

GUIDE DOG NEWS

2023
ISSUE 1



JASON DOORISH AND
GUIDE DOG, MORRY



Guide Dogs
for the Blind



Guide Dogs for the Blind

A NON-PROFIT, CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

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GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

Greetings,

I hope your 2023 is off to a great start! As we embark on our 81st year of working toward a world of greater inclusion, opportunities, and independence for people who are blind or visually impaired, I want to thank you for all you do to help move our mission forward. As you know, Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) does not charge for our services and receives no government funding. We depend on generous people like you to fund our life-changing programs!



Thanks to your ongoing support, our team is focused on executing a key initiative in our strategic plan that calls for serving more clients with a broader range of services throughout their lifetimes — all free of charge. To this end, we will:

- **Continue to train the world's premier guide dogs to serve hundreds of new clients** and support 2,000 current guide dog teams throughout North America.
- **Enable more clients to receive crucial orientation and mobility skills** so they can live a life of greater independence with a cane or a canine.
- **Introduce more children and young adults to the guide dog lifestyle** through a variety of programs, camps, and workshops.
- **Take a more interdisciplinary and holistic approach with our client programs.** GDB offers emotional support services from our Psychosocial Support Specialist, Jason Doorish, Ph.D., and we are piloting other opt-in service offerings with our Orientation and Mobility Immersion clients such as hearing screenings with a licensed audiologist or physical support with a sports medicine professional.
- **Continue to expand our K9 Buddy Program throughout the U.S.**, and eventually Canada, so people of all ages throughout North America can benefit from these specially selected dogs. All K9 Buddy clients will also be eligible for Veterinary Financial Assistance funds.

Throughout the year, we'll share our progress and how your support is changing lives.

You can stay up to date on all our news by listening to our Central Bark podcast at guidedogs.com/podcast or visiting our blog at guidedogs.com/blog.

Stay tuned. We're just getting started!

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

Christine Benninger
President and CEO



**MARY ANN SORICH WITH
TWO FOSTER DOGS WHILE
ON A WALK NEAR HER HOME**

WARM HEARTS MEET WET NOSES

Volunteering Opportunities at Guide Dogs for the Blind

Some partnerships are just meant to be. Like the partnerships Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) has with 3,000+ passionate volunteers who donate their time, talents, and hearts. With a staff of just 300 employees, volunteers are integral to our organization's success!

The majority of our volunteers are puppy raisers who live in ten western United States, while others serve as campus dog walkers, neonatal puppy cuddlers, puppy socializers, office and gift shop assistants, drivers, breeder custodians, and foster care providers.

Jack and Linda Brey have raised 51 puppies over the past 25 years. "The great thing about GDB is that you meet so many friends and there's such a sense of community," says Jack. "Even people you don't know come up and greet you and thank you for raising a guide dog puppy. It's really remarkable."

Allen and Robin Locke volunteer on our Oregon campus. Robin primarily works in the gift shop, walks dogs, and cleans the dogs' food dishes. "I really enjoy all of it. No deed is too big or too small," says Robin. "When I'm walking the dogs, I get in my five miles of exercise, and I like knowing that every dog is well-cared for and goes on to live a happy and purposeful life."

Allen volunteers as a driver, primarily transporting clients and volunteers who are visually impaired to and from campus. "I love this organization and enjoy talking with people," he says. "I enjoy witnessing the bond new guide dog clients make with their guide dogs." Allen says he doesn't mind picking up clients from the airport early in the morning or late at night. "I worked the graveyard shift for 30 years before I retired so if I have to get up at 3 am it's no big deal. I'm happy to help."

Mary Ann Sorich volunteers in our California campus veterinary clinic and has fostered 43 dogs in her home (and counting!). She has a special place in her heart for the senior retired guide dogs. "I am in awe of their lifelong dedication to their human partners, their willingness, and constant good natures," she says. "I want to help them into the next stage in their lives: to relax and enjoy retirement. My husband Mark and I get to indulge in a lot of pampering of a dog and in return, we get the best reward: the joy of feeling the love and devotion that these dogs readily give."

With so many critical
volunteer roles at GDB,
there just might be
a role for you!

For more information
about volunteering, visit
[guidedogs.com/volunteer](https://www.guidedogs.com/volunteer)
to learn how you can
become involved.

We can't wait to meet you!

***PUPPY RAISERS LINDA AND
JACK BREY (FRONT) WITH
A GUIDE DOG PUPPY IN
TRAINING, AND MICHELLE
MCDONALD, (STANDING)
WHO CO-LEADS THE SANTA
MARIA PUPPY RAISING CLUB
IN CALIFORNIA WITH JACK***



At Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB), we recognize that there are complexities and nuances for our clients when it comes to the emotional and psychological aspects of adjusting to blindness and guide dog use. As part of our world-class client services, we offer emotional support resources to clients in our guide dog, K9 Buddy, and Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Immersion programs, all free of charge.

