

PAW PRINTS

ISSUE NO. 28



Official newsletter from the staff, graduates and volunteers of
BC & Alberta Guide Dog Services and Autism Support Dogs



Ole



With Thanksgiving just past and Christmas right around the corner, feelings of gratitude are definitely overflowing. It is no different for us at BC & Alberta Guide Dog Services and Autism Support Dogs.

William S. Thornton

Through the generosity of the Nemetz Foundation,

we were able to purchase and move to a new location that affords us the required space and takes us one step closer to our goal of building a breeding centre. Thank you Nemetz Foundation!

To support our future endeavours we must ramp up our breeding and training program, therefore it gives me great pleasure to welcome Nick Toni, Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, to our team. Nick comes from the UK and brings more than 20 years experience to his role. As well, Laura Mahoney joins us as Puppy Supervisor for Vancouver Island. Laura has held previous Puppy Supervisory positions and we are excited to have her skills and experience.

On a final note, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge two major milestones: we recently graduated our 100th guide dog team and 25th autism support dog team! So yes, much to be grateful for and all due to your incredible support — thank you!

BC/AGDS CEO

William S. Thornton, GDMI

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A High Five for Mikey and Wellsie

By: KP, Mikey's parent

Last October, our son Mikey received his autism support dog Wellsie. What a wonderful gift to his life and to our whole family also! The trainers came to our home and taught us how to care for Wellsie, and how to work with Wellsie and our son. We are forever grateful.

Mikey is a very trusting, gentle child, who is prone to getting lost. He cannot speak to say, "I am lost" or "I can't find my Mom or Dad" so Mikey would be very vulnerable should he ever become separated from us.

When faced with the added difficulty of a large crowd, it can become stressful for both parent and child. Because of this, **there were many places we did not go before we received Wellsie.**

Likewise, busy streets were difficult for us. Mikey finds it scary to stand and wait to cross a busy street, and in the past he has been inclined to pull his hand out of mine and consider fleeing. This is dangerous of course, and so I would be forced to hold onto Mikey's clothing in an effort to keep him safely with me.

Now that we have our wonderful Wellsie, Mikey happily holds onto Wellsie's jacket handle [while one of us holds the dog's leash]. I have shown Mikey how to pet her ears while we wait to cross the street. Her incredibly calm demeanor is very comforting to Mikey.

She has really taken a lot of the stress out of our day. Mikey is so much calmer, and he is so much better at staying with us.

Mikey likes bringing Wellsie everywhere he goes. Peers at his autism social club ask him, "Can I pet your dog?" and he says "Ya" which takes quite a lot of effort since he is mostly non-verbal, and then Mikey pets Wellsie with them.

Mikey is so proud of his dog. **You can see his face is light up now that the kids have a common interest to share, even though Mikey cannot speak.**

One of the boys has also taken to saying "bye" to Mikey, and then they give each other a high five.

Wellsie is bringing healing to our family, to Mikey, and to other people in our community, with her beautiful loving nature. And we are so grateful! 🐾

This letter has been edited for space. Read Mikey and Wellsie's full story at autismsupportdogs.org



*Mikey, his mom, and autism support dog Wellsie. Team sponsors: **Loyal Protestant Association and Wellsie's Puppy Sponsors.***

A Puppy for Christmas? Imagine the smiles!

By: Grandma Nancy and Grandpa Darrell, Puppy Sponsors

Big smiles — that's what Darrell and Nancy receive in abundance from their grandchildren every Christmas. They suspect this year will be no different as they continue their tradition of sponsoring another puppy with their grandchildren. These are no ordinary puppies but life-changing dogs who are part of the BC & Alberta Guide Dogs' Puppy Sponsorship Program. Sponsoring a puppy is a great gift idea that is really catching on!

In their words: "We retired in 2009 and relocated closer to our two daughters and their families. That Christmas, we took great effort to find meaningful gifts for our four grandchildren. Their parents were already providing all they needed materially — we wanted to do something different. That's when we came up with the idea to give each child a small personal gift and some loonies to donate to charity. We chose a few charities, including Alberta Guide Dogs, that would have meaning to the children and we set out marked containers for their money with the promise that Grandma and Grandpa would match their donations. This has become a favourite part of our family Christmas.

Our entire family of ten is involved in this project. We love receiving the letters and photos from the sponsored puppies letting us know how they are progressing in their training to become guide dogs or autism support dogs. We keep all the photos and letters in a conspicuous spot in our home; and it's one of the first places our grandchildren check out when they come to visit.



