



partners

Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines



Guide Dogs
of America



Tender Loving
Canines

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope this letter finds you and yours healthy and well. As we wrap up a challenging year, I want to share all that we accomplished together and why I am so proud – as always – of our incredible staff, volunteers, and supporters.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we classified ourselves as an essential business because hundreds of graduates and dogs depend on our services. Furthermore, the future of our program depends on the work that we do now. While we had our share of struggles, we found successes I'd like to share with you.

- Our IT department put in long hours this year, becoming Zoom video conferencing experts overnight and ensuring we did not skip a beat.
- Our puppy-raising department moved their entire training module online, and their weekly "Kennelside Chats" with puppy raisers have become a huge hit. We have been delighted by a flood of first-time puppy raisers desiring a quarantine pal.
- With most of our annual fundraising events canceled, we looked for new fundraising opportunities. Our first virtual fundraiser, "The Walk, Run, Ride...Whatever!" raised more than \$50,000. The virtual-palooza did not stop there. People from all over conducted virtual events on our behalf, from Zoom yoga classes to Zoom comedy nights -- even a virtual barbecue competition!
- Our breeding department carried a massive burden without their usual fleet of volunteers on campus, yet kept things running like clockwork.
- Our training department dedicated extra time to train clients in their homes instead of on campus.
- The vet department managed an influx of new service dogs while managing appointments during the stay-at-home orders.

- The kennel department came in every day to maintain our dogs' health and well-being, juggling new cleaning protocols and practicing social distancing in tight quarters.

- Our administration staff led the charge and handled each new challenge, instituting new safety protocols, sorting through funding requests, and so much more.

As you can see, it truly takes a village to keep Guide Dogs of America running – especially during a pandemic. As we continue merging Tender Loving Canines (TLC) into our organization, we could have never envisioned our two programs fitting together so seamlessly. The development of our service dog program has moved much faster than we expected. Our vision is that TLC service dogs will grow to the point where they represent half of the teams we place.

Despite everything stacked against us, we still produced more than 40 guide and service dog teams this year. As we head into the New Year, our mission continues to center on hope. Somewhere out there, a veteran, individual with autism, or someone who is blind does not have the independence they deserve. We have rallied together during this time to instill hope in people's hearts and deliver a dog that will transform their lives.

With the unwavering support we receive from our supporters, donors and volunteers, we stand prepared for whatever lies ahead and can accomplish any goal we put forth. I wish you and your family health and happiness this holiday season.

—Russell Gittlen, *President*





The Perfect Pair

A MESSAGE FROM GUIDE DOGS OF AMERICA GRADUATE, KASSANDRA HERNANDEZ

"My name is Kassandra Hernandez, and I was born with Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA), which causes debilitating light sensitivity and extreme farsightedness. I live in Philadelphia, and I have a full-time job, but I don't let my busy schedule stop me from having fun. During a typical year, I compete and travel on a national goalball team, a Paralympic sport that combines soccer and bowling. When I'm not scoring goals, you can find me racing alongside my friends from my running club. All of this is possible because in 2015 Guide Dogs of America (GDA) matched me with my yellow Labrador Retriever, Tagg.

When I was accepted to GDA, I knew I needed a special dog to mirror my zest for life. Everyone had told me that the GDA trainers were experts at matching guide dogs with their forever partners. I could not wait to meet mine. If you've ever seen how seamlessly Tagg and I travel together, you might assume that matching us was simple. It was not.

Matching a guide dog and handler is like threading a needle, except there are many threads, and many needles. There is height, speed, pace, but also personality - and a little bit of magic involved too.

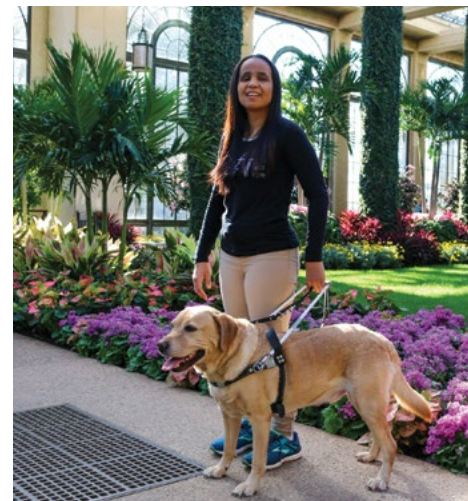
After spending five years together, you could say we are in perfect sync. When I think about all the times we have had together, I know exactly why GDA knew Tagg was the dog for me. He is a carefree, fun-loving boy who definitely enjoys going on adventures. To say I keep him on his toes is an understatement. Tagg gives me the confidence and independence to feel like I can go anywhere and do anything, which makes us the perfect match.