Lauren Kenney, director of client services, says GDB takes an interdisciplinary and holistic approach with our programs to ensure clients feel supported throughout their GDB journey. “We don’t just wait for clients to come to us for help, we proactively let them know we provide emotional support services around a myriad of issues.”



*JASON DOORISH WITH
GUIDE DOG, MORRY*

Heading up this effort is Psychosocial Support Specialist, Jason Doorish, Ph.D. “Jason is a clinical expert who brings 15 years of professional experience in the mental health field,” explains Lauren. “He completed his dissertation on the impact a guide dog can have on family dynamics, and he provides staff education to deepen their understanding and foster a ‘person-first’ approach. In addition to his clinical knowledge, Jason’s lived experience as a guide handler is invaluable,” says Lauren.

A big part of Jason’s job is helping people navigate the emotional journey that comes with having a guide dog, including retiring a guide dog, working with a new guide dog, or saying goodbye at the end of a guide dog’s life. He also provides support to clients as they work through all aspects of vision loss and connects them to resources in their local communities.



“Mental health is a health issue, and everyone deserves to live a happy and healthy life.”

—Jason Doorish, Ph.D.
Psychosocial Support Specialist

“There are a lot of services out there but finding them can be exhausting for people,” explains Jason. He recalls working with one client who lost his eyesight two years ago and had no idea he could access free vocational rehabilitative services in his area. “Mental health is a health issue, and everyone deserves to live a happy and healthy life. I enjoy helping people tap into that support.”

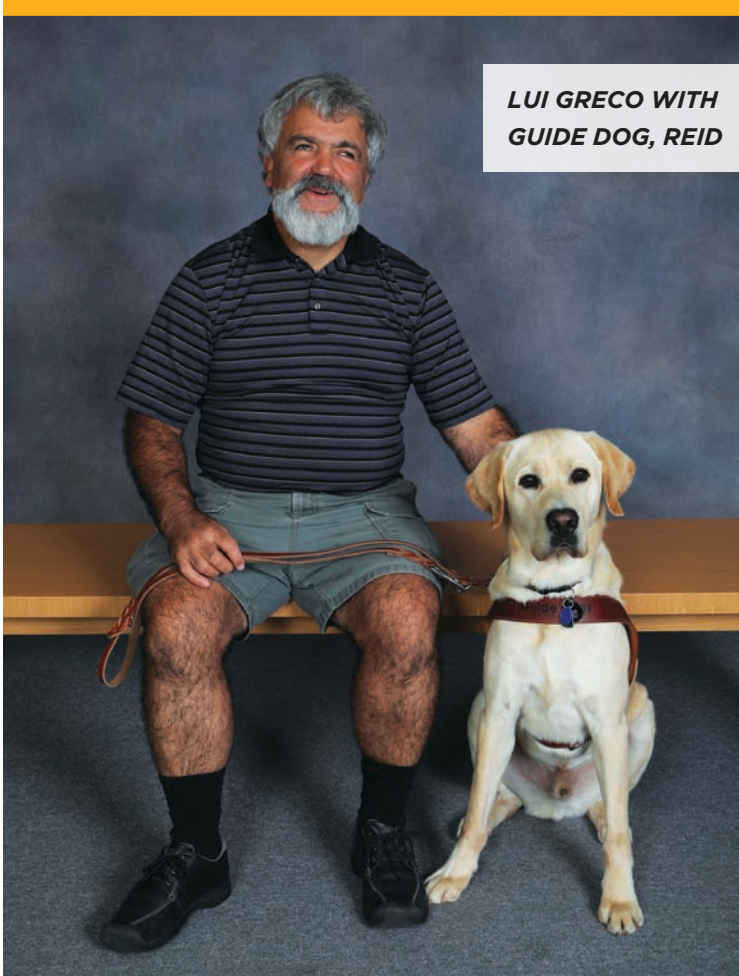
Jason lost his eyesight in his 20s due to retinitis pigmentosa. He received his first guide dog from GDB in 2007, and is currently working with his third guide dog, *Morry*, a black Lab. “GDB gave me a sense of freedom and confidence that I never thought that I would regain. This experience ignited a passion in me to work at Guide Dogs for the Blind to help others live their best lives.”

In addition to offering clients emotional support resources, GDB is piloting other opt-in services for our Orientation and Mobility Immersion clients while they are training on our California campus. This includes offering physical support services with a sports medicine professional and hearing screenings with a licensed audiologist. By bringing multiple services under the same roof, GDB hopes to provide clients with a wide range of support that treats the whole person.

