CEO LETTER

Get an update from
CEO Christine Benninger,
including our position
on the rise of fraudulent
service and emotional
support animals. **p3**

STAFF PROFILE

Get to know our new veterinary Medical Director Dr. Kate Kuzminski, and her role in keeping our dogs and puppies healthy on both campuses. **p5**

THE GDB FAMILY

Meet the Janowsky family, dedicated GDB volunteers and donors, who are proud members of both our President's Circle and Legacy Society. **p10**





SHOP TIL YOU DROP!

From apparel and dog supplies, to GDB-branded accessories, we've got something for everyone in our online gift shop. Check it out at guidedogs.com/shop.

NEW INSTRUCTORS





Congratulations to our newest Guide Dog Mobility Instructors: Katelyn Almon and Amanda Jones. They recently completed their three-year GDB instructor apprenticeships, and we're so proud of their accomplishments!

TO READ THEIR COMPLETE BIOS, PLEASE VISIT OUR BLOG AT GUIDEDOGS.COM/BLOG.

Happy New Year to you!

As we look toward another exciting year, I'd like to first thank you for giving so generously last year. Because all our services are free of charge and we receive no government funding, your generous support is so crucial to our mission. With this support, we look forward to graduating even more teams in 2019!

I thought I would take this opportunity to make you aware of an issue that currently threatens our client's safety and independence on a daily basis: fraudulent service and emotional support animals. Fraudulent service and emotional animals pose a threat to legitimate service dogs because they have not had the extensive training of a service dog and can become uncomfortable and even fearful in public situations. Recently, incidents of aggression involving fraudulent service and emotional support animals have jumped alarmingly. Even one dangerous encounter between a



working team and an untrained animal could have catastrophic consequences and result in the permanent retirement of the guide dog. Confusion between legitimate service dogs and pets is fueled by how easy is it to obtain fake service or emotional support animal certification online.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines service animals as "dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities." Guide Dogs for the Blind is firmly committed to advocating for solutions to crack down on fraudulent service and emotional support animals to ensure the safety and independence of our clients. In the future, we look forward to sharing more about our advocacy work and ways that you can help.

Thank you to the entire GDB community for all you do to support and advocate for our life-changing mission. We couldn't do it without your support. We look forward to a year of wonderful things!

Sincerely,



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by the Council of U.S. Dog Guide Schools and the International Guide Dog Federation for the humane care and training of our dogs, and the instruction and services offered to our clients.







Christine Benninger, President and CEO

CAREER CHANGE CORNER

KEEPING UP WITH THE ADVENTURES
OF GDB CAREER CHANGE DOGS





TOP: Owen Bulger and his Golden Retriever K9 Buddy, *Theo*, live in Vancouver, Wash. One of Owen's favorite things about *Theo* is how he wakes him up every morning, giving them time to play before Owen starts getting ready for his day. GDB's K9 Buddy Program matches specially selected dogs to become pets and companions to children and young adults who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

ABOVE: Brent Mershon of Kentucky is enjoying life with *Floyd*, a black Labrador hearing dog that was trained by GDB community partner, Dogs for Better Lives. *Floyd* helps Brent by alerting Brent to noises like doorbells, ringing phones, or smoke alarms.

RIGHT: Vancouver is a very special dog, who was trained by our community partner, Service Dogs, Inc., to serve as a mental health and therapy canine.

His job is to provide comfort to first responders and medical personnel, including police officers, fire fighters, doctors, and nurses. Vancouver is an official member of the Atascocita Fire Department in Humble, Texas. When he is off duty, he enjoys living with Battalion Chief Edward Roth and



Guide Dogs for the Blind is excited to welcome Dr. Kate Kuzminski as the new Medical Director overseeing veterinary operations on both of our campuses. Kate was born to Canadian parents in Massachusetts but moved back to Canada when she was eight. She attended the University of Guelph for her B.S. and MBA degrees, before earning her veterinary degree from Ontario Veterinary College.

Through a bit of serendipity, fortunate timing, and a little courage she eventually landed in non-profit veterinary medicine. She was the Director of Shelter Medicine at the San Francisco SPCA and most recently served as the Field Medical Director for Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS).