"Tagg gives me the confidence and independence to feel like I can go anywhere and do anything, which makes us the perfect match."

—Kassandra Hernandez

Before becoming a guide dog user, I used my cane to get around. I would have to worry about hitting things in the way or veering off in the wrong direction. Now that I have Tagg, walking with a cane is unimaginable. I hold onto his harness, gliding down the street, blending in with other pedestrians. I barely give walking any thought anymore because Tagg knows exactly what I expect of him without having to say anything. It is like he was born to guide.

The love I have for him is indescribable, and I cherish every moment because I know I won't have him forever. I am forever grateful for Tagg, and I look forward to setting off on plenty of adventures with him and creating many new memories together." 🐾





Vandenberg's Little Superstar

One of the lesser-known services we provide at Guide Dogs of America is the placement of facility dogs. Our facility dogs provide intervention and therapy to people with disabilities, victims of crime, and other vulnerable populations. We place facility dogs in hospitals, schools, courtrooms, and, in the case of Preston, even on military bases.

Vandenberg Air Force Base, in Santa Barbara County, California, employs more than 3,000 Airmen and their families. They lead the way in missile testing, space exploration, and are home to the newly minted "Space Force". Yet, one of their crowning achievements is Preston - the first facility dog in the U.S. Department of Defense.

Preston's primary handler, Emily Dreiling, is the Sexual Assault and Prevention Response Coordinator for the Air Force Base. The importance of their work cannot be understated. Sexual assault affects one in four women

and one in six men at some point in their life. Emily and Preston combat sexual assault by focusing on education, prevention, and victim assistance.

Anyone on base can enter the Sexual Assault and Prevention Response (SAPR) office to report sexual assault at any time. The traumatic stress that sexual assault leaves behind makes it hard for victims to detail their experiences. Emily says, "When you're working with victims of sexual assault, there's only so much humans can accomplish. I have all of the degrees, all of the fancy letters after my name. Yet, there was a void in the comfort I could offer. It is crucial that I create an environment of emotional support for my patients."

Emily had been working in the SAPR office for three years when she began exploring how animals can help with victim assistance. After months of researching service dog organizations, she connected with Tender Loving Canines (TLC). Emily instantly realized that they aligned closest with her goals. In May 2018, she entered her team training with Preston. "TLC gave me all of the tools I needed to be successful and provided a plethora of follow-up support," Emily recalls.

Preston's main job is to provide comfort and assistance. Emily can cue Preston to snuggle or hug while victims describe the worst moment of their life. The trust and security created by Preston enables victims

"He is there when our nation's best need him the most,"

—Emily Dreiling

to overcome the stress of their trauma and accurately describe their experiences. "He is there

when our nation's best need him the most," Emily says.

One of Preston's shining moments came in a courthouse when a teenage sexual assault victim was extremely nervous about providing critical testimony. With Preston's help, the defendant was finally able to provide the information necessary for a conviction. Prosecutors from the case remarked they could not have done it without Preston. A juror even commented that



she did not know the dog was there during court because of his perfect behavior on the stand.

Being the beautiful black lab that he is, Preston is a people magnet. Preston helps to spark conversations that Emily would not have had before, increasing her ability to educate the base about sexual assault prevention.

While she is not at liberty to share exact reporting and statistics, Emily says with full confidence that her office has seen a dramatic increase in the number of people coming in for resources since Preston arrived. In no small part because of Preston's work, the DoD recognized Emily and the Vandenberg SAPR program as the top office of 2019.

Emily boasts about her work with Preston: "Being on the other end of the leash has been such an honor. I wish I could capture all of the moments we've had together. Watching Preston work, he has impacted and changed so many lives... he's this little superstar." 🐾

Mask-a-thon!

When health officials first encouraged the use of cloth face coverings to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, our wonderful volunteer community stepped up to support GDA and TLC program graduates by volunteering to sew and donate masks. In less than a month, we received more than 1,600 masks, which we sent to graduates with a quick note sharing the name of the crafter behind their masks.