Grandma Nancy and Grandpa Darrell.

It's exciting to welcome a new puppy into the family every year through the Puppy Sponsorship program. It's the best of both worlds: all the benefit of sharing in the fun of having a new puppy without all the extra work... and clean up! We have been so inspired by our grandchildren — each of them has shared our special Christmas tradition through stories and presentations at their schools. Best of all, they know they are making a difference in the lives of other people, what better gift is there?"

Join Darrell & Nancy in giving the gift of a Puppy Sponsorship this Christmas!

Earl and Daisy are the two newest pups to join our training program and they need sponsors like you. Whether as a gift for yourself or a loved one, please consider sponsoring Earl or Daisy this holiday season!



Daisy, 3 weeks old (Alberta)



Earl, 3 weeks old (BC)

A Burst of Energy: Kyla & Lloyd's Story

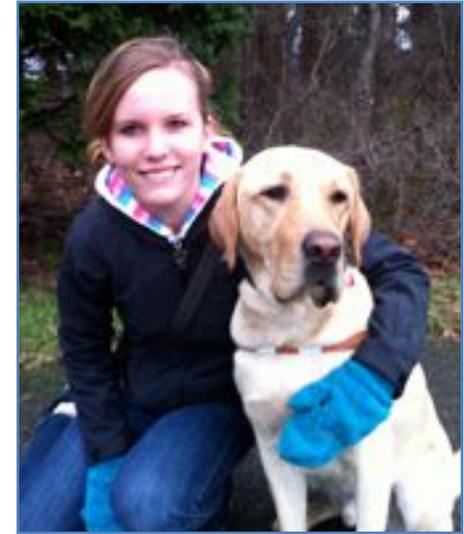
I received my first guide dog, Hanna, when I was 14. She has been by my side for most of the major events in my life: my high school and college graduations and my wedding, so when it came time to think about her retirement, I couldn't imagine replacing her with another dog.

As Hanna's tenth birthday drew nearer, and she started to really slow down, I realized how much she has done for me. I started to use my cane more as she wanted to stay home with my husband, and I really missed the comfort of a [guide] dog by my side. It was time for Hanna to retire.

In January of this year I started my training with Lloyd. He has brought so much energy and joy into our life. He is always eager to go for a long walk or play. It has been fun to see the contrasts in Hanna and Lloyd's personalities. Having a young dog again has reminded me of how much independence and freedom a guide dog can bring. **Lloyd gets me out of the house and going to new places on my own again.**

He wakes up every morning with a kiss and a wagging tale, excited for the new day. Then he brings me his food bowl, and puts it in front of me if I'm not fast enough at feeding him. **His goofy personality keeps us smiling.** I am looking forward to all of the new adventures Lloyd and I will experience together in the next eight years!

I would like to thank everyone who made it possible for me to receive another beautiful and amazing guide dog. Thank you to everyone at BC Guide Dogs, to Henny for doing our training, to Margaret and Pat for being Lloyd's Puppy Raisers, and to everyone who sponsored, boarded, and helped to bring Lloyd into my life. 🐾



Kyla & guide dog Lloyd. Team sponsor: Ole Elmer.

Upcoming Events

Alberta

- November 23, 2013 : Puppy Success Party, Calgary. For info, call 403.258.0819.
- December, 2013 (dates TBA): Appearances at Bankers Hall, Calgary. For info, call 403.258.0819.

British Columbia

- SOLD OUT! November 16, 2013: Trivia Night, Ladner, BC.
- Spring Dinner/Auction (date TBA): Committee members needed. Call 604.940.4504.

In the Litterbox

Opal & Tiller



Born February 20, this is our first-ever litter of Golden Retrievers. We thank Karen for taking care of Opal and Tiller's puppies.

Bristol (GRB): Janine & James in Surrey, BC
Delta (GRB): Kristin & Kevin in Tsawwassen, BC
Bella (GRB): Cheryl in Calgary, AB
Sundance (GRB): Dawn & Gary in Vancouver, BC
Simon (GRM): Mara & Tom in Vancouver, BC

Diamond & Max



Just three days after Opal had her puppies, Diamond delivered her litter! Thanks to Diane and Graham for taking care of Diamond and her puppies.

