



partners

Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Graduates of our school are constantly thanking us, but I think it's time that we say thank you to them. Meeting and interacting with our graduates is by far the best part of my job. You'll never hear them talk about what they can't do, but rather what they *can* do and *what they're going to do*.

The accomplishments that transpire when our graduated teams return home are what bring me the most fulfillment. Like when a graduate tells me they walked to a grocery store on their own for the first time in years. Or when a parent tells me that because of our service dog, their child with autism is going off to college. With our dogs by their side, our alumni are doing things never thought possible – such as surfers who are blind, sky-divers, hikers, and marathon runners. One of our GDA graduates is even working on Capitol Hill.

So like I said at the beginning, I want to say thank you to our GDA-TLC Graduates. Your fierce determination and the achievements that follow make our work truly meaningful and inspire me to come to work. This edition of the Partners Newsletter is dedicated to you. Your accomplishments bring us immense joy, and you make us so proud.

As for an update on the school, things are returning to normal here at our campus in Sylmar. We are busy holding guide and service dog classes and have our hands full with the renovations to our kennel center. Please consider

participating in our upcoming **"Walk, Run, Ride...Whatever!"** fundraiser at the end of the month. Funds raised from events like these are why we continue to transform lives through partnerships with service dogs. I wish you and your family a happy, healthy, and fun-filled summer.

—Russell Gittlen, *President*



Guide Dogs
of America

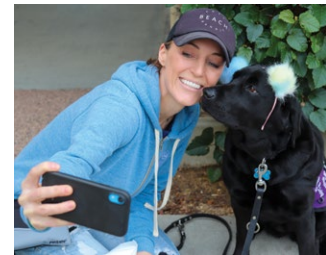


Tender Loving
Canines

Because of Proxie...

WRITTEN BY MESSINA
SERVICE DOG CLASS #04

[This note is the one-month progress report from US Army Veteran Messina, recently paired with service dog Proxie. Messina served as a combat medic and paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division.]



I received Proxie one month ago, and she has impacted almost every aspect of my life. For starters, I improved my self-care habits for the first time since my injuries. Having Proxie encourages me to work towards a healthy morning and evening routine. Having these new routines dramatically improves my ability to get out of bed in the morning and sleep peacefully at night (despite pain and fatigue). She allows me to cope with my neurological symptom flares, which lets me engage in activities outside my home – errands, healthcare, and other activities just for fun!

Proxie helps me with many chores when I am struggling physically. Her presence motivates me to keep trying until I complete the task at hand. She helps me bring in the groceries, change the laundry, and take out the trash. When I take out the trash, she pushes open the heavy door to the backyard that I previously struggled with. Proxie helps me avoid pain by picking up the things I drop and also

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retrieving items like my phone, the remote, and my bag; this means I do not have to stand back up when I need to rest my legs longer.

When I am in too much pain, feel nervous in social situations, or become too stressed, she performs comforting deep pressure therapy. During my infusion therapy treatments recently, Proxie helped manage my pain and stress by doing her “snuggle” and “focus” and “between” commands. She’s also fantastic at interrupting before I even recognize that I am feeling socially anxious or pain is building to the point that I need to take medication. She does this by nudging me when I start shaking my legs.

Because of Proxie, I now do much more physical therapy at home because I make it a game with her. Furthermore, our walks help me to do vestibular physical therapy more regularly because of the head-turning that occurs while walking. Last summer, I suffered my most severe neurological attack ever, which caused significant muscle atrophy. Having Proxie has helped me regain all of the muscle in my legs that I lost.

With Proxie, this past month, I participated in life at a higher level than I ever have since becoming this ill. I regained interest in past hobbies. I traveled independently (accompanied by Proxie) on public transportation for the first time in years. We visited family out of town, went on many walks outside, and **I discontinued multiple medications.** Proxie makes me feel safe in crowds by using her “between” command especially. She also helps me interact with others when we are in public by waving and



bowing; this is a great way for me to have short, positive interactions with strangers. Because of her, I have begun to socialize with my family and neighbors more. I even met a neighbor with a psychiatric service dog who has children the same age as my daughter!

Proxie is helping me in so many ways already, and we do not even have our balance harness yet! When we do get the balance harness, we plan to take nature walks on uneven surfaces and walk on the beach for the first time since I can remember. We even hope to go camping with a small group as well!

Because of Proxie, I feel a wider range of emotions than I was capable of before. I feel my detachment lessening and my capacity for normal emotions increasing. **Because of Proxie, I am starting to feel joy again.** 🐾



Guide Team Ardennes

WRITTEN BY KARL MUNDSTOCK, GRADUATE GUIDE DOG CLASS #389

[A guide dog team relocated from California to Europe! What happens when they do will amaze you...]

