

# GUIDE DOG NEWS

The Quarterly Publication of  
Guide Dogs for the Blind

2020 ISSUE 1



*GDB'S FIELD SERVICE SUPPORT  
SPECIALIST TOBY CONTRERAS*

**2020 VISION** In her letter to supporters, CEO Christine Benninger outlines the four pillars of GDB's exciting 10-year strategic framework as we look to the future. **p3**

**BINGE WORTHY** Have you watched it yet? All episodes of the NEW six-part docuseries, "Pick of the Litter," are now available for streaming on Disney+! **p4**

**GIVING HEART** Meet GDB graduate Glenn Abbitt and learn why he chooses to support GDB as a member of both the Legacy Society and the President's Circle. **p8**



**Guide Dogs  
for the Blind**



**GINA PAOLINI**



**CHELSEA SIMS**

## **Point of Pride**

### **NEW INSTRUCTORS**

Congratulations to our newest Guide Dog Mobility Instructors: Gina Paolini and Chelsea Sims. They each recently completed their three-year GDB instructor apprenticeships, which require a combination of hands-on experience, as well as a comprehensive course of academic study. Kudos to both of you for all of your hard work and accomplishments!

To read their complete bios, please visit [guidedogs.com/blog](http://guidedogs.com/blog).



# Guide Dogs for the Blind

**A NON-PROFIT, CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION**  
800.295.4050 | [GUIDEDOGS.COM](http://GUIDEDOGS.COM)

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Michelle McNew - p12  
Submitted image - p8

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Full Member

Guide Dogs for the Blind follows the guidelines recommended 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.



Please recycle this newsletter!

# GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

Greetings,

As Guide Dogs for the Blind enters into this new decade, it's only fitting that in the year 2020 we take the opportunity to review and solidify our vision for GDB in the coming years. I'm thrilled to share that we have been working hard to establish a strategic framework for our future, and have an exciting roadmap to guide us through the next ten years in support of our life-changing mission.

The four pillars of this framework include: serving our constituents more broadly; serving more clients without breeding more dogs; remaining a global industry leader and partner; and focusing on sustainability. To support these priorities, we will examine and bolster everything from discovering how we can serve clients along the continuum of the guide dog lifestyle, to what it will take to make the best use of our campus facilities. We will get more involved with government relations and public education, and endeavor to keep all GDB dogs healthy and productive throughout their lives. We will achieve these goals and others while maintaining financial sustainability and maximizing our resources.



