



Magic of the Match

They are quite the pair: Ellie, a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania, and her GDA | TLC guide dog, Linda. Navigating one of the country's most rigorous Ivy League campuses takes focus and confidence, and with Linda at her side, Ellie has found both.

"Linda is sassy and stubborn – and that's exactly why they matched her with me," Ellie said. "If she thinks a situation is not safe for us, she will not compromise." That instinct is known as intelligent disobedience – a critical guide dog skill that helps keep their partner safe.

Before Linda, Ellie – who is legally blind – struggled with getting around Penn's busy urban campus.

"We have a pedestrian-only walkway, but a lot of electric scooters use it, and I got hit twice," she said. "I ended up developing a lot of anxiety about being outdoors."

Last August, Ellie received the call that a guide dog had been selected for her. She traveled to the GDA | TLC campus for a three-week residential training program, where she learned how to work with and care for Linda.

Since returning to Penn, Linda has transformed Ellie's daily life. Moving across campus, navigating crowded walkways, and meeting friends between classes no longer feel overwhelming.

"I'm no longer scared to go outside," Ellie said. "I go out with friends all the time now. I'm so comfortable. I don't have to worry because I know Linda's got it."

With Linda leading the way, Ellie is navigating Ivy League life with the confidence and independence every student deserves. 🐾

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

At Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines heroism lives in everyday acts of service, compassion, and commitment – the spirit behind our Year of Heroes for 2026.

Through our "Paws Forward" campaign, you can give future guide and service dogs the boost they need at the very start of their story, helping them grow into life-changing partners for people who are blind or visually impaired, children and families impacted by autism, veterans with PTSD & TBI, facilities, and therapy dogs.

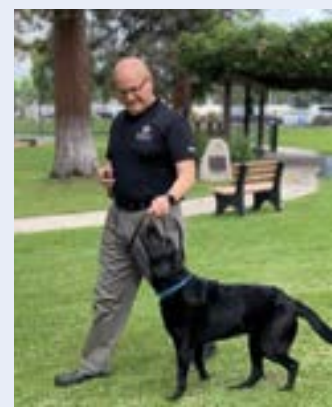
This year, we honor the real-life heroes of our community: volunteer puppy raisers, campus volunteers, graduates, veterans, first responders, IAM partners, donors, staff, and the extraordinary guide, service, and therapy dogs whose work changes lives for the better.

Donate today and stand with the heroes who make independence possible for those in need.

With gratitude,

Tony Blevins

Tony Blevins
President / Director
GDA | TLC





Creating Connection with Facility Dog Wyatt

Wyatt may wear a vest instead of a badge, but his impact is felt throughout the Watertown Police Department – by officers, victims, and the community he serves.

Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council STARS program, a school-safety group that includes mental health professionals, firefighters, EMS personnel, and law enforcement.


Wyatt is trained in 48 different cues that help break the ice and put people at ease.

“He can wave, bow, do a fist bump, or bring items from one person to another,” Kyle said.

But Wyatt’s most important skills come in moments of stress or trauma. He is trained to provide calming pressure by laying his head or body across someone.

“I used Wyatt on a call with a woman during a domestic disturbance,” Kyle said. “When I had him do the ‘lap’ command, she hugged him and started crying. She just kept saying, ‘Thank you – I really needed that.’”

Wyatt also supports the officers he works beside.

“Even when he’s not doing cues, just his presence at the station makes a difference,” Kyle said. “Officers come in from a long shift and their faces light up when they see him.” 

Want to see this popular pooch in action? Follow Wyatt on Instagram [@Officer_Wyatt](#).



“Wyatt just lights up the room,” said his handler, Watertown police officer Kyle. “I’ve had him for a year, and I’ve met so many more people who would not have approached me because of the uniform.”

As a facility dog, Wyatt helps create connections between officers and the public. He rides along with Kyle and also supports the Northeastern

The Bright Light for Veteran with PTSD



Kealohi means “the bright light” in Hawaiian, and today that light shines through his service dog, Judo.

“He likes to play a lot, so even if you’re in a bad mood he comes up with a toy and it gets you smiling,” Kealohi said. “But honestly, my bad moods have decreased a lot because he’s just so happy.”



Over the past few years, Kealohi has faced enormous challenges coping with military-related PTSD. The weight of those experiences made everyday life difficult.

“I’d get agitated or irritated really quickly,” he said. “Sometimes I just didn’t want to deal with people, so I would stay inside. Some days I wouldn’t even get out of bed.”

That began to change when Judo entered his life.

“Now that I have Judo, everything feels different. I have someone that’s always there for me. I feel safe with him. He helps with my PTSD by creating a barrier between me and other people.”