Thanks to all who helped make this possible, including a special shout-out to Santa Clarita Valley Mask Makers, Face Mask Fairies, and puppy-raiser Deborah Prough who each contributed a tripldigit number of masks! In many cases, graduates shared pictures of themselves wearing their donated masks, allowing for a fun connection between maker and recipient! 🐾



IN LOVING MEMORY

With sadness, we note the passing of the following graduates, guide dogs and breeders:

GRADUATES

- Buster Chisholm
- Carole Regan
- Daniel Walukiewicz
- Greg "Herbie" Hoover
- Toni Carr
- Turalee Smith

GUIDE DOGS & BREEDERS

- Ajax, Class 368
- Carbon, Class 368
- Coby, Class 375
- Dazzle, In home
- Dooley, Class 370
- Gunner, Class 382
- Kira, Class 357
- Liam, Class 358
- Sage, Class 399
- Val, Class 369
- Venus, Class 415
- Whitney, Class 362
- Wyatt, Class 369
- Sable, Breeder
- Roxy, Breeder
- Vida, Breeder

IN-HOME GRADUATES

(puppy raiser in parentheses):



- Adam Ohnstad and Doppler (Nixon Family)
- Jeff Jenkins and Fiona (Judson & Kasman Families)
- Jim Bobryk and Abby (Jim & Jennifer Klipfel)
- Kristi Kovach and Deacon (Audrey Rohrer)
- Madeline Babcock and Enzo (Sandra Healy)
- Tatiana Corri and Everest (Richard Stevens)
- Veronica Elsea and Sky (Sheila Pappas)



PUP QUIZ!

Find the quiz answers in the "Our Blog" section of our website by visiting guideddogsofamerica.org

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. How many pounds of food do we use in a year?</p> <p>a. 18,700
b. 43,720
c. 65,622</p> | <p>4. How long does a deep clean of our kennels take?</p> <p>a. 1 hour
b. 2.5 hours
c. 4 hours</p> |
| <p>2. How many loads of laundry does the nursery do in a year?</p> <p>a. 730
b. 2,190
c. 365</p> | <p>5. How many miles does a Guide Dog trainer walk every year?</p> <p>a. 976
b. 1,550
c. 2,080</p> |
| <p>3. What year was Guide Dogs of America founded?</p> <p>a. 1948
b. 1966
c. 1982</p> | |

SHOP GDA

To purchase, go to "Shop GDA" on guideddogsofamerica.org, or call (818) 833-6429.

HOLIDAY CARDS

Available in packs of 10 cards with 10 envelopes. Message on the back reads, "During this holiday season and throughout the new year... we wish you comfort, good health, and happiness."

PRICE: \$15.00 + Shipping and handling



This season, give the gift of love, confidence and freedom. Donate to our

"Holidays of Hope" campaign kicking off on #GivingTuesday, December 1. By the way, did you know that your gift is eligible for a 100% tax deduction under the CARES act legislation?

Are you doing your holiday shopping online this year? Use Amazon and choose GDA as your charity of choice by selecting International Guiding Eyes, Inc. (our legal name) in the Amazon Smile portal at smile.amazon.com.

Holidays of HOPE



2020 QUILT RAFFLE

This year's quilt was made and donated by the Orange County Quilt Guild. Raffle tickets are \$2 each or \$10 for six. Send your check to Guide Dogs of America, postmarked by

Nov. 30, or call us at (818) 833-6429. Include a return address and phone number. The drawing will be held in December.



**Guide Dogs
of America**

**13445 Glenoaks Blvd.
Sylmar, CA 91342**

TEL: (818) 362-5834

FAX: (818) 362-6870

E-MAIL: mail@guidedogsofamerica.org

WEBSITE: guidedogsofamerica.org

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

LOS ANGELES, CA
PERMIT NO. 2181

GET PARTNERS [DIGITAL EDITION]

If you would like to receive this newsletter by e-mail, simply go to **guidedogsofamerica.org** and click on the "Partners" icon, located on the bottom right side of the home page.



**OUR MISSION STATEMENT:
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH SERVICE DOGS.**

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 us in their planned giving. Visit our website, or please call **Rhonda Bissell** at **(818) 833-6432** for more information.

Cut along dotted line



CLICK HERE TO MAKE A DONATION »

If you would like to make a one time donation, please fill out the information below, cut along the dotted line and use the provided envelope to mail in your donation. If paying by check, please make check payable to **Guide Dogs of America**.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

☐ Cash ☐ Check ☐ Credit Card Donation Amount \$ _____ Phone: _____

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____