My guide dog Tucker and I moved to the Ardennes region of Belgium in May of 2018. Tucker will be ten this year, and after all this time, I believe the most significant difference between utilizing a cane and working with a guide dog can be summed up by one word: confidence. While I only need Tucker to guide me for about 20-30% of the day, his abilities have transformed my whole life. Tucker’s navigation, ease of travel, and acquired route memory have made my interactions with the world much more meaningful. With Tucker by my side, I can walk with my head up. I take purposeful steps and go about my daily business with little fear or inconvenience.

As for the other 70-80% of Tucker’s time, I can assure you that he is more than just a well-trained pet for me. He’s my therapist and sanity manager — keenly in tune with my moods.

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For example, when I was preparing to relocate to Belgium, I became overwhelmed and stressed at the effort. Without me saying anything, Tucker walked over and laid his head on my lap to comfort me. This unspoken communication which is so meaningful, comes naturally to Tucker.

The first route I completed with my guide dog Tucker was an incredibly emotional experience. **It was at that moment that I began to take my life back. Guide Dogs of America's (GDA) training helped me build confidence in my mobility skills, which restored the confidence I have in myself.** With this rebuilt foundation, I was prepared to move to Belgium. With minimal help from others, I packed everything myself, labeled my boxes, sold my unwanted furniture, contacted a shipping agent, and obtained my visa.

As a member of the **International Guide Dog Federation**, GDA's training program is held to the world's highest standards, and I knew moving to Belgium would put it to the test. Upon arrival in our new home, Tucker and I christened ourselves "Guide Team Ardennes" and set about exploring our new world. We immediately encountered many changes to the way we travel. For example, we needed to adapt to tiny sidewalks, different crosswalk locations and learn the local "right of way" rules. Tucker also learned that cows, sheep, and horses are not "big dogs," and we now avoid them when possible. At each new challenge, both Guide Team Ardennes and GDA's training proved superior.

Tucker and I lead a busy life here in Belgium. We spend time visiting with merchants in the community to demonstrate our work, go to see our friends, and of course, enjoy lots of playtime. The fact that we are unlimited in how often we can go outdoors has kept Tucker in exceptional health after all these years. In fact, his veterinarian here often remarks what a fantastic example of a Labrador that Tucker is, a direct testament to the quality of GDA's breeding program.

Little did I know that when you become part of the GDA community, you make friends for life. I'm so grateful to have kept in touch with Tucker's puppy raisers, Mike and



Meg Tennant, who have provided invaluable information about Tucker's personality, habits, and demeanor. I also keep in touch with my fellow alumni, and we share updates frequently via social media. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my dear friend and GDA volunteer, Linda Loper, who assisted me with my move to Belgium.

Since receiving Tucker, my family, especially my daughter Brooke, has seen a considerable improvement in my approach to life. Along with a physical transformation, they noticed a significant shift in my overall personality and attitude. Tucker and I work so well together that many of my sighted friends often forget that I have a visual impairment.

So when people ask me, "what are the benefits of having a guide dog?" I motion to the landscape around me and say, "I get to live in a beautiful country like this!" GDA provided me with a fantastic guide dog partner, the chance to rewrite my entire life story, and the courage to actually do it. I've fulfilled my life's dream by traveling the world and settling down in a small European village. I would not have had the confidence to take the first step without my guide dog Tucker.

Our adventures are just beginning. Stay tuned.

Karl W. Mundstock

Tucker Tennant-Mundstock | Class #379, July 2013
Gedinne, Belgium

Follow our adventures at:
www.facebook.com/guideteamardennes

2021 QUILT RAFFLE

This year's cheerful and detailed quilt, "Pictures of My Dog," measuring 80" x 106," was crafted by the Santa Clarita Valley Quilt Guild to raise funds for GDA. One very lucky person will have the chance to take it home after the raffle drawing on **Friday, December 17th, 2021**. The cost of the raffle ticket is \$2 per ticket or \$10 for six tickets.

Raffle tickets can be purchased by mail, over the phone at (818) 833-6429, or in person at the school's Visitor and Education Center today! If purchasing by mail, please include your address and phone number.





Jersey and Me

WRITTEN BY JOHN DRAKE
GRADUATE GUIDE DOG CLASS #415

I was given a friend to help me out
He's with me daily to walk my route
His eyes are fine, as opposed to mine
He gets me there every time

He finds elevators, seats and doors
He never tires, ready for more
He always stops
For curbs and cars
He's my very own, superstar

Chorus

Jersey's in front, and he's got my back
Wherever we go, he keeps me on track
I hold the handle, he's gets me there
He's my guide dog, extraordinaire

He was raised by Tammy and Mark
I hardly ever hear him bark
He's really sweeter than a boy should be
And well behaved, much better than me

We travel sidewalks, buses and trains
He works real hard, never complains
If I try something wrong, He won't obey
He was trained to work that way.