Serge (BLM): Vera & Ling in Calgary, AB
Caprice (YLB): Jan & Bob in Delta, BC
Compass (YLB): Joan & Jonathan in Vancouver, BC
Kelsey (YLB): Tessa in Langley, BC
Evelyn (BLB): Ken in Surrey
Konnor (YLM): Michaela & Mike in Ladner, BC
Grover (BLM): Rena & Harry in White Rock, BC

Calypso & Rodeo



This is Calypso's second beautiful litter! Many thanks to Joanna and family for taking care of the pups.

Sir Scruffy (YLM): Dave & Nancy in Parksville, BC
Totem (BLB): Mary & Bob in Burnaby, BC
Cassidy (BLM): Jean in Calgary, AB
Mackenzie (BLM): Lauren in Lethbridge, AB
Mindy (BLB): Charlotte in Victoria, BC
Molly (BLB): Ruth in Victoria, BC
Teasel (BLB): Rita in Victoria, BC

LEGEND: YL=Yellow Labrador Retriever
BL=Black Labrador Retriever
GR=Golden Retriever

LxGR=Labrador cross Golden Retriever
B=female
M=Male

Sacha & Max

Sacha is the proud first-time mom of two puppies born on October 3. Thanks to Wendy for taking care of Sacha's litter.

Earl (YLM): John & Michel in Victoria, BC
Daisy (YLB): Erica & James in Calgary, AB



Bowen

Thank you to Basia for caring for Bowen during her first seven weeks.

Bowen (YLB): Kristin & Kevin in Tsawwassen, BC



After a long day of training, our adult dogs need a loving home in which to relax. Many thanks to the following boarding home families who take such great care of our dogs in the advanced stages of training:

Andy & Lorraine
Bob
Carla & Clayton
Colleen & family
Darlene, Rand, & Linda

Janice & Lee
Leslie & John
Lorelei & family
Marlene & Dave
Michelle & Neil

Ruth
Sally
Scott & Paula
Valerie & Randy
Wendy & family

Puppy Raisers Needed!

Learn more about how you can volunteer in the Greater Vancouver/Calgary/Victoria areas. Visit our websites below for details.

A Gentle Giant: Ryan and Walter's Story

By: Ryan's family

When Walter arrived at our home, we were thrilled to see a long-time dream realized. It is only when we saw him in action that we discovered his true nature and how wonderful this living dream is. Walter is a gentle giant at 90 pounds.

When Walter is working with Ryan, he is on his best behaviour. One time, after Ryan had a "meltdown," I knew his habit of bolting was about to surface, so I hooked him up to Walter's jacket before we continued on our way. Ryan did not bolt and he accepted being hooked up, perhaps realizing that Walter is there for his safety. There have been times when Ryan has bolted and Walter has done his job to anchor him, which gives me a chance to catch Ryan and calm him down.

It is such a pleasure to see Ryan and Walter together. Bonding was not immediate between them but Ryan is beginning to participate in Walter's care. Ryan enjoys pouring water over Walter's kibble while he sits patiently and watches and then blowing the whistle signalling Walter to eat his meal. **One day at Science World, Ryan decided he was tired enough to lie down on the floor, using Walter as his pillow. Walter didn't seem to mind.** In the car, I looked in my rear view mirror to observe Ryan scratching Walter's head. A couple of days ago, after picking Ryan up from school, I noticed he had his hand resting on Walter's head the whole time we were in transit.

Ryan walks very slowly and Walter patiently keeps to his slow pace. He is such a smart dog and is so well trained. After only two or three times, Walter already knew the way to Ryan's weekly appointments downtown, which involves taking the bus, sky train, plus walking a few blocks.

Although it is difficult for a big dog like Walter to fit into tight spaces [autism support dogs are trained to rest quietly under the table in restaurants], he tries his best. But such a gorgeous dog shouldn't be hidden too long. So, little by little, he slowly creeps into the aisle where he can be seen. Strangers continually comment on his good looks and I think he understands them, because sometimes he winks at his admirers. This delights Ryan.

Walter continually keeps an eye on Ryan when they are together. **If Ryan lags behind, Walter keeps looking back to make sure Ryan stays with him.** During Ryan's swimming lessons, Walter keeps his eyes focused on Ryan. One day, Ryan yelled out Walter's name while he was in the pool and Walter (who had been lying



Ryan and his mom with autism support dog Walter safely maneuver a busy food court. Team sponsor: Mackenzie Financial Charitable Foundation.

down on the deck) quickly got up to see if Ryan was in trouble. At the playground, Walter keeps his eyes peeled on Ryan and when he decides to wander off, Walter tugs at the leash to get to Ryan right away.

