



partners

Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines



Meet Tony Blevins

Exciting changes are underway at Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines as we welcome our new president, Tony Blevins, who brings a fresh vision and dedication to our mission.

With a stellar military background and over 20 years of supporting GDA | TLC, he is committed to sharing his passion and dedication for this organization with anyone seeking to get involved.

Tony's connection to GDA | TLC is deeply personal. He and his wife, Teresa, initially got involved by organizing local fundraising events, never realizing just how life-changing the organization would become for them.

Their world shifted unexpectedly one morning when Teresa woke up to a sea of red. Diabetic retinopathy had caused bleeding in the blood vessels behind her eyes, leaving her almost completely blind. After a long and challenging year filled with multiple surgeries, she regained only about 15% of her vision in one eye.

Tony vividly recalls the moment when the doctor informed them that no further treatment options were available. He quickly dedicated himself to helping Teresa adapt by rearranging their home's furniture and even positioning food on her plate in consistent patterns she could recognize. He guided her through their home and neighborhood, ensuring she could navigate safely.

Despite the discouraging news, they remained unwavering in their determination to find a solution. Fortunately, the answer was closer than they expected. Rather than waiting for a medical breakthrough or withdrawing from the world, Teresa applied for a guide dog through GDA | TLC.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

I am honored and thrilled to serve as President of this incredible organization and to lead this dedicated and passionate community. I fully recognize the magnitude of the responsibility entrusted in me—to uphold and advance the great mission Joseph Jones established over 75 years ago.

I extend my deepest appreciation to Russ Gittlen for his guidance and mentorship. His leadership, dedication, and vision have been instrumental in shaping this organization, and I am excited for the opportunity to build upon the strong foundation he and those before him have established.

I am also incredibly thankful to the entire community for the warm welcome my wife, Teresa, with her guide dog Delilah, and I have received. Your support and commitment to our mission inspire us every day.

As we move forward, my focus is on growth—expanding our programs, extending our reach, and deepening our impact through life-changing service dog partnerships.

I look forward to working alongside each of you to build upon our success, honor our past, and shape an even brighter future. Together, we will create an even greater impact!

Tony Blevins

Tony Blevins
President / Director
GDA | TLC



Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

That decision changed everything for the better. Today, Teresa confidently moves through life, guided by her loyal companion, a four-year-old yellow Labrador named Delilah.

A DISTINGUISHED CAREER IN SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

Beyond his dedication to GDA | TLC, Tony Blevins has a strong background in service. He spent four years on active duty with the U.S. Marine Corps, serving as a Crew Chief and Flight Engineer in the Heavy Marine Helicopter Squadron, followed by two years in the Marine Reserve aviation sector.

After completing the required college coursework, Blevins was accepted into Federal Army Officer Candidate School, graduating as the Honor Graduate and top of his class. He continued a distinguished career in Army aviation, earning Dual Branch qualifications in aviation and armor, specializing in Heavy Combat Armor with M1A Abrams Tanks. He simultaneously held the highest levels of security clearances.

Tony pursued a dual career path, working in the Helicopter Maintenance Test Flight Section at Ft. Novosel, Alabama (formerly Ft. Rucker), conducting test flights on Army helicopters with maintenance deficiencies. In addition, he served as an International

Aerospace Coordinator, negotiating modern military defense contracts at national and international levels and collaborating with military bases and facilities. Following several helicopter crashes, he was honorably discharged as a Veteran with a disability.



Teresa Blevins on a motorcycle.

Tony also held leadership roles within the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), including Local Lodge President representing 6,000 members, District Lodge Representative for 18,000 members across 38 military defense contracts, and International Representative as a Special Assistant to the International (IAM) President with Compliance and Procedures Field Representative for troubled Locals and Districts with up to 48,000 members.



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Our shared goal is to put as many dogs into the hands of people that need them as we possibly can. Achieving this vision will require a thoughtful strategy and the most effective use of our resources. Expanding our impact means increasing our breeding program to produce more future service dogs, recruiting and supporting more dedicated volunteer puppy raisers, and growing our team of expert trainers and staff to ensure each dog reaches its full potential. With careful planning and the unwavering support of our community, we are committed to building a future where more individuals receive the life-changing partnership of a highly trained service dog.