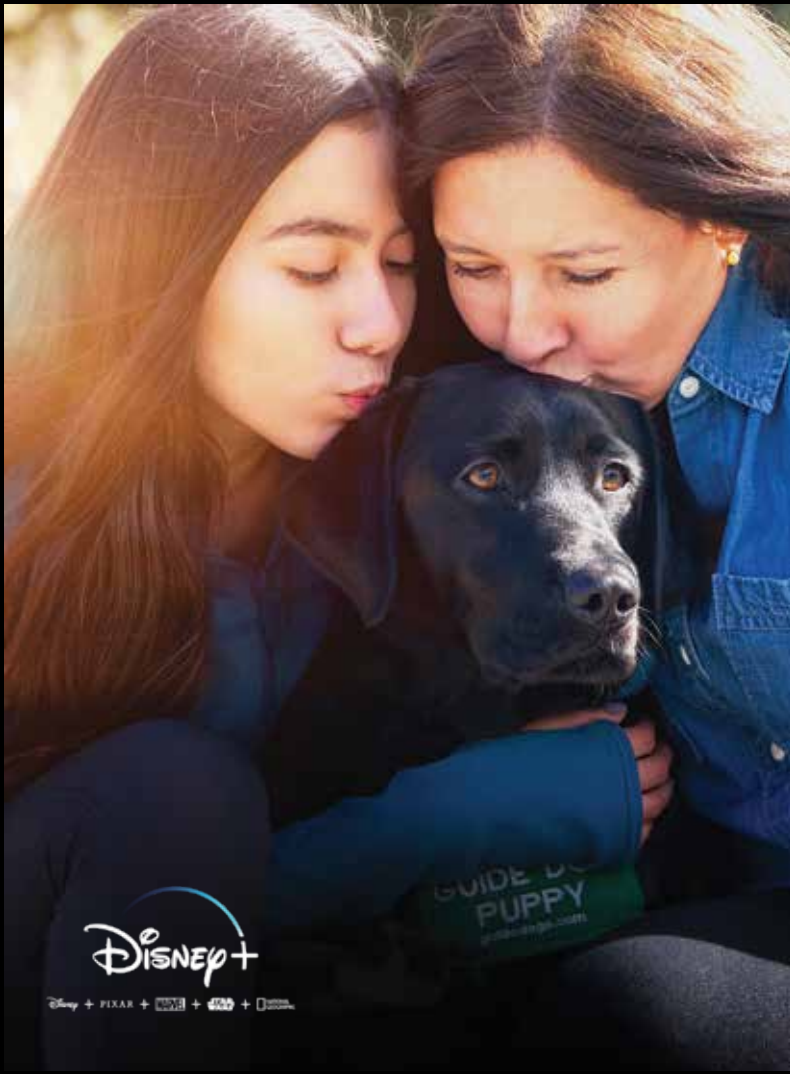
We have you—our donors, friends, and supporters—to thank for allowing us to dream big. We have ambitious plans, and with your help, we will not only set the bar for what it means to be a part of the amazing GDB community, we will raise it. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our work—you are helping to make a difference!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Benninger'.

Christine Benninger

President and CEO



# Pick <sup>of the</sup> Litter

The launch of the Disney+ platform and the all-new docuseries, “Pick of the Litter,” have far exceeded our expectations! Over 10 million people signed up for the platform on its first day and it is expected to have 50 million members by end of the year. Several days before the premiere of the show, GDB grads, puppy raisers, and staff joined the series producers at ABC Studios in Los Angeles for the national launch. CEO Chris Benninger and Producers Don Hardy and Mary Calenza participated in a number of media interviews that were shared broadly across the nation. The series has continued to receive positive reviews in popular entertainment and general news media such as “People” magazine and “The New York Times.” We have also seen significant increases in web traffic, interest in job opportunities at GDB, and a huge surge in interest in puppy raising. We are excited for all that we have achieved thus far and pleased that the public is clamoring for a second season!



**ABOVE (L TO R): PRODUCER DON HARDY; FOUR MEMBERS OF THE DUPUY FAMILY WHO ARE VOLUNTEER PUPPY RAISERS FEATURED IN THE SHOW; PRODUCER MARY CELENZA, AND GDB CEO CHRIS BENNINGER.**

All episodes of “Pick of the Litter” season one are now available on Disney+. Please check them out or binge them all for a second time!

GDB alumna Claire Stanley certainly has an impressive and lengthy list of accomplishments! Now she can add TV personality to that list having been featured in the all-new Disney+ docuseries “Pick of the Litter.” Claire, originally from Orange County, Calif., earned her BA in political science and communications from UC Davis. She then went on to earn her law degree from UC Irvine.

Following law school, Claire channeled her passion for disability rights and legal chops by becoming an advocacy and outreach expert for the American Council of the Blind in Washington, D.C. Her job focuses on supporting the blind and visually impaired community in a variety of ways, including one-to-one advocacy for individuals, litigation with attorneys, lobbying on Capitol Hill, and building relationships with members of Congress to get legislation passed. When she’s not working, Claire loves hanging out with friends and being an “arts and crafts junkie,” with knitting, sewing, and jewelry making among her hobbies.