We are so grateful to have Walter. Everybody in the family loves him and he has a good home with us. He must feel that way, too, as it took him very little time to adjust and feel comfortable in his new home. Why, his very first night, he was already drinking from the toilet bowl!

We wish to thank Bill Thornton for accepting Ryan into the training program. In addition, we wish to thank Wendy, the first lady to house Walter from birth, to his Puppy Raisers, Susan and family, who provided us with his cherished "baby book" so we could follow his progress from puppyhood, plus Jaime, who visited our home to make sure an autism support dog was right for us, and Henny, who was very patient in training us to be good dog handlers, as well as all the sponsors and donors who made this dream possible for us. 🐾

Greeting Cards: Send Some Puppy Love!



Back by popular demand, we have a limited number of greeting cards for sale. Each package costs \$20 and contains eight blank cards (two cards of each design above). Taxes and shipping are included.

Cards are available in BC and Alberta. These cards will sell quickly so call today!

Contact us at 1-877-940-4504 (BC) or 1-877-258-0819 (Alberta).

A Day in the Life of a Guide Dog Trainer

By: Laura, trainer



Laura shows guide dog trainee Beebles how to find the crosswalk button.

After 16 months of being trained by volunteers, our dogs are ready for professional training or “college” as we call it. One of our trainers Laura gives us a glimpse into her typical day.

My day starts in the office attending to paperwork, phone calls, and emails. Then I am off to pick up the dogs from their volunteer boarding homes. From here, the dogs get loaded into the training vehicle, a typical “mom van,” but the back seats have been replaced with a large metal bin to accommodate dog beds, blankets, bones, and toys. When I arrive, each dog has already been given breakfast and a quick outing so the gang is ready to start their training day.

We train anywhere from White Rock to downtown Vancouver, indoors and outdoors, in busy areas and quiet neighborhoods. Generally the dogs start their training in quieter areas and work their way up to the busier, more crowded places over the four to six months that we spend together.

I train each dog individually while the others sleep or play in back of the van. We don’t use the guide dog harness in the beginning so as to give the dog time to adjust to a new routine and new trainer. We then slowly introduce the harness — first without a handle, then we add a soft one and finally, the hard handle that is used by a blind person. If a canine has made the career choice to become an autism support dog, there is really no transition needed since the autism jacket is very similar to the “In Training” jacket they wear growing up.



Training mates relax in the “mom van.”

Training routes can be anywhere from 20 minutes to almost two hours long, depending on what we’re working on. Longer routes involve more public transit and down time spent in a store, restaurant, or coffee shop. Once a dog has completed his/her route, I go back to the van to start all over again with the next dog.

Some days when it is raining or cold out and I am not near a building, I end up eating lunch in the van with the dogs — it’s not always the comfiest place to eat, but it does allow for more time with them!

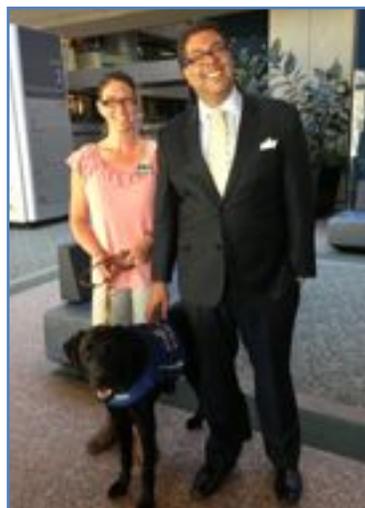
Typically a training day ends between 2:45 and 3:30PM so that I can return the dogs to their boarding homes for the night. Then we start all over again the next day, with weekends off for the dogs to enjoy life with their boarding home families. 🐾

Out and About

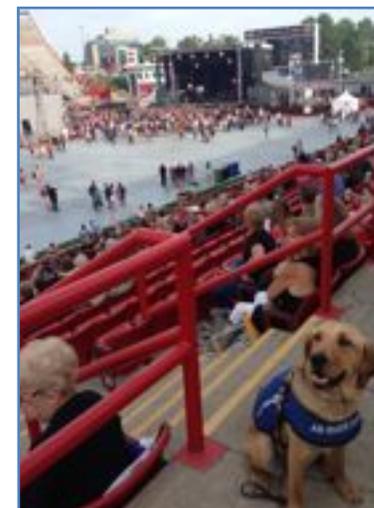


Variety — the Children’s Charity presents a \$50,000 donation to Autism Support Dogs (ASD).

