based program re-offend out in public.**

Twice a week, TLCAD staff trainers conduct classes in prison to teach the inmates how to raise and train service dogs. The inmate trainers only use positive reinforcement training. The puppy lives with its two inmate trainers under the strict surveillance of the correctional staff. During the two-year training program, the inmates teach their dog more than 40 different commands.

Service dogs trained in prison programs have a high success rate for placement. **In fact, the evidence-based best practices used by our program result in a 70 percent success rate for placement.** 🐾



GRADUATES (puppy raiser in parentheses):

Class #412



Mike Premro and Nelson (Steve Reckon), Sharlene Wills and Venus (Laura and Tim Wild), William "Bill" Harris and Wilson (The Whitlach Family), Megan Glimp Shasta (Sue Munz and Jan Hughes), Emilio Pacheco and Yofi (The Sobel Family), Tyanne Wilmath and Nora (Lauren and Jack Gaver), Paul Bousquet and Yoshi (The Kirschenmann Family), Amity Human and Newt (Mary and Alysoun Higgins)

INSTRUCTORS: Tiffany Brundy, Kelsey Horst, and Sean Chiles

Class #413



Katherine Cole and Yogi (Laura and Dave Kroesen), Maria Christina Cervantes and Brody (Lauren Amendola), Robert Stigile and Winnie (Sharon and Jay Segal), Betty Hansen and Yonder (Lauren Twisselmann & Family), Antonia Lliteras Espinoza and Luna (Sheila Schultz and Family), Lamar Upshaw and Gala (The Carlson Family), Dee Dee Mann and North (The Skaalen Family), James Garnett and Wheeler (Michelle Johnson and Family), Rebecca Judy and Hudson (The Kasman Family), Lynn McLellan and Joy (Deborah Madden)

INSTRUCTORS: Sean Chiles, Alejandra Maldonado, Kelsey Horst

In-Home Graduates

■ Katrina Stanley and Georgia (Carly Nelson and Family)
INSTRUCTOR: Linda Hawes

■ Michelle Plunkett and Ozzie (Catarina and Josh Marbach)
INSTRUCTOR: Alejandro Maldonado

Merchandise SHOP GDA

Check out new and popular merchandise from Shop GDA at guidedogsofamerica.org. Merchandise is also available for purchase by calling (818) 833-6429 or at GDA's retail store. Several of our newest items are featured here.



2020 GDA LAPEL PIN

This year's pin features the recognizable GDA logo with the words "Guide Dogs of America" above the logo and the year "2020" below. Made in the U.S.A., the gold-toned metal pin measures .75" x 1.25".

PRICE: \$8.00*



MEN'S AND WOMEN'S GRAY ZIP-UPS

These cozy dark gray zip-ups feature a collared neck and roomy pocket. The GDA logo is embroidered in white on the upper left arm. Men's jacket only: waistband at the hips, and wristband at the end of the sleeves.

Sizes: Men's Small-3XL

Women's Small-3XL.

PRICE: \$50.00*

**Tax, shipping and handling not included*

TLCAD Graduates



Luis Pingarron and Shield, Chris Tompkins and Chance, Caroline Tingum and Nutmeg, Curtis Both and Mandy

INSTRUCTOR: Victoria Cavaliere, Stephanie Santos, Erin Vejar, Nicole Maple



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GET PARTNERS DIGITALLY!

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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 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 donation 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. 🐾

GDA CALENDAR

03/21	Graduation
05/02	Graduation
05/17	Ride for Guides
06/13	Open House
07/11	Graduation
09/19	Casino Night
10/03	Graduation
10/31	Graduation
11/21	Las Vegas Banquet
12/1-31	Giving Tuesday, Fund A Need



OUR NEW MISSION STATEMENT: With the merger of GDA and TLCAD, our two organizations have created a new Mission Statement to reflect the breadth of individuals that we will serve.

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH SERVICE DOGS.