



Puppy Raising

An Overview



Guide Dogs
of America



Tender Loving
Canines



OUR MISSION



Our mission is to transform lives through partnerships with service dogs.

At Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines (GDA|TLC), we breed, raise, and train guide dogs for individuals who are blind/visually impaired and service dogs for veterans, and families of children with autism. We also place facility dogs with professionals in hospitals, schools, and courtrooms. Our highly skilled canines become trusted companions that increase people's confidence, mobility, and independence. Our dogs, all programs and services, including transportation, personalized training, room/board, and postgraduate support, are provided at no cost to the recipient.



OUR HISTORY

At the age of 57, Joseph Jones sought the assistance of a guide dog for his mobility needs but was declined by many organizations due to his “advanced age.” Because Mr. Jones was determined that a guide dog would enhance his independence, he turned to his labor union, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (“IAMAW”) for help, soliciting assistance from its Executive Council.

After extensive research the IAMAW Executive Council endorsed the founding of International Guiding Eyes. The organization became one of the first guide dog schools to be founded by a blind individual, and also adopted a policy of no upper age discrimination.

With the growing need for highly qualified service dogs, Guide Dogs of America (GDA) merged with Tender Loving Canines (TLC) in January of 2020, allowing us to expand our ability to offer service dogs for Veterans, children with Autism as well as Facility Dogs.



Seated: Joseph Jones, Sr. and “Lucy” with Captain L.A. Kreimer, March 20, 1957

DOG DEVELOPMENT CYCLE



Our purpose-bred puppies are born at the GDA|TLC facility in Sylmar, CA. GDA|TLC maintains a large breeding colony to ensure optimum health as well as desirable traits and temperament for successful guide and service dogs. We also network with partnering guide or service dog schools, approved breeders, and co-op breeder programs. Veterinary care for all of our dogs is provided by a team at our on-site clinic in Sylmar.

- **Newborn puppies begin their socialization on day one with an hour a day of handling.** After four weeks, these future service dogs start spending time away from their mother and siblings. During weeks seven and eight the puppies move to the Head Start area of the main kennels where they have more room to play and explore.
- **When they are 8 weeks old, puppies are placed with carefully screened “puppy raisers.”** With the guidance of our Canine Development Team, raisers teach their puppies proper house manners, basic obedience, and socialize them with experiences that will give them confidence in the world. At any given time, we have 150-200 puppies in homes. Puppies spend each day at work or school with their puppy raiser, experiencing organized and informal training opportunities.
- **Dogs transition to formal training after a series of visits and evaluations conducted, typically at 15-18 months of life.** Dogs identified as guide dog candidates are housed and trained at the Sylmar facility. Dogs identified as candidates for one of our service dog tracks (autism, veterans, facility) are trained by incarcerated individuals in one of two California state correctional facilities. The incarcerated trainers are instructed and supervised by GDA|TLC staff.
- **Upon completion of their formal training, dogs are tentatively matched with an applicant during a residential training course at the Sylmar campus.** Following successful completion of the training course, the team participates in a graduation ceremony and returns to the recipient’s home to start their life working together.

OUR IMPACT

IT TAKES A VILLAGE: A JOURNEY OF JOY AND LEARNING WITH GIZMO



The Puppy Raiser: Valerie

This was an incredible learning experience for me and I'm so glad to have joined GDA|TLC's puppy raising group. Before I got Gizmo, I was so nervous that I was about to tell my area leader, Nancy, that I couldn't do it. However, she reassured me that I would have a lot of support. So, I went ahead and started raising Gizmo. I want to thank Nancy, the South Bay team, the GDA|TLC staff, and my family because, without them, I would not have discovered how meaningful and joyful this adventure would be.

Congratulations William, Gizmo is a wonderful dog and I know he'll do his best with you. During the time that we raised Gizmo, my family and I had a lot of fun learning and laughing. We had so many good times together and we believe that you two will make the most amazing memories going forward.



The Incarcerated Trainer: Arthur

Hello, my name is Arthur and the thing I'll remember most about Gizmo is his love for people, and his love for work.

With Gizmo, I learned that good communication takes a lot of time and patience. To whoever receives Gizmo, please give him a lot of love and trust. I know he'll return that tenfold.

To his puppy raiser, we could never have done this without you. I want to thank you for giving Gizmo the confidence, love, and trust to make him the amazing dog that he has become!



The Graduate: William

When I arrived at GDA|TLC, I was filled with stress and anxiety, due to my PTSD and military trauma.

The first day was especially challenging for me. I didn't think that I would be able to make it through the program. A few days later, I was matched with Gizmo and it was life-changing. I wasn't stressed or anxious anymore. When I looked into his eyes, I knew that my life would change, and it did. Today, with an open heart, my eyes are bright, and I have no anxiety. I'm shining!

I would highly recommend any service member dealing with anxiety, depression, or any type of mental issue get in contact with GDA|TLC.