(L to R): Volunteer Puppy Raiser Ken, puppy Evelyn, Linda Thornton (Breeding & Puppy Raising Director, ASD), Paul Spelliscy (Corporate Partnership Manager, Variety), Linda Flack (Heart Fund Manager, Variety), Bill Thornton (President, ASD), and canine trainee Echo.



Zax and his Puppy Raiser Joyce meet Calgary Mayor Nenshi.



Myrtle shows her support at a Calgary Flood Relief Concert



See more great photos by following us on Facebook and Twitter! Visit our websites at the bottom of the page for links.



Worth the Wait: Jim & Kushner's Story

By: Jim



Jim & guide dog Kushner at their favourite off-leash park. Team sponsor: John Hardie Mitchell family foundation.

On March 12th of last year, I lost my guide dog Stevie to cancer. It was the second dog that I've lost to cancer in less than five years. The first question that crossed my mind was, "What am I doing wrong?" My vet and Linda [BC Guide Dogs' co-founder] both assured me, "It is nothing you are doing. Stuff like this happens sometimes."

Over the next eleven months, I got around using a white cane and with the help of family and friends.

I would call or email Linda every week, just to check in and chat. Every now and then I would chat with Bill, the CEO of BC and Alberta Guide Dogs. He would tell me that they were doing all they could to train another guide dog for me. I started to count days, then weeks, and at last months. I knew as the year was coming to an end, that it would be a great Christmas gift, or an early birthday present.

On January 3, I got a call from Instructor Henny, asking if she could bring over a dog to take a test walk with me. He was a match, and on February 8, Kushner came to live with me for three days before we started training together. Over the next few weeks, we practiced going everywhere: to my family's, to my optometrist's office, to the grocery store, to my vet's, as well as three different dog parks. It was great, and I enjoyed every minute of it. Henny did a great job training us and finding some great dog parks that I didn't know about before.

I would like to thank Linda and Bill for putting up with my weekly phone calls; Kushner's Puppy Raisers and wish them all the best with their new puppy; Henny for training us, and everyone else who had a hand in Kushner's upbringing.

With God's blessing I am looking forward to many happy years working my boy. 🐾

Jenny's Journey

Hi I'm Jenny, a 20-month-old Labrador Retriever. I have been very lucky to be on the Puppy Sponsorship Program. Did you know that it takes a minimum of 106 sponsors to cover the \$35,000 cost to raise and train me?

Not to brag, but some of my sponsors have told me that I have a natural talent for writing, so I thought I'd share some snippets of the letters that I have been writing to them.

It seems I was pretty rambunctious during my first six months of training: "One day my Puppy Raiser had the flour container out to fill the canister and on my way by I just HAD to stick my nose in it. As you can imagine I had flour up to my eyes and all over my nose."

I worked out a lot of my 'kinks' by 10 months of age, but I guess there were still a few things I hadn't seen yet: "We went to a Christmas party but no one warned me about this thing called a 'cat'. I was lying quietly on the floor when this 'thing' walked by. I was so startled I let out a big 'woof' that really surprised everyone as I don't usually bark. Let's just say the cat and I had a truce – 'you leave me alone and I'll do the same.'"

By 14 months, I had mastered a lot of important skills: "Right now we are focusing on me staying centered when walking on sidewalks. I am stopping at curbs, waiting at streetlights, finding posts and doors. My instructor gives me lots of praise."

Pretty soon, it was time for me to head off to 'guide dog college,' so I moved into a volunteer boarding home. "I love to curl up with my Boarder, my head on her leg while she rubs my tummy. I think it's because I am such a cuddler — and really who can resist a cuddler? I also like to cuddle with Gus, the rescued Labrador who is the family pet at my boarding home."

The final letter that my Puppy Sponsors will receive will be written by my new visually-impaired partner. I can't wait for them to read all about how much they have helped to change a person's life! 🐾



At 2 weeks old, my eyes hadn't even opened yet!



All grown up and ready to change someone's life!

Sponsor a puppy to help change lives in your community! Choose from three sponsorship options:

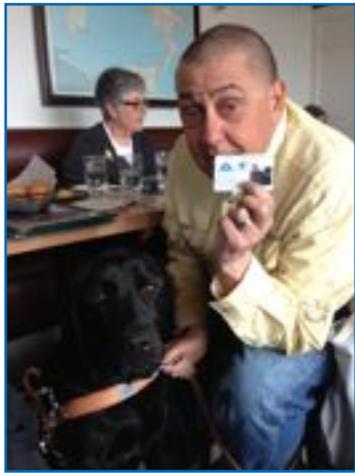
1 \$15/month ongoing – a puppy will send letters and photos regularly to you until training is complete. Then you'll follow another puppy's journey!

