

GUIDE DOG NEWS

2022
ISSUE 2



*MEET GUIDE DOG PUPPY OAK,
GDB'S FIRST PUP BORN
IN 2022, THE YEAR OF OUR
80TH ANNIVERSARY*



**Guide Dogs
for the Blind**



Guide Dogs for the Blind

A NON-PROFIT, CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

CONTACT INFO

California Campus, National Headquarters:

350 Los Ranchitos Road, San Rafael, CA 94903
415.499.4000 | Fax 415.499.4035

Mailing address (donations only):

P.O. Box 3950, San Rafael, CA 94912-3950

Tax ID: 94-1196195

Oregon Campus:

32901 S.E. Kelso Road
Boring, OR 97009
503.668.2100
Fax 503.668.2141

800.295.4050 | guidedogs.com

In Canada: Guide Dogs for the Blind International

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1275 STN K, Toronto, ON M4P 9Z9

Canadian registration number: 83061 8682 RR0001

866.797.6603 | gdbinternational.ca

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On occasion, GDB will share donor information with like-minded non-profit organizations to better fulfill our mission. If you do not want your information shared, please email us at donations@guidedogs.com.

GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

Greetings,

Spring is here—a time of new beginnings! Meet *Oak*, the first pup born in our Puppy Center during our 80th anniversary year. *Oak* is the traditional symbol for 80th anniversaries and represents strength, longevity, resilience, and knowledge. We think he's already growing into his name.

With your ongoing support, Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) continues to lead the way with innovative ventures that will help meet our clients' needs over the next 80 years. This year, we launched The Gard Furlong Canine Research Program, a groundbreaking research and development program made possible by a generous multi-year pledge from Elizabeth Gard and Tom Furlong. Like many donors, the two began their GDB journey as puppy raising volunteers. Their extraordinary gift will help improve the success and longevity of GDB program dogs. Learn more on page 4.

We also highlight our Puppy Transformation Project that helps pups like *Oak* reach their full potential as guides, K9 Buddies, or breeders. This pioneering work is moving us toward our goal of having more of the dogs we breed serve more clients.

Additionally, we profile clients Megan Borella and Kevin Leong, both of whom were partnered with K9 Buddies when they were children, and now as young adults, they both have guide dogs. Megan and Kevin will likely have six or more guide dogs throughout their lifetimes. Thanks to your support, we can provide our clients with a lifetime of care and support so they can continue to live more abundant, inclusive lives. Thank you! Together, we are unstoppable!

With gratitude,



Christine Benninger
President and CEO



**CHRIS PICTURED WITH OAK, GDB'S
FIRST PUPPY BORN IN 2022**

P.S. Be sure and listen to our new podcast, "Central Bark" at [guidedogs.com/podcast](https://www.guidedogs.com/podcast)

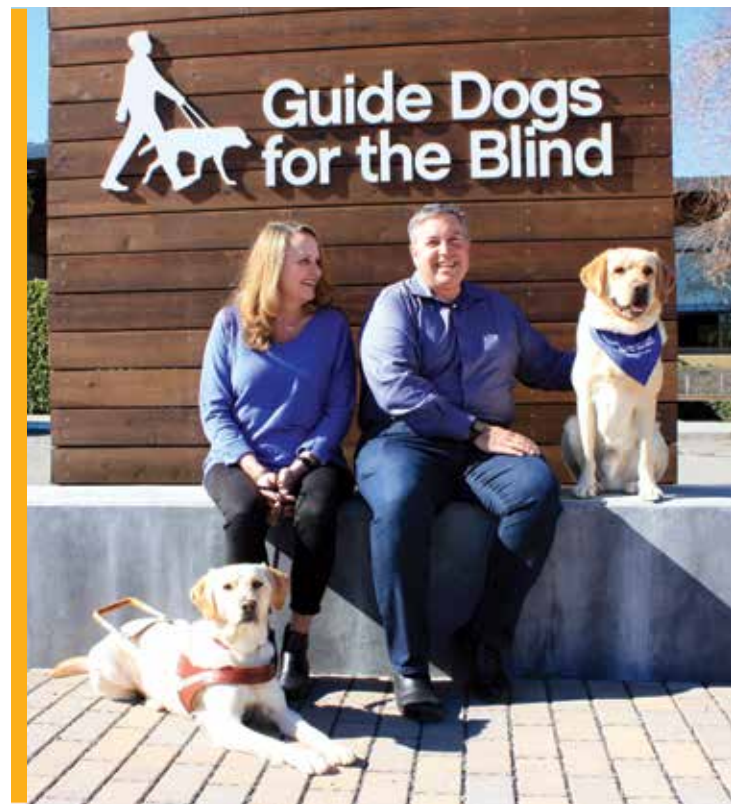
A FAMILY AFFAIR

Ever since she was a child, Elizabeth Gard wanted to raise a guide dog puppy. It wasn't until she was an adult that her wish came true.