Beyond the support Judo gives him every day, Kealohi also feels connected to the people who helped prepare Judo for his role.

“I really like the concept of the Prison Training Program,” he said. “It changes their lives too. It’s double the impact – they work through their own challenges, and then the dog goes on to help someone like me.”

For Kealohi, the experience ultimately comes down to something simple but powerful.

“These dogs give so much unconditional love,” he said. “And you can tell everyone involved in this program has a huge heart.” 🐾



2026 LAPEL PIN

In tribute to our puppies-in-training as well as our devoted Puppy Raisers who guide them, this pin celebrates where the journey begins.



Every purchase supports our mission to create even more life-changing partnerships.

Visit our Store at
Guidedogsofamerica.org/giftshop

A New Leash on Life

Margo tried to keep her expectations in check. She knew it might take time for her son Tanner – age five and non-speaking with level three autism – to connect with his new service dog, Hayden.

Two months later, she realized she didn't need to worry.

"Tanner never really threw a ball before, but yesterday he spent the whole day tossing this toy ball and watching Hayden bring it back," Margo said. "Big belly laughs. He looks into her puppy-dog eyes with his own, and you can tell he's completely captivated."

That simple moment marked the beginning of a connection that is already changing Tanner's daily life.


"We took Hayden and Tanner to see Christmas lights at a house where you walk through the front yard," Margo said. "Usually Tanner would be carried – big crowds, unfamiliar place. This year he held Hayden's leash and proudly walked her through the entire display."

Hayden's training plays an important role in moments like that.

"The most important part of her job is walking safely," Margo explained.

Before Hayden arrived, leaving a restaurant could be dangerous. "Tanner used to run from the door straight toward the car," Margo said. "With Hayden, Tanner takes her secondary leash and calmly walks with her from the restaurant to the car. That's a lifesaving skill."

Hayden also helps Tanner stay calmer during car rides. In the past, he would kick the seat or become upset when traffic slowed or stopped. "Since Hayden has been here, he doesn't react that way anymore," Margo said.

Now Tanner and Hayden are ready to face whatever comes next. "In just two months we're already doing so much more together, and I'm excited for the years ahead." 

For more on Tanner and Hayden's adventures, follow [@HaydentheHelpingDog](https://www.instagram.com/HaydentheHelpingDog) on Instagram.





PAWS FORWARD

The journey begins...

GIVING LEVELS :

Plant the Seed

- \$50 – Early enrichment items

Nurture the Journey

- \$100 – Socialization supplies

Raise a Hero

- \$250 – Fund veterinary care

Launch a Hero

- \$500 – Start of formal training

Help start a hero's journey.


DONATE TODAY!



Super Heroes Unite!

GDA | TLC has kicked off an exciting new collaboration with **DC** with a special DC-sponsored litter of future guide and service dogs. Named after iconic DC characters – **Krypto, Clark, Lois, Kara, and Lobo** – these puppies have begun their year-long journey with volunteer puppy raisers who will help prepare them for their future as service dogs.

This unique collaboration brings together legendary storytelling and real-world impact, highlighting the everyday heroes who raise, train, and support these extraordinary dogs.

Fans can follow the progress throughout the year at dc.com/pups and even meet them at select events, including San Diego Comic-Con in July! 

Puppy Raiser Spotlight:

Build a Community

Sherrie didn't know much about puppy raising at first – only that her 15-year-old daughter wanted to try it.

Then she had an “aha” moment.

“I remember listening to a GDA | TLC guide dog graduate talk about the first time he walked with his guide dog,” Sherrie said. “He said, ‘This is the first time in seven years I’ve walked with the wind blowing in my face.’ In that moment I thought, ‘I want to be part of that mission.’”

That experience set Sherrie and her family on a path that has now spanned 18 years and 13 puppies.

“My kids both went away to college, but we just kept raising,” she said.

Puppy raising involves far more than housebreaking and basic manners. Volunteers help prepare future guide and service dogs for the real world by introducing them to as many environments and situations as possible.

“Our job is to expose them to different places so nothing feels new or overwhelming later,” Sherrie explained. “We’ve taken our puppies on trips to Temecula, to Las Vegas, and even to Portland.”




Through those experiences, Sherrie discovered something she hadn't expected – a strong and supportive community of fellow puppy raisers.

“I didn't realize I would find such an incredible group of friends at this point in my life,” she said. “It really feels like a special club. I've made amazing connections through puppy raising.”

For Sherrie, that sense of community is inseparable from the mission itself.

“We're all doing this together for something bigger than ourselves,” she said.

And what keeps her going, year after year, is knowing the puppies she helps raise will one day change someone's life. 



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Tender Loving Canines

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GET PARTNERS [DIGITAL EDITION]

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

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