About GDB, "I am excited about this role! I see it leveraging my experience in direct veterinary care and shelter medicine. Part of my job is to provide leadership to our veterinary

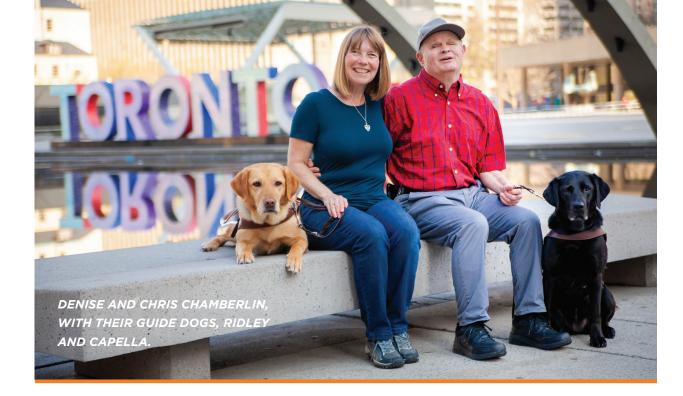
teams, supporting both campuses so that we continue to operate as an awesome, collaborative, and unified team. This includes ensuring our clinics continue to provide exceptional care to our patients and our clients in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner." Another aspect of her job is collaborating with many other departments to develop and



deliver industry best practices in population health and infectious disease control. "I think the entire veterinary clinic team is amazing and I feel very grateful to be a part of it. Every single person is committed to our dogs and GDB in a way that is inspiring and motivating every single day."

Outside of work, she loves to spend time with family and dogs along the Sonoma County coast. She also loves road trips, hiking, and camping. "I am excited to find out why the stars aligned and brought me to GDB and how I will contribute to this incredible organization and the complex life-changing work that it does," Kate said. "Everyone on both campuses, including the volunteers, has been incredibly welcoming and stellar examples of the commitment that happens when a team truly believes in the mission of an organization."

4 5



If one guide dog partnership is good, it makes sense that two are better. That's certainly the case for married couple Denise and Chris Chamberlin of Toronto, Canada. Chris owns an assistive technology company where Denise was a customer. They made a connection and a subsequent coffee date led to romance then marriage!

Between them, they've had eight guide dogs. Denise's current guide is yellow Lab *Ridley*; Chris has black Lab *Capella*. The dogs have established a good balance of respect and order between them. "They play well together with no jealousy and even seem a bit sad when they are apart!" said Denise.

As anyone with children or dogs knows, even controlled chaos that comes with a full house can lead to a mishap from time to time. When Denise noticed her dog was acting oddly, she put her hand on the dog's head to feel it. When the telling identifying spots didn't add up, she quickly realized she and her husband had each left home with the other's dog! Both enjoyed a day with coworkers and friends commenting that their dog was in fact the wrong color!

When asked about living the guide dog lifestyle together Denise notes her husband "gives me my freedom to be an individual as well as being a partner in our marriage" and Chris is appreciative of their ease traveling together as a team, using the same method of mobility. "Chris and I like to be busy and like to travel together so it works out very well. It is also very nice for our dogs because they also enjoy the company of a four-footed friend to travel and play with. When we travel on buses together, the dogs sit side by side and one or the other rests their head on the other and people are always commenting on how cute they are!"

George Kerscher was recently honored by the LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired in San Francisco with the Dr. Isabelle Grant Award for individual initiatives that benefit people who are blind worldwide. George is the inventor of DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System), a groundbreaking means of creating digital talking books for people who wish to hear and navigate written material presented in an audible format. Through his work with The DAISY Consortium, which consists of membership organizations around the world, George's career is committed to developing equitable access to information for people who have a print disability, including blindness, impaired vision, dyslexia, or other issues. George's guide dog is yellow Lab Kroner.



ABOVE: ARIA LOBERTI AND HER BLACK LAB GUIDE DOG, INGRID, RECENTLY SPENT SOME TIME IN ITALY. ARIA WAS TRAVELING AS PART OF A STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND, AND VISITED ROME, NAPLES, AND TIVOLI. THE DUO IS PICTURED AT ROME'S FAMOUS TREVI FOUNTAIN.

YOU'RE INVITED!

Plan now to join us for GDB's 7th Alumni Reunion: Tails Unleashed!

- When: Friday, October 18-Sunday, October 20th, 2019
- Where: The Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Portland, Oregon.

Celebrate and share tales of the trails with fellow alumni, puppy raisers, volunteers, GDB staff, family, and friends. Workshops and activities will highlight inspiring and informative stories shared by the GDB community. All tall tales and wagging tails are welcome!

Stay tuned for updates, including registration and excursion information, on our website at guidedogs.com/reunion.

Read more of Chris and Denise's story on our blog: guidedogs.com/blog.

CLAUDIA BARKMEIER

Guide Dogs for the Blind is fortunate to have such a talented and compassionate board! This description fits board member, Claudia Barkmeier, to a T! Elected to the Board of Directors in 2018, Claudia is a seasoned financial professional with over three decades of experience, and an active leader in the non-profit world. In 2016, she and her husband John opened their own wealth management firm, Gainline Financial Partners, in Boulder Colorado where they live and raised their three children.