"I was a Girl Scout leader and invited Guide Dogs for the Blind to speak at a meeting. Two wonderful volunteers came with dogs and explained what it was like to become a puppy raiser. Later, my younger daughter Katie said, 'I'm nine. I meet all the qualifications. I want to raise puppies.'" The puppy raising seed was planted.

A few weeks later, Elizabeth picked up her older daughter Paige from school and a puppy raiser was there with her dog. "There were a lot of signs telling me the time was right to fulfill my youngest daughter's dream and my own childhood dream of raising a guide dog puppy." Elizabeth's husband, Tom Furlong, was on board and so was Paige. After the entire family underwent training with their local puppy club, they received their first charge: a black Lab puppy named *Phoebe*, who was later partnered with an 18-year-old client. "Her mother thanked us for raising such a wonderful dog and said she could now be at peace knowing that her daughter was safe," recalls Elizabeth. "To know you are having such an impact in someone's life is a bit overwhelming. I'm not aware of any other organization that has this kind of an impact."

The family went on to raise seven puppies. As their involvement grew, Elizabeth and Tom became even more impressed with GDB's supportive and collaborative community and became donors. "The dedication of everyone throughout the organization is tremendous. From the Development team to the veterinarians, kennel staff, community field reps, and the volunteer puppy club leaders, everyone is working toward one goal."



ELIZABETH GARD AND TOM FURLONG WITH A YELLOW LAB GUIDE DOG AND A YELLOW LAB BREEDER DOG

When Elizabeth and Tom learned about GDB's efforts to build a new Residence Hall on our California campus, they wanted to help. In subsequent years, they supported the new Puppy Center and the courtyard adjacent to the center, now known as the Elizabeth A. Gard Courtyard.

Most recently, they made a significant multi-year pledge to launch The Gard Furlong Canine Research Program. This extraordinary funding will support a research and development program that will provide recommendations to improve the success and longevity of GDB program dogs.

GDB President and CEO Christine Benninger says the new program will support the organization's strategic initiative to increase the success rate of guide dogs to serve more clients and provide relevant industry knowledge to support innovation and improve guide dog welfare worldwide. Funding from The Gard Furlong gift will help GDB hire a Canine Research Manager to oversee studies

focusing on improving the health, well-being, and success of GDB dogs, through analysis of large data sets of canine genetics, breeding, behavior, and medical traits. "This program will ensure reliability and sustainability of our client and dog programs. It's the first time GDB will have a person specifically allocated to a research-based role," says Chris.

This year, The Gard Furlong Canine Research Program will launch an annual Canine Health and Longevity Survey to track medical trends and flag important genetic conditions to guide breeding choices of all GDB dogs. The Program will also establish benchmarks for reproductive excellence and develop a theriogenology-focused externship for veterinary students through a formal partnership with UC Davis.

"We're excited to see how the Program contributes to the overall success rate of the dogs and gets more teams out there," says Elizabeth.



"I always tell people that GDB receives no government funding and relies on donor support. We're proud to fund the initial launch of this program and hope other funders offer additional support."

—Elizabeth Gard, pictured (left)
with CEO Chris Benninger

A LIFETIME OF CARE AND SUPPORT

At Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB), providing a lifetime of care and support is central to our mission. For some, that starts with pairing young clients with a K9 Buddy dog, and then eventually providing them with a guide dog. That was the case for 23-year-old Megan Borella who began her journey with GDB in 2004, when she was in grade school. Her parents thought Megan could benefit from our K9 Buddy Program, which matches specially selected dogs to children and young adults who are blind or visually impaired. Our K9 buddies introduce a child to the responsibilities of caring for a pet and can also contribute to sensory development, motivating a child to learn and enhancing self-esteem.