Facility Dog Valoo Brings Joy and Comfort to the Wichita Children's Home

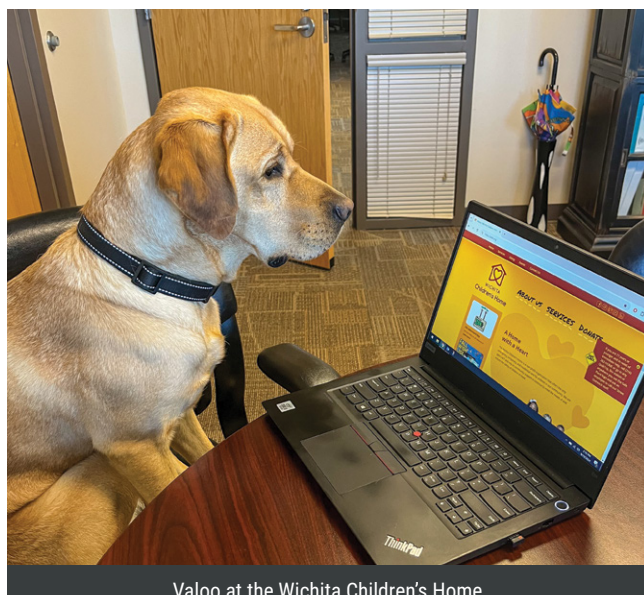
When Kim first arrived at the Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines campus to meet Valoo, a yellow Labrador, she had no prior experience working with a service dog.

"I have a Shih Tzu," she laughed. "I had no idea how to handle a working service dog!"

Training with Valoo required focus and dedication, but as the Development Officer at the Wichita Children's Home, Kim sees the impact of his work every day. Valoo offers care and comfort to children and youth in crisis.

The Wichita Children's Home (WCH) was started in 1888 in Wichita, Kansas when a local father lost his wife during childbirth and needed help caring for his children.

Several women in the community banded together to help meet the need, and over a century later, the home serves around 2,000 children a year aged newborn to 18+. The nonprofit organization provides not only safe shelter, food, and medical care for children and youth, but counseling, case management, life skills training, and more.



Valoo at the Wichita Children's Home.

A LIFELINE OF COMFORT AND HEALING

Most of the children come to the home with pain and trauma, and some of them are recovering from abuse, neglect, and even human trafficking. That's where Valoo comes in: to provide much-needed physical comfort and emotional support during aftercare.

For many of these children, trusting another person feels impossible—but a dog like Valoo offers unconditional love with no expectations.

Kim describes one little girl with physical evidence of abuse who was able to connect with Valoo despite her trauma.

"She just sat quietly in the playroom, gently stroking his ears," Kim recalled. "It was clear she had experienced touch in a very different, painful way before—but this was different it was safe and comforting."

Similarly, Valoo provides a calming presence, helping children feel safe enough to express themselves and process their emotions during aftercare.



"One of our human trafficking survivors needed to talk through the next steps with an adult, and she was pretty anxious," explained Kim. "As she opened up, she gently rubbed her bare feet against Valoo's back, which helped her feel calmer and more at ease."

These dogs are trained to respond to a cue for deep pressure therapy, a technique that can be incredibly beneficial towards helping children cope with trauma.

"When he lies on their laps, the kids get that deep pressure that helps them to relax," said Kim.

Valoo offers more than just support—he brings joy, laughter, and unconditional love to everyone at the home. He eagerly plays with the children, and many



MERCHANDISE SHOP GDA|TLC

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

2025 LAPEL PIN

This beautiful enamel pin features the phrase "Proud Supporter of GDA | TLC 2025," elegantly encircling a silhouette of a dog against the backdrop of the American flag. This pin is the perfect way to showcase your support and pride!

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.

long-term residents seek him out whenever they need a little extra comfort.

