

# OSVD STUDENTS AND STAFF NURTURE SERVICE DOGS

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**T**ransforming lives through the profound bond between humans and dogs, Guide Dogs of America/Tender Loving Canines (GDA/TLC) has established a flourishing partnership within Ocean View School District (OVSD).

It started in 2010, when staff at Hope View Elementary School initiated a partnership with GDA/TLC, commencing with a school assembly to teach students about service dogs and the role they play in helping others.

Fast forward to 2017, Hope View and OVSD elevated the collaboration by agreeing to host their first GDA/TLC puppy-in-training on campus. OVSD employees have successfully nurtured 15 service puppies in training, placing them in classrooms across the district.

"Being blind is a frightening experience

at times," said Las Vegas resident Veatrice, who was paired with seeing eye dog Harry. "Try to imagine it — opening your front door and not being able to see the world outside. Having Harry by my side makes opening that door not so overwhelming."

Currently, there are six GDA/TLC pups at OVSD elementary schools and the district office. Community members as well as school staff and students have encountered numerous uplifting moments thanks to the puppies.

"Playing a small role in transforming someone's life is the motivating factor for becoming a puppy raiser for Guide Dogs of America," said Lorena Aceves, who works in human resources for OVSD. "Seeing the amazing service the pups provide to their people is truly gratifying."

Integrated into the district's Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program, the puppies actively



engage with classrooms on a weekly basis. Through these interactions, students gain a deeper understanding of the values of volunteering and giving back to others.

An annual highlight is the Service Dog assembly hosted by one of our elementary schools. Numerous pups in training, operational service dogs and leadership representatives from OVSD and GDA/TLC come together to commemorate the program.

This event celebrates the positive impact the program has on the eventual recipients of the dogs and on those who interact with the dogs throughout the training journey.

GDA/TLC is dedicated to breeding, raising and training guide dogs for individuals who are experiencing blindness or visual impairment, as well as service dogs for veterans and children with autism.

"Having a service dog has been so impactful to our family," said Chicago resident Staci, whose child with autism was matched with dog Keeper. "I have seen such a positive change to my son's social emotional function and confidence. His mental state has also improved, and all of these wonderful changes have been seen across all settings of his life. We are completely blown away and forever grateful to the entire GDA/TLC organization."

This enduring partnership between OVSD and GDA/TLC showcases the power of collaboration to make a positive impact.



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