At first Megan was nervous around dogs, but our pups' calm and affectionate personalities soon won her over. Eventually, she was paired with her K9 Buddy, *Nikka*. "Nikka was just a great family dog, really calm and fun to be around," Megan says. "I had such a positive experience and would definitely recommend the K9 Buddy program."

Nikka remained Megan's constant companion and a beloved member of the Borella household until she passed away at the age of 14. After graduating from UCLA and establishing a successful career in the technology sector, Megan decided it was time to apply for a guide dog. That's when GDB paired her with *Gallagher*. Megan says her journey with *Gallagher* has been transformative. "I have been a cane user since I was three, but the transition to a guide dog has been such an exceptional journey, in large part due to the guidance of GDB's staff, who went above and beyond to train both *Gallagher* and me how to be a successful team."

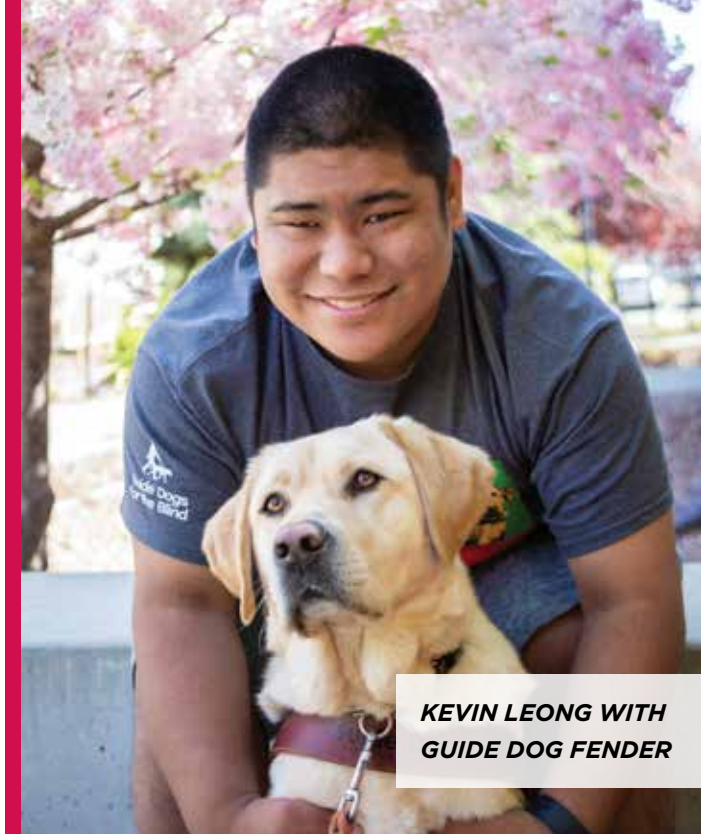


**MEGAN BORELLA WITH
GUIDE DOG GALLAGHER**

Check out videos featuring Megan and Kevin at [guidedogs.com/client-videos](https://www.guidedogs.com/client-videos)

Kevin Leong had a similar journey that began with our K9 Buddy Program. As a youngster, Kevin was paired with a K9 Buddy named *Kelly*. Kevin was the only student in his school with a visual impairment. “I had a really tough time in school. Having *Kelly* as a companion made it a lot easier for me.”

When Kevin decided to get a guide dog, he wasn't sure that another dog would be as incredible as *Kelly*. But he says his guide dog *Fender* exceeded all expectations. “I wanted a very playful, but calm and relaxed dog that would really be there for me. GDB did a great job (selecting *Fender*) and I am very blessed to have both dogs in my life now.”



**KEVIN LEONG WITH
GUIDE DOG FENDER**



“I am very, very blessed, and I look forward to being able to travel a lot more. We are going to have some fun!”

—Kevin Leong

HELP PROVIDE A LIFETIME JOURNEY OF LOVE, CARE, AND SUPPORT!

We need your help so we can continue to provide all of our client services free of charge.

- ▶ **\$50** helps provide a leash and grooming supplies
- ▶ **\$100** helps provide transportation for one client to one of our campuses for training
- ▶ **\$250** assists with the costs of a “Puppy Raising Kit” for a puppy raiser volunteer
- ▶ **\$500** helps provide veterinary care for a guide dog or K9 Buddy
- ▶ **\$1,000** helps cover the cost of training for a guide dog team



Why does one puppy become a successful guide dog, breeder dog, or K9 Buddy and another one does not? “That’s the big question we’re trying to understand,” says Kristin Lucas, GDB’s Canine and Community Operations Officer. In 2017, GDB launched a Puppy Transformation Project to determine what factors comprise this “secret sauce” so GDB can serve more clients without breeding more dogs.