Dogs have played an important role throughout her life. Claudia shares, "I have always had a dog my whole life and I love dogs. I can't imagine a time when I won't have one." She says with a

laugh, "I told my husband when we got married that I would always have a dog and that he could always play rugby." They each got their wish: John still plays rugby and Claudia fulfilled a life-long dream when she began raising puppies for GDB in 2011. She shares that she aspired to be a raiser for GDB since she was in 5th grade and read the book "Follow my Leader." Raising puppies has brought much joy to Claudia, who notes, "Being a puppy raiser has changed my life. I am certain that each dog has taught me more than I taught it. People don't understand how I can give them up, but seeing the puppy at graduation all grown up alongside his or her partner, you know that puppy was meant for that person. It is so rewarding."

Claudia also finds her role on GDB's board fulfilling. "With my board role I wanted to give back to GDB and I am honored beyond belief that GDB wants to work with me. All the staff is so great and like-minded in their commitment to creating exceptional partnerships. After my first board meeting I thought I had seldom been in a group where people are so competent, respectful, and successful. I am so thrilled to be a part of it." When asked what she wishes people knew about GDB, Claudia jokes, "We give our dogs away for free and we provide free maintenance and tune ups. Seriously, I would like people to know that all of our services our free and we go to great lengths to ensure the partnerships we create are successful."

In her free time, Claudia enjoys hiking, traveling, and is a voracious reader. All three of these interests come together on past trips to wonderful places like Africa and the Northern Coast of Spain. Claudia is particularly looking forward to a trip to New Zealand next year. We are





LEFT: PUPPY RAISER ABBY WALKER WITH GUIDE DOG PUPPY, ARMANI. RIGHT: A TABLE OF HOLIDAY LUNCHEON ATTENDEES RAISE A GLASS FOR A TOAST.

HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

In a tradition spanning 42 years, GDB held our annual Holiday Luncheon in December at the Westin St. Francis Hotel on Union Square in San Francisco. Nearly 600 friends, supporters, and guests joined us for a mid-day celebration that featured a reception complete with a GDB Gift Shop, a three-course lunch, and an impactful program that shared highlights from GDB's past year, including an update on our K9 Buddy Program that pairs GDB specially selected dogs to become pets and companions with youth who are blind and visually impaired and their families. The featured speaker was GDB alumna Camille Jassny with her guide dog Egan, and a highlight of the program was a puppy delivery in which six baby puppies were delivered to the arms of their new volunteer puppy raisers. The festivity was capped off with a puppy and dog parade, a fitting way to lift spirits and spread holiday cheer!

Thank you to the event sponsors:

- Presenting—Natural Balance Pet Foods, Inc.
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SAVE THE DATE

- CAPS & TAILS GRADUATION June 1, 2019 (Portland, OR)
- CANINE HEROES AUCTION September 21, 2019 (San Francisco)
- HOLIDAY LUNCHEON December 6, 2019 (San Francisco)

For more information or to register, please visit guidedogs.com/events.

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thankful to have Claudia as part of the GDB community!

President's Circle members Emily and Steve Janowsky of Corte Madera, Calif., got involved with Guide Dogs for the Blind thanks to a personal relationship. "We had a close family friend who was a GDB breeder custodian," Emily said. "Through her and her beautiful dog, we learned about the programs at Guide Dogs for the Blind and the how these four-legged companions offer enhanced mobility, independence, and inclusion for those who are visually impaired. In 2014, we decided as a family that we too

impaired. In 2014, we decided as a family that we t wanted to volunteer at GDB by becoming breeder custodians. Little did we know that this decision would forever change our lives."

In 2015, the Janowsys received *Lucio*, a black Lab. "*Lucio* introduced our family to the GDB world. We started attending GDB events like Fun Day, the annual Holiday Luncheon, and breeder custodian receptions. We also were able to have *Lucio* approved to be a therapy dog. He worked every week helping patients at Marin General Hospital and students at Hall Middle School," Emily said. "Through *Lucio*, we learned so much and became personally connected to the network of dedicated and inspiring GDB staff and volunteers. We now consider them our GDB family."

Their involvement over the years has grown beyond that of their initial volunteer capacity. "With any family, you learn the value of taking care of those you love," Emily said. "This includes financially supporting



THE JANOWSKY FAMILY WITH BREEDER DOG SPROCKET: EMILY AND STEVE WITH SONS SAM AND NICK.

them as well—not because you have to, but because you want to. We have been delighted to be able to be a part of the President's Circle by naming puppies and sponsoring teams at graduation. We are extremely excited about the role of the new Puppy Center and we were honored to support it. When we recently revised our wills, we made sure GDB became a part of our estate plans, so we are now proud Legacy Society members as well."

In 2018, *Lucio* unexpectedly passed away. "We received tremendous support from our GDB family during that difficult time," Emily said. "We continued to volunteer through the foster care program and eventually we found room in our hearts for a new breeder, yellow Lab *Sprocket*—aka *Sprocket the Rocket!*—who is opening new doors in our world." Thank you, Janowsky family, for your support!

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^{*}You can also choose to be anonymous.