For the past twelve years Claire has been accompanied on life’s adventures by her guide dogs. Her first guide was *Carola*, a black

Lab/Golden cross, who was “a total love bug. She was the perfect college dog—very cuddly and extroverted.” Her next guide was *Kodiak*, who Claire describes as “a dorky black Lab, who was a great worker.” Claire’s current guide dog, and with whom she is featured in “Pick of the Litter,” is yellow Lab *Tulane*. “She’s a smarty and on top of her game!” Claire said.

She extols the virtues of her guides and the guide dog lifestyle. “I like the ability to not have to figure out everything on my own,” she said. “I still have to problem solve, but the dog walks you around obstacles. I love that free feeling. And of course there are the warm fuzzies of having a dog as a partner... it’s like having a four-legged person with you all the time. People love dogs, and people otherwise may not know how to engage with a person who is blind. So having a cute Lab really breaks down the barriers.” You can follow Claire and *Tulane’s* adventures on Instagram: @tulane.guides.claire.



CLAIRE  
STANLEY  
AND  
TULANE



# DRUM ROLL PLEASE!

## **GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT**

We are thrilled to announce that as of press time for this publication, our new 28,000 square foot Puppy Center will soon be fully up and running. The Puppy Center will provide a safe, warm, and enriching environment for puppies as they begin their journeys to become guide dogs. In order to ensure biosecurity, our first pregnant mother is expected to arrive directly from her breeder custodian's home to the new center in late February. The inaugural litter will arrive a week later, which will definitely be cause for celebration. Thereafter, all pregnant moms will come to the center to deliver their pups. In order to further enhance biosecurity, we are using all new equipment throughout the center, including healthier and more nurturing habitats for mothers and pups.

We anticipate that by April we will have a robust number of pups in the Young Heroes Academy section of the center and will begin having tours visit our Learning Lab—the public area of the center. Here visitors will be able to enjoy interactive exhibits and watch the 6-8 week-old puppies being socialized under the loving care of our staff and volunteers. We can't wait to share this new lens into our life-changing mission.

# IMMERSED IN SUCCESS

In our exciting Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Immersion Program program, participants work with GDB-trained O&M specialists at one of our partner organizations over the course of six days to gain some of the critical skills that are important for working with a guide dog, such as traveling with a long cane, establishing and safely navigating routes, and learning to read traffic. Often, gaining those skills is difficult, due to a variety of reasons such as lack of, or limited access to, O&M training programs. GDB's O&M Immersion Program is helping to fill those gaps by providing this training, free of charge, to qualified individuals who are in need of these skills. Our current partners include the Earle Baum Center in Santa Rosa, Calif., Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired in San Francisco, and Wayfinder Family Services in Los Angeles.



We wanted to share and celebrate a huge milestone with you. As 2019 drew to a close, our Immersion Program served its 100th client since its inception in 2016. The participants were comprised equally of people who had never worked with a guide dog before, as well as current GDB graduates. As a testament to the program's success, 13 of the 50 students who were first time guide dog applicants have already graduated with a guide dog, while another six are ready and waiting for a class date. Of those who have had guide dogs before, many have gone on to graduate with new guides, and still others continue to work their current guides with increased O&M skills and confidence.

We are very proud of the program and grateful to all who have helped in its success. "Achieving these results has not been possible without a huge team of professionals banding together to evolve this program into what it is today," said O&M Services Manager Marc Gillard. "From the internal staff at GDB, to our partner agencies, to the donors and volunteers who support the program, we thank you and are looking forward to many more milestones ahead!"

*"Excellent program! Can't say enough about it. I attended the O&M Immersion Program about a year ago, and am now heading back to GDB to meet and start training with my guide dog. I'm super excited!"*

**—GDB Alumna Laura Heard, pictured with her new guide dog, Lupe.**

For Glenn Abbitt of Deer Park, Texas, donating to Guide Dogs for the Blind has deeply personal roots. “The day I graduated from high school in 1974, I was involved in a water skiing accident. I suffered a severe head injury resulting in total blindness, paralysis on the right side of my body, and speech and learning impairments,” he said. During his recovery and subsequent orientation and mobility training, he learned about GDB and knew that having a guide dog was the path he wanted to take. He was matched with his first guide dog, a black Lab named *Medley*, in 1978. “Because of my multiple disabilities, it was a challenge to find a dog that would meet my needs,” Glenn said. “She was the perfect match. *Medley* served me faithfully for almost 10 years.” Glenn has gone on to have four more guide dogs, including his current guide, a Golden Retriever named *Verdi*.