HELP PROVIDE A LIFETIME JOURNEY OF SUPPORT!

- ▶ **\$50** helps provide a leash and grooming supplies
- ▶ **\$100** assists with the cost of a white cane and training materials for one O&M client
- ▶ **\$250** helps provide psychosocial support services to two clients
- ▶ **\$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

Canadian client and Alumni Board member Lui Greco is passionate about raising awareness and understanding about blindness. Lui has worked for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) since 2011 as Manager of Regulatory Affairs. In addition to serving on GDB's Alumni Board, Lui is a member of the Dartmouth Rotary Club in Nova Scotia and enjoys speaking to community-based organizations about the guide dog lifestyle.



"I'm all about building awareness, understanding, and empathy," says Lui. "People often go through their entire life without meeting someone who is blind. I think it's important to say 'I'm no different than you. I do some things a little bit differently. I happen to have chosen a guide dog as my mobility aide,'" explains Lui. "My hope is that next time they come across someone who has a disability, they see us as people first, not as a disabled person or there's that guy with that smart dog. It's changing attitudes and perceptions about people who are blind, and it's my small part of moving that needle."

Lui received his fourth guide dog, *Reid*, from GDB in 2019. That same year, he became a monthly donor. "From day one, I was so impressed with the commitment and professionalism of GDB's employees." He notes that his younger sister has been a GDB client for some 30 years. "I'm extremely grateful to GDB and want others to benefit as we have." In his spare time, Lui enjoys sailing and is a member of the Shearwater Yacht Club.



"It's changing attitudes and perceptions about people who are blind, and it's my small part of moving that needle."

—Lui Greco, Canadian client and Alumni Board member

WORTH THE WAIT

GDB client and artist Danny Hiemstra likes to take his time when he's painting pet portraits. But even he admits that his watercolor of five guide dogs took longer than expected. Life got in the way and six years passed before he completed the painting. Danny and his wife Barbara decided to mark the occasion by flying from St. Charles, MO., to our California campus to present the painting in person to GDB President and CEO Christine Benninger.

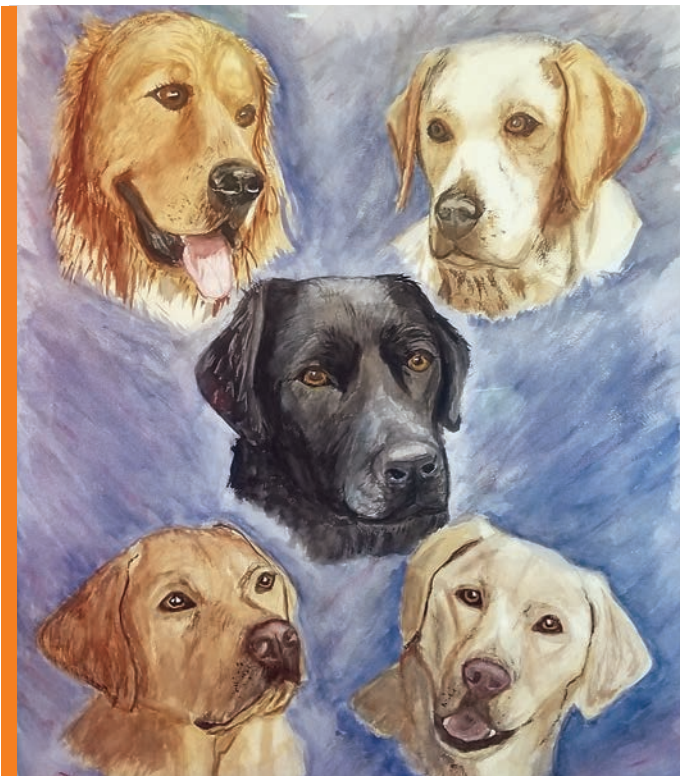
Danny met Chris while training on campus with his black Lab guide dog, *Bronte*. He and Chris got to talking and Danny proposed painting a watercolor portrait for her featuring the dogs in his training class.

"I am so honored," remarked Chris. "I have tears in my eyes. It's gorgeous. Thank you, Danny!"

Danny paints pet portraits from digital photos that he enlarges on his computer to see detail. "I try to capture the soul of the pet. For this painting, I wanted to capture each dog's unique personality." Danny uses a layering technique that adds more detail with each layer. He credits Barbara for giving him lots of feedback during the process. "She's my critic and keeps me on my toes."



DANNY AND BARBARA HIEMSTRA WITH HIS GUIDE DOG, BRONTE



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