President’s Message

Greetings,

As we mark our 75th anniversary, I am filled with great pride. We must honor the legacy of Joseph Jones, whose audacious dream and unwavering determination gave birth to Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines (GDA|TLC). Working together, we have granted thousands of people freedom and independence. Joseph’s legacy is a gift to us all. This organization is more than a service dog school. It’s a community. It’s a place where people find purpose and can become a part of something bigger than themselves. It’s where lifelong friendships, lessons, and memories are made. What started as a dream has become a safe haven for peace, kindness, and hope. Joseph once said, “It seems like an impossible task that I have undertaken to provide at least 10,000 blind people with a guide dog that will give them their freedom and independence, release them from the darkness, and take them places they want to go. I fully realize the proportions of this undertaking, but none will tell me that it can’t be done.” As we celebrate this milestone, we must remember our work is never finished. We have embraced a new mission that includes service dogs and that is not a responsibility I take lightly. At this very moment, there is a Veteran who won’t leave their home, burdened by the hidden scars of their service. There is a child with autism feeling too scared to go out in public, yearning for a friend. These people need our help, and Joseph’s legacy will guide us forward as we continue to transform lives through partnerships with service dogs.

Sincerely, Russell Gittlen, President GDA|TLC

A Legacy of Vision and Compassion:

the inspiring Journey of Joseph Jones

In 1885, in the small town of Meridian, Mississippi, a child was born who would change the lives of thousands of individuals. Although Joseph Jones came into this world with full vision, at the age of eight, he contracted a tropical fever, and his eyesight was severely impacted.

Joseph refused to be defined by his disability. He began his career as a railroad machinist. Joseph immersed himself in the labor movement, passionately advocating for workers' rights. But as time passed, his vision decreased even more, and, at 37 years old, Joseph became legally blind and was forced to give up his railroad job.

Seeking a loyal companion to help him navigate the world, Joseph applied for a guide dog. Unfortunately, he was denied one due to his "advanced age"… he was 57. Determined to regain his independence, Joseph extensively researched guide dogs and their benefits. Doing so revealed a substantial need for more guide dogs, particularly ones without a fee.

Joseph founded International Guiding Eyes (IGE) in 1946 in Richmond Hill, New York. IGE’s mission was to provide guide dogs free of charge to those in need and would never discriminate based on age. Joseph believed that, with the assistance of these specially trained dogs, thousands of individuals could regain their freedom and live fulfilling lives.

IGE’s first task was to find a suitable dog trainer. Joseph soon met William P. Holzman, a seasoned dog trainer with expertise in working with German Shepherds, the preferred breed for guide and working dogs at the time.

In desperate need of financing, Joseph turned to his friends in the labor movement for support. The International Association of Machinists (IAM) allowed Joseph to promote IGE through the union's influential newsletter. Donations started pouring in, and Joseph's dream began to take shape.

Joseph's strong belief in his mission kept him going, even when facing challenges such as finances. With barely two nickels to rub together, Joseph and Holzman trained and deployed their first guide dog, "Young Buche of Groyullam," to a man named Arthur Torgerson. Buche enabled Arthur to pursue his dream of higher education.

Joseph's tenacity and research eventually led him to Captain Kreimer who was living in Burbank at the time and was renowned as one of the first guide dog trainers. Their new partnership sparked a relocation of the school to Southern California and also allowed IGE to train guide dogs year-round. It was here in Los Angeles that Joseph formally filed for the incorporation of International Guiding Eyes, thus marking the official birth of the organization in 1948. The move to California also brought the financial support of the Hollywood community, full of celebrities who recognized the life-changing impact of guide dogs. For instance, Andy Griffith donated the full cost of training a guide dog.

By 1951, IGE had produced an astounding 83 guide dogs. However, the organization didn't just count its success based on numbers, it also looked to the real stories of change that happened for its clients. Students who received guide dogs from IGE gained newfound independence and pursued their dreams with confidence.

It took several years after the school's founding before Joseph received a guide dog of his own. However, once he did, Joseph and his new loyal companion, Lucy Belle, touched hearts of many as they traveled the nation, tirelessly advocating for access to guide dogs. Joseph and Lucy would visit local districts and lodges to encourage fundraisers, they spoke to thousands at national conventions, and were a staple of Hollywood, wining and dining with the stars of the 1950’s.

Joseph’s death in 1957 marked a profound loss. Just before his passing, Joseph had one last contribution to IGE. The lack of a permanent home was a great concern of his. In 1956, Joseph and the board of directors purchased a piece of land in North Hollywood to build a headquarters. Duke Evers took the reins as Joseph’s successor, and the organization continued to grow. In September 1960, the newly built headquarters on Denny Avenue in North Hollywood became IGE’s first official home. For the first time, administrative offices, kennels, training quarters, and a residence for the head trainer are all housed under one roof. Joseph’s dream had a place to thrive for years to come.

For 75 years, IGE, now GDA | TLC, has carried out Joseph’s motto: “We serve so that others may see.” His legacy continues to be the brightness we bring to people’s lives and the power we give them to move through the world with confidence and respect Joseph’s journey was one of hope, resilience, and boundless compassion—a life that continues to inspire and remind us that a single person's vision can illuminate the lives of many.

History Timeline

- 1885: Joseph Jones is born.

- 1893: Jones loses his vision due to a tropical fever at age 8.

- 1928: The first guide dog arrives in the United States.

- 1942: Jones is denied a guide dog for being “too old.”