In appreciation for all that he had received, in 1999 Glenn set up a GDB charitable remainder trust (CRT). He wrote at the time: “Through all of my years with GDB, I have received the most professional training, and have been treated with respect by all of the staff and instructors. I hope that this gift will help other individuals who are blind have the same opportunities you have given me.”

Glenn received income from the trust through its 20-year term; at its termination in 2019, the balance of the trust was used to fund a kiosk in the Learning Lab of our new Puppy Center. And Glenn continues to be a proud supporter, grateful for his beloved guides. He is a member of both the Legacy Society, that honors those who remember GDB in their estate plans, as well as the Presidents Circle, that recognizes donors who make annual contributions of \$5,000 or more. “Each dog has enriched my life tremendously,” he said. “Not only for the independence they give me, but for the companionship I receive from them as well.”

Thank you Glenn for your generosity, and happy tails and trails to you and *Verdi*!



**GLENN ABBITT  
AND VERDI**

*If you are interested in learning more about establishing a GDB charitable remainder trust (CRT) as a way to both support Guide Dogs for the Blind while receiving an income, or becoming a member of GDB's President Circle, please contact Robin Keating at [rkeating@guidedogs.com](mailto:rkeating@guidedogs.com).*





**THE PUPPY DELIVERY AT GDB'S 43RD ANNUAL HOLIDAY LUNCHEON IN SAN FRANCISCO.**

## HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

The holiday spirit was on full display at our annual Holiday Luncheon at The Westin St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco this past December. More than 600 guests joined us for a mid-day celebration that included a welcome reception and a three-course meal. The event highlighted one of our programs, Camp GDB, in which teens who are blind or visually impaired spend a week with us to not only engage in all types of traditional summer camp activities such as hiking, kayaking, and campfires, but to learn all about the GDB lifestyle as well. One of the campers, Zach Thibodeaux, spoke about his experiences at camp, and how they have impacted his life and inspired him to apply to get a guide dog. The festivities continued with a puppy delivery where four baby puppies were presented to their volunteer puppy raisers. The luncheon then closed

with our traditional pooch parade, with pups and dogs taking to the runway and mingling with our guests. The event raised \$250,000 to support Camp GDB.

Thank you to our generous sponsors: Gold—Lyn & Don Klein, Gainline Financial Partners. Silver—Dodge & Cox Private Client Group. Bronze—Julie Burnet, Carle Mackie Power & Ross LLP, Genie Callan, Harbor Point Charitable Foundation, Stasia Reisfield, Valero Benicia Refinery. Media—KOIT.

### SAVE THE DATE

- **LABS LIVE AT ANDREI'S: CANCELLED**  
March 28, 2020 (Irvine, CA)
- **CAPS & TAILS: CANCELLED**  
May 9, 2020 (Portland, OR)