2 \$250 one-time – a puppy will send letters and photos regularly to you until training is complete (about 2 years).

3 \$50 one-time Kinderpup – you'll receive a letter of introduction and a photo from a puppy.

Living Fearlessly: Phil & Royal's Story

By: Robin, Phil's wife



Phil and Royal proudly show their Alberta Guide Dogs ID card. Team sponsor: Royal's Puppy Sponsors.

Thank you doesn't seem to be enough. To everyone who helped support, raise and train Royal — thank you for all you did. Royal has not only changed Phil's life but the rest of the family's as well.

Phil was always independent and worked very hard trying to be strong and brave in order to maintain his independence as his health continued to deteriorate. He sits on many committees for the City of Calgary trying to increase awareness about persons with disabilities. He often travelled on public transportation late at night [by himself]. He was scared but determined to do this. Now that he has Royal, Phil's world has opened up.

Phil is fearless now. He volunteers throughout the city taking public transportation and Royal goes with him as his loyal, loving trusting friend.

[When] Royal came into our lives, Phil was thrilled. I wasn't so certain. I needed to get to know Royal and see how our lives would change now that we have another dog in the house. It took about 24 hours to win me over! Royal is always happy and his happiness is infectious. It doesn't matter how many times he sees Phil and me; he is excited to see us.

We often take him to the off-leash park to let him exercise and be a "regular" dog. He loves to see the other dogs at the park and we have even met Mocha (another BC & Alberta Guide Dog trainee) a couple of times when we were there.

Our older dog, Rocky, and Royal get along famously. Royal has been bold enough to try and share Rocky's bed and Rocky graciously let him. Royal's happy and free loving spirit has also added some pep to Rocky. She loves to run and jump with Royal any chance she gets.

In December, we met a lot of Royal's sponsors at the Alberta Guide Dog Puppy Sponsor event held in Calgary. It was wonderful to meet some of the people who have played a role in helping Royal achieve success, from generous donors to dedicated volunteer Puppy Raisers. It was amazing to see the puppies at all the different stages of training and for everyone to see firsthand in Royal, the successful result of all that hard work and support. We sponsor a number of puppies ourselves and cannot wait to watch them grow up to help others in the community.

Again, I would like to say THANK YOU! Please rest assured that Royal is loved by all of us and we will take good care of him. 🐾

Special Thanks

Our thanks to the following donors who have contributed \$10,000+ in the 2012 fiscal year or who have shown an outstanding, long-term commitment to making our work possible by donating goods/services year after year.

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VetCor Canine Reproductions
Victor & Anna Kern Foundation
Westjet

BC GUIDE DOG SERVICES

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Delta, BC V4K 3N3
Phone: 604-940-4504
Toll Free in Canada: 1-877-940-4504
Fax: 604-940-4506
Email: info@bcguidedog.com

Victoria Satellite Office

1027 Pandora Avenue (please call first)
Victoria, BC V8V 3P6
Phone: (250) 413-3095
Email: info@bcguidedog.com

ALBERTA GUIDE DOG SERVICES

Alberta Office

Unit 102, 4-14th Street NW
Calgary, AB
Phone: (403) 258-0819
Toll Free in Alberta: 1-877-258-0819
Email: info@albertaguidedog.com

AUTISM SUPPORT DOGS

Contact any of the offices above.

Charity Registration Numbers: BC&AGDS 89131 1763 RR0001 | ASD 80796 1610 RR0001



Give a gift that makes a visible difference...



Sponsor me!

I'll send photos and letters as I grow up into a life-changing dog.

Yes, I would like to support a life-changing puppy!

Make a donation... online: click here
... by mail: (head office) 7061 Ladner Trunk Rd, Delta, BC V4K 3N3
... by email: scan and send to patti.nakatsu@bcguidedog.com

*Your Name
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Postal Code
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How did you hear about us?

- Yes! Please send my Puppy Sponsorship packages by email (if applicable).
Yes! I have left a gift for BC Guide Dog Services in my will.
I wish my gift to remain anonymous.

If this is a gift, please give name and address of recipient:

Name
Address
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Sponsorship Options (please check):
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My choice: \$

Payment Options:

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*We do NOT sell, lend, or exchange our donors' personal information with other organizations.

**You may terminate your monthly sponsorship at any time with 15 days notice by calling 1-877-940-4504.