PUPPY TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Sarah Blevins is GDB’s Director of Puppy Raising. Her team oversees upwards of 3,000 puppy raising volunteers in 10 Western United States. “We know that a dog’s DNA is critically important to their success. That’s why we breed our own dogs so that they have the genetic traits and good health to do this important work. But we’ve also found that how a puppy is raised can make a profound difference in how successful they are when they return to campus for training.”

One of the biggest findings revealed that when puppy raisers understand that their socialization and time with the puppy matter, statistically that puppy will have a better chance at succeeding. Given this revelation, Sarah’s team examined what other factors help predict a successful puppy raiser. They found three primary factors make a difference:

- ▶ Puppy raising leaders who are adaptable teachers.
- ▶ Puppy raising volunteers who enjoy receiving constructive, timely feedback.
- ▶ Consistent puppy training by all people in the home.

Sarah says the project also challenged some of GDB’s assumptions. “We thought the environment

a dog was raised in—such as the city or country—might be a key factor in predicting how successful a dog would be in a particular environment. It wasn’t. This project helped us set aside many of our assumptions and look at the program with a fresh perspective.”

Moving forward, Sarah says GDB will strive to provide puppy raising volunteers with consistent, informative onboarding information, so that every volunteer can feel supported and be more successful from the beginning. For example, her team has developed a better screening and onboarding process for puppy raising volunteers, launched new online training materials, and initiated updated protocols to head off potential issues pups may develop in their raiser’s homes.

Prior to the Puppy Transformation Project, 38 to 42 percent of GDB’s dogs became guides, breeders, or K9 Buddies. Today, that percentage is between 45 and 47 percent. “Each percentage point we gain translates into serving more clients and stewarding our donor dollars more effectively,” explains Kristin. “We believe the Puppy Transformation Project will lay the groundwork so that a majority of our dogs will reach their full potential in our program as guides, breeders, or K9 Buddies.”

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GDB is pleased to partner with The Giving Block, one of the world's largest cryptocurrency donation services, to support our life-changing mission. The Giving Block enables our organization to accept over 70 cryptocurrencies.

"This opportunity gives a new generation of supporters the ability to use their crypto as a force for good and help people who are blind or visually impaired lead more abundant, inclusive lives," says GDB Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, Sherilyn Dacquisto.

Learn more at guidedogs.com/crypto.



GDB'S ONLINE GIFT SHOP GETS A GLOW-UP!



Our online gift shop has recently undergone a number of significant changes to enhance the shopping experience for our community. The store now has a fresh look and feel, and many behind-the-scenes

upgrades to the store's infrastructure. We worked with a team of web developers, as well as two different digital accessibility consulting companies, to maximize the usability and accessibility of the store where possible. As part of GDB's commitment to diversity and inclusion, the updates to the store include gender-neutral product categories, sizing, and descriptions, larger and clearer images, and a faster checkout. As our software vendor makes accessibility updates in the future, we plan to roll them out in a timely manner. Happy shopping! guidedogs.com/shop

SAVE THE DATE

80TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION CANINE HEROES GALA

October 29, 2022 (The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco)

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

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January 1-March 31, 2022

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Our Legacy Society honors supporters who make gifts to GDB in their estate plans, whether by will, trust, or beneficiary designation on a bank, retirement, or stock account, or life insurance policy. These gifts help ensure that our clients can continue to enjoy the rewards of partnership with a guide dog throughout their lives. “My daughter has had five guide dogs, all at no cost. Leaving a provision in our trust to benefit GDB is such a meaningful thing for us to do when you consider how much the program has benefited our family.” —*Fred George*



**FRED GEORGE WITH DAUGHTER
MAILE AND HER GUIDE DOG,
FLANDERS.**

For more info, please return the coupon below, or call our estate planning team at 800.295.4050 ext. 4073 (Joan), ext. 4169 (Tom), or ext. 4456 (Erin).



GDB CHARITABLE 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 information about charitable gift annuities.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Return to:

**Joan Scott, Planned Giving
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San Rafael, CA 94915-1200**