**For more information, please visit [guidedogs.com/events](https://www.guidedogs.com/events).**

# GDB'S TOP THREE FUNDRAISING NEEDS



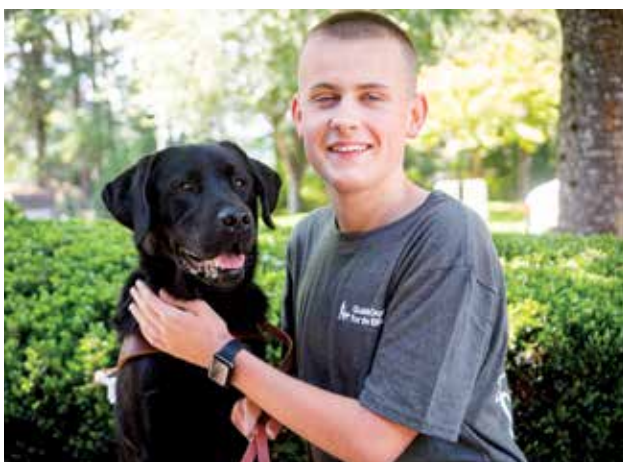
## 1. PUPPY CENTER NAMING OPPORTUNITY

GDB exceeded its \$20 million fundraising goal for the Puppies with a Purpose campaign but is still looking for a naming sponsor for the Learning Lab, the educational area of the new Puppy Center. The Learning Lab is the most visible and public section of the Puppy Center and offers engaging interactive displays and puppy viewing areas. We are looking for a \$1.5M gift for naming rights that can be pledged over three years.



## 2. ORIENTATION & MOBILITY IMMERSION PROGRAM

Gifts to our Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Immersion Program help underwrite the costs of preparing individuals who are blind or visually impaired with critical skills for independent travel and working with a guide dog (read all about our free Orientation & Mobility Immersion Program on page 7). This program fills an important need that is lacking—or non-existent—in many areas of the United States and Canada.



## 3. CAMP GDB

An important initiative in GDB's strategic framework is to introduce teens who are blind or visually impaired to the guide dog lifestyle through participation in Camp GDB (read all about this program in the Holiday Luncheon recap on page 9). Last year Camp GDB had its highest number of applicants to date and campers came from all over the country to attend. We are excited to grow this program and to touch the lives of even more youth!

*Help us address these critical fundraising needs at GDB so that these programs can continue to thrive. For more information please contact Robin Keating at [rkeating@guidedogs.com](mailto:rkeating@guidedogs.com).*

## THANK YOU TO OUR NEW & CONTINUED SUPPORTERS October 1-December 31, 2019

### PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE MEMBERS Honoring the generous donors who contribute \$5,000+ annually.

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### NEW LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS

October 1-December 31, 2019

#### Recognizing the vision of those who have included GDB in their estate plans.

Michael Buchar

Anne-Maree Cantwell

Patricia and Lee Gradman

Joanne Miller

Lorraine Repchak

Arlene Stearns

Nanako and Mitsutoshi Watanabe

## LEAVE A LASTING IMPACT TO GDB!

Legacy giving leaves a lasting impact. At Guide Dogs for the Blind, our estate planning options allow you to make a donation that not only helps to sustain our mission into the future, but ensures good stewardship of your assets by increasing benefits for yourself and your family as well.



From naming GDB in your will, trust, retirement or insurance accounts, to creating a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust, we offer many ways for you to plan your financial future while supporting our mission.

Please consider including Guide Dogs for the Blind in you estate plan and become a member of our Legacy Society. Return the coupon below to join or request additional information.

### GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND ESTATE PLANNING

- I have already included Guide Dogs for the Blind in my estate plan. I accept the invitation to be recognized as a member of the Legacy Society.
- Please send me suggested language to use in my will or trust.
- I would like to receive the *Planning Your Legacy* guide for preparing wills and trusts.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to Joan Scott - Planned Giving Coordinator  
Guide Dogs for the Blind, P.O. Box 151200, San Rafael, CA 94915-1200

## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

- **SEND A DONATION TODAY**  
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San Rafael, CA 94912-3950  
Online: [guidedogs.com](http://guidedogs.com)  
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Mailing address (donations only):  
GDB International  
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Name GDB in your will, trust, or as a beneficiary of an annuity, life insurance policy, IRA, or retirement plan.

Guide Dogs for the Blind will, on occasion, share donor information with like-minded non-profit organizations in an effort to better fulfill our mission and serve our clients. If you do not wish to have your information shared, please contact us at 800.295.4050 ext. 4160 or email us at [donations@guidedogs.com](mailto:donations@guidedogs.com).