Chorus

Jersey's in front, and he's got my back
Wherever we go, he keeps me on track
I hold the handle, he's gets me there
Jersey's my guide dog, extraordinaire

My dog Jersey, Jersey and me.
I am blind and he can see.
I'll smell the flowers, and we won't hit the trees
When I'm with Jersey, yeah Jersey and me.



Scan the QR code to watch John Drake's original "Jersey and Me" performance at Graduation #415. Don't forget to click the subscribe button below the video to stay up to date with all our GDA-TLC content!

SHOP GDA

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



GDA TLC SHIRT

Our new shirt signifies our merged organization with a Tender Loving Canine service dog hugging a Guide Dog of America. Available in a women's and men's cut.

PRICE: \$25.00 + Shipping and handling



HOLIDAY CARDS

Available in packs of 10 cards with 10 envelopes. The message on the back reads, "May all that brings you happiness and joy be yours this holiday season and throughout the new year."

PRICE: \$15.00 + Shipping and handling

WALK, RUN, RIDE...WHATEVER

You can walk, you can run, you can ride, or you can do *whatever* you want to help the GDA community! From July 30th to August 1st, challenge yourself and others to get outside with friends and family for an hour dedicated to GDA-TLC and raise funds for a life-changing cause. All participants are encouraged to fundraise individually or as a team. You can register and create your fundraising page by visiting:

<https://give.guideddogsofamerica.org/whatever2021>

SAVE THE DATE – LAS VEGAS CHARITY WEEKEND

Grab your cowboy hat and boots, and please join us for the 40th annual William W. Winpisinger Charity Banquet on Saturday, November 20th, 2021, at the Paris Hotel and Casino. This year's theme will be "Rodeo," and we are premiering a new and exciting off-road experience as one of our events. We are working hand in hand with Las Vegas event staff to ensure that our event will meet stringent health and safety standards.

For more information and future updates go to:
<https://www.guideddogsofamerica.org/charitybanquet2021>



GUIDE DOG GRADUATES

(puppy raisers in parentheses)



Class #415

TOP ROW: Reynaldo Villareal and Linux (Megan Haug), Rhonda Rice and Lex, (TLC Prison Program), Lila Mares and Hailey (Thomas Family), John Drake and Jersey (Mark & Tammy New)

BOTTOM ROW: Trinity Eseke and Keesha (Barbara & Mike Arbogast), Arielle Cavazos and Ilene (Rusty & Julie Waters)

INSTRUCTORS: Sydney Fujishige, Kelsey Horst, Sean Chiles



Class #416

TOP ROW: Veatrice McLucas Davis and Harry (Holly Sjogren Family & Hope View Elementary), Connie Jacomini and Poco (George & Marri Thomas), Cari Shields and Jynx (Karlen English & Renee Limon), Rhonda Hutson and Hank (Ava & Blake Baldwin)

BOTTOM ROW: Rhicard Orozco and Lev (Matt & Cate Silberstein), Kristi Colton and Vorden (Debbie & Savannah Ames)

INSTRUCTORS: Sydney Fujishige, Sean Chiles, Kelsey Horst

SERVICE DOG GRADUATES

(puppy raisers in parentheses)



Class #05

TOP ROW: Ryan and Apollo, Alex and Genie, Lina and Piper (Diana Janke)

BOTTOM ROW: Brooke and Dooley, Sung and Nina, Mariam and Velcro (Erin & Craig Sturges)

INSTRUCTORS: Nicole Maples, Erin Vejar



Building for the Future

Kennel and Puppy Nursery Renovation

With more than 250 puppies-in-training and hundreds of working dogs, our kennel and Puppy Nursery are the heart of our campus. That is why, this year, we are **Building for the Future** with a complete renovation of our Kennel and Puppy Nursery. We will be updating these facilities with state-of-the-art technology that meets the industry's highest health and safety standards in order to ensure our dogs and staff have the ideal environment to focus on their greater purpose – transforming lives.

To continue this project, we still need your help! Sponsors of this project will have their names placed in these new areas and at the entrance.

■ Silver:	
Single Kennel Dedication	\$6,000
■ Gold:	
Puppy Pen	\$25,000
■ Platinum:	
Section of 10 Kennels + Community Area	\$50,000

If you are interested in being a part of this important project, contact us at **(818) 833-6429** or go to **give.guidedogsofamerica.org/kennel2021**



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If you would like to receive this newsletter by e-mail, simply go to **guidedogsofamerica.org** and click on the "Newsletter Sign-Up" button, 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



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 _____



Donating to GDA-TLC has never been easier. Open the QR code reader or camera app on your phone and hold your device over the QR code to give today!