Valoo's remarkable effectiveness in his role stems from more than just his impressive work ethic—he's a dog full of heart, personality, and an undeniable love for the people he serves.

"He loves to work, but he also is just so goofy and tender and playful," said Kim. "He'll give the kids 'fist bumps' with his nose...he'll do zoomies around the courtyard as the kids throw him a ball."

A HEARTFELT BOND

At first, Kim wasn't sure if she could keep up with Valoo's boundless energy, but now, she can't help but feel grateful for the GDA | TLC team's exceptional training and guidance. "They truly know what they're doing!" she said, with heartfelt appreciation.

Valoo has proven to be a gift not only to the WCH children but also to the staff, who likewise need support while working daily with victims of trauma and abuse.

"He's brought a lot of joy to me too," said Kim. "He's a lover—he knows when one of us is having a hard time and will always step in to comfort us."

He has now become an invaluable member of the community at the Wichita Children's Home.

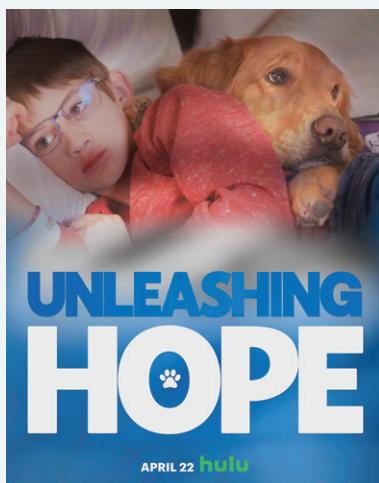
"Valoo has a big drive and big personality," says Kim. "He is just the right dog for the job." 🐾

SAVE the DATE



EVENTS CALENDAR 2025

Apr 22 Unleashing Hope GDA
| TLC Documentary
Release



May 10 Graduation

Jun 7 Open House

You're invited! Tour our seven-acre campus, visit the puppy kissing booth, mingle with puppies-in training, watch working service dog demos, bid on amazing silent auction items and MUCH MORE!

Jul 17 Blood Drive

Aug 23 Graduation

Nov 1 Graduation

Nov13-15 Las Vegas
Charity Week-
end

Dec 2 Giving Tuesday

GRADUATES

(PUPPY RAISERS IN PARENTHESES)



GUIDE DOG CLASS #431

INSTRUCTORS (FROM LEFT): Sean Deeb, Sonia Parisi, Jessica Simpson

TOP ROW (FROM LEFT): Molly & Adora (Lauren Tsai & Family & Judy Espana), Shannon & Hula (Damon Hein), Phil & Darcy (Kathy & Paul Orlowski), Gregorio & Gio (Emily Arturo & Sofia Morales), Holly & Zach (Marianne Brigham & Cheryl Stevenson), Moises & Durga (Marta Jasberg)

BOTTOM ROW (FROM LEFT): Tyra & Rookie (Brian & Joy Lottermose), Kyle & Wyatt (Melanie & Tony Wickersham), Gretchen & Jordy (Andree Patti), Yarra & Violet (David Darga), Angela & Montana (Jenny Cruse), Beth & Vera (The Eaton Family)



2025 QUILT RAFFLE - "SHINING STARS"

This year's beautiful and detailed quilt, "Shining Stars," was crafted by the Quilt Guild! A friendship group comprised of members from the Santa Clarita Quilt Guild. One lucky person will have the chance to take it home after the drawing on Friday, December 12, 2025. All mail must be postmarked by December 8, 2025, to qualify for a ticket. The cost is \$2 per ticket or \$10 for six tickets. 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. (Quilt measures 104" in x 92" in)



Guide Dogs of America Ten-
der Loving Canines

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
VAN NUYS, CA
PERMIT #2399

GET PARTNERS [DIGITAL EDITION]

To receive this newsletter by e-mail, simply go to
guidedogsofamerica.org and click on the "Newsletter
Sign-up" icon located at the bottom of the home page.



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

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 or in your web browser type,
<https://give.guidedogsofamerica.org/transformlives>