- 1946: Jones starts a school in New York with trainer William Holzman. They produce their first guide dog "Young Buche of Groyullam" a year later.

- 1948: Jones officially incorporates International Guiding Eyes in California.

- 1951: International Guiding Eyes produces 83 guide dogs in its first three years.

- 1954: Jones realizes his dream and receives his first guide dog, Lucy Belle.

- 1957: Jones passes away at 72.

- 1960: Official headquarters are built in North Hollywood.

- 1975: Bonnie Bergin trains the first service dog to assist a paraplegic woman, giving birth to the service dog movement.

- 1981: Organization moves to new campus in Sylmar, California.

- 1990: President George H.W. Bush signs the Americans with Disabilities Act into law, which defines service animals.

- 1992: President Bud Melvin changes name to Guide Dogs of America.

- 1995: The organization’s first puppy nursery is built.

- 1998: Tender Loving Canines Assistance Dogs (TLCAD) is founded in San Diego.

- 2007: TLCAD receives accreditation from Assistance Dogs International.

- 2016: The visitor and education center is built and completed.

- 2018: Dormitories and administation buildings are remodeled.

- 2020: Guide Dogs of America and TLC merge.

- 2021: Kennel Center and Puppy Nursery renovations are completed.

Heidi Poem

Audrey Whetzel graduated from IGE in April 1964, and was partnered with “Heidi,” a beautiful black female German Shepherd. Audrey and “Heidi” went to work for IGE, traveling around the country, speaking at conventions, and appearing before service groups to put a human (and canine) face on IGE’s fundraising efforts. The pair proved to be a popular draw, and Whetzel penned a poem to her partner that was widely circulated:

***Heidi***

Tho not a word can Heidi say

She lets me know in every way –

By my side she’ll always be,

Watching, loving, guiding me.

Her warm, wet tongue upon my cheek,

Her quick response each time I speak –

Oh how I thank the Lord above

For sending Heidi me to love

Ready now to take my place among society,

The chains of blindness gone for good,

My Heidi set me free.

How bright Life is with Heidi near,

This darkness I’ll no longer fear,

She’ll take me where I want to go –

Heidi, how I love you so,

Heidi, how I love you so.

# 2023 QUILT RAFFLE - “From Our Dogs to Yours”

This year’s beautiful and detailed quilt, “From Our Dogs To Yours,” was crafted by the Santa Clarita Valley Quilt Guild! This beautiful piece of art contains pictures of all different shapes, sizes, and breeds of four-legged friends. One very lucky person will have the chance to take it home after the drawing on **Friday, December 15, 2023**. The cost is $2 per ticket or $10 for six tickets. (Quilt measures 62.75 inches x 61 inches.)

Tickets can be purchased by mail, over the phone at (818) 833-6429, or in person at the school! If purchasing by mail, please include your address and phone number. Envelopes must be postmarked at least 7 days before the drawing.

Graduates

**Guide Dog Class #424**

In Row: Stephen Ulerick & Kingston (Margaret Jackson), Mui Phu & Fritz (Annabel Schultz), Judith Lung & Bernard (Giles Family), Roger Kopp & Elton (Dave Brooks), Monique Barragan & Gadget (Tammy New), Amanda Hilty & Itsy (Cheryl Stevenson), Albert Macklin & Whit (Kaity Taylor)

Instructors: Sydney Fujishige, Sean Chiles

**Service Dog Class #13**

In Row: Joe & Apple (Lisa Collins), Brooke & Raider (Sobel Family), Angel & Vivian (Mike Steinmetz)

Instructor: Nicole Maples

**Service Dog Class #14**

In Row: Rudi & Wisdom (Anna Conway), Shelby & Bosun (Ugoretz Family), Drew & Iniko (Shelby Zimmerman), Lisa & Justice (Thomas Family), Beth & Opie (Diana & Jenna Cheng), Danielle & Lego (Stapleton Family), Kristin & Ziggy (Yoshida Family)

Instructors: Nicole Maples, Jen Bohan, Sonia Parisi

# MERCHANDISE SHOP GDA|TLC – 75th Anniversary Pin

*To purchase, go to “Shop GDA” on guidedogsofamerica.org or call (818) 833-6429.*

**ITEM:** 75th Anniversary Pin

**URL:** [**https://guide-dogs-of-america.mybigcommerce.com/2023-lapel-pin/**](https://guide-dogs-of-america.mybigcommerce.com/2023-lapel-pin/)

**DESCRIPTION:** This year’s 75th-anniversary pin is a black and gold German Shepherd. The dog is symbolic of the first Guide Dog to graduate from Guide Dogs of America in 1948.

**Price: $8.00**

\*Tax, shipping, and handling not included. If mailing a check, please call (818) 362-5834 to determine additional tax and shipping charges required for payment.

# PARTNERS IN TRUST

Leave a legacy by considering Partners in Trust. There are multiple planned giving opportunities. We would like to help you decide which would best suit your wishes. For additional information, please contact Zack Gittlen (818)-833-6426 or Rainie Williams at (818) – 833 – 6469

# GET PARTNERS [DIGITAL EDITION]

If you would like to receive this newsletter by email, simply go to [www.guidedogsofamerica.org](http://www.guidedogsofamerica.org) and click on the “Newsletter Signup” button at the bottom of our home page.

# OUR MISSION

*Transforming lives through partnerships with service dogs.*

Your gift ensures our clients have a life filled with love, confidence, and hope in the form of a service dog.