

The official newsletter from the staff, graduates
and volunteers of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

PAW PRINTS

Fall 2018 – Issue No. 38



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



As 2018 draws to a close, I am filled with gratitude. Gratitude to all of you who made financial contributions to support breeding, raising, and training Guide Dogs, Autism Support Dogs, and more recently, PTSD Service Dogs. Your support really does change lives.

Gratitude to all of you who volunteer your time to help our 'puppies-in-training' learn the skills they need to begin their advanced training to become full-fledged, certified Service Dogs. I know that it is difficult to say goodbye, but your efforts are rewarded when 'your pup' graduates and begins changing someone's life.

Gratitude to those of you who serve on event committees, and help plan and run the fundraising events in BC and Alberta, gratitude to your organizations for sponsoring our fundraising events, and to all of you who attended those events.

I am grateful too, for our relationship with Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs, and look forward to completing our amalgamation early next year, and changing the lives of more military and RCMP veterans by matching them with PTSD Service Dogs.

Finally, I am grateful to our clients for sharing their stories with us about how our service dogs have changed their lives. That's what we are all here for.

Please enjoy the stories and photos in this edition of Paw Prints; none of this could have been accomplished without you. I wish all of you the the best for the holiday season and the new year, and thank you all again for your kind and generous support.



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ON THE COVER: Puppy Pixie is part of Dewling and Gerry's litter, born April 22. The litter included one yellow and five black pups.

GUIDE DOG TEAM



Jashandeep & Guide Dog Pebbles

Team Sponsor: John Hardie Mitchell family foundation

About four months ago, three of BC and Alberta Guide Dogs' best trainers came to my home and we began three weeks of vigorous training. This involved going to places such as the mall, grocery stores and bus stops in and around my neighbourhood. I will admit, there was a bit of trepidation on my part at the start but, as the weeks went on, I found that I gained a great deal of confidence in what I was doing.

Before Pebbles came into my life, going out on my own was a challenge. But now, I don't have any doubts at all. Pebbles has essentially become my safe guard. Obstacles and areas with low lightning are no longer an issue and I trust Pebbles to safely get me through any area we come upon.

She is very calm whether she's working or not. She is content to sleep the day away but I try and keep her as active as I can. While working, she is attentive and hardly ever loses focus. When it's time to go out and play in the backyard, she will sprint around like she owns the place – which, at this point, she does.

When we are out, Pebbles draws a great deal of attention (it's her eyes that draw people in). In fact, my friends and I have made up a sort of game out of the whole thing. We count how many people come up and ask to pet her – the record at the moment is 19. She has everybody falling in love with her – even my Mom, who was hesitant to even come near her at first, has been caught under her spell. They are the best of friends now.

This has been a life changing experience for me and I am very thankful to have Pebbles in my life. I have gained a wonderful pet and Guide Dog. But more importantly, a great friend.



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Carson & Autism Support Dog Grace

Team Sponsor: Grand Chapter of British Columbia and Yukon – Order of the Eastern Star
We cannot imagine life without Grace. She has changed our world in more ways than you can imagine.

Before life with Grace, Carson was five and still in diapers. But for some reason, a month after Grace joined our family, Carson decided he was ready to try the toilet – and is now diaper free!

We live in an area with lots of parks and fields, but sadly, Carson could not walk to them without tripping or bolting into traffic. He also did not have the muscle tone to walk, even though it was only five minutes from our house.

The therapists suggested I start looking into an adult wheelchair or stroller for him – but again Grace changed our world. As soon as Carson was attached to Grace, he began walking at such a calm and steady pace and the tripping stopped. Now he walks everywhere multiple times a day. Carson not only walks to the close park but walks to the farther bigger parks, and loves it!

Before Grace, Carson could not sleep. Numerous times a week he would only be able to sleep for about three to four hours a night. The therapists and doctors felt he was just so overwhelmed with life and his surroundings that he could not settle to sleep. We tried different medications, but they always left him groggy and it would take such a strong amount to work.

Now, as a result of walking with Grace, and her gift of calmness, Carson has been sleeping a solid 8-9 hours a night!

Grace has brought such peace and fun into our lives. We thank her puppy raisers for doing such an amazing job! Grace and I like to go to the dog parks and on hikes together. She loves being with the other dogs and it has become one of my favourite times of the day.

PTSD SERVICE DOG TEAM



Patti & PTSD Service Dog Tiaa

When I was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 2005, I had no idea what it was. But my health, my social life, anxiety, everything, were all in decline. I had no idea how to function at that point – and I'm normally a high-functioning type A personality.

The doctor said, 'You have PTSD,' and I said, 'I haven't even been to war.' The doctor told me, 'Yeah, you've been to war. As a member of the RCMP, every day when you strapped on that gun belt, you went to war.'

For me, PTSD manifested itself in social isolation, a lack of self-care and my thought process. For most people the thought process begins at one point and ends at another. With me, my thoughts get broken up all along the way and get lost. When that happens, I just sit, turn inwards and do nothing.

So much changed when I was given Tiaa. If I sit still, go inward and do nothing, she will come along, nudge me and puts her head on me. And I have to take her out for a walk or get food. I can't go out and meet people in the park if I'm wearing my pajamas, haven't had a shower or dressed properly. I'm going out just for her, not for myself. But it's begun to become my purpose.

Now, for every breath I take outdoors, I want two. For every lap I do around the park, I can't wait to do another.

The medication prescribed for my PTSD doesn't do anything for me. It's Tiaa that's my medication now and it really works.

The other thing is the other veterans I trained with have become my family. We all know that we have PTSD, we all cry, we all get angry, we all have outbursts and we are not alone. We keep each other going.



VERY SPECIAL PLACEMENT

VOLUNTEER PROFILE



Mart & VSP Dog Louie

Last year in October Linda Thornton stopped by our townhouse to visit and interview us and inspect our home environment. We had applied for a non qualifying dog – one that did not totally meet all the criteria to become a service dog but yet has a beautiful and calm personality. Linda asked me if it was okay for her to bring a dog.

Well, that day was life changing for us. My husband Mart has Huntington's Disease, a hereditary neurodegenerative illness with physical, cognitive and emotional symptoms. It can last 30 years, with life's qualities and abilities slowly deteriorating.

Linda brought this beautiful black lab named Louie. Little did we know he was our new family member. He walked around the house, checking everything out. I told Linda he had a beautiful disposition to which she responded that Louie could be ours if we wanted.

It now has been almost a year with our Louie. Every day with him is a joy. The specialists at the Huntington's clinic are in awe of how well Mart is doing. Louie has added so much warmth and companionship to Mart's life, he is always by his side no matter which room of the house he is in. Louie's loyalty is endless.

When we walk with Louie next to the wheelchair, he is so well behaved and calm and then, when we get to the park, he gets to be a dog and plays and runs with all his (dog) friends.

The doctors and I are convinced that, with the addition of this beautiful lovely Louie, there has been a subconscious improvement on Mart's life at home. Thank you to all the beautiful people in charge of this program at BC Guide & Alberta Dogs, we are forever grateful for this wonderful addition to our family.

Betty Robinson wouldn't trade a moment of being a Puppy Trainer

Why did you initially get involved with BC & Alberta Guide Dogs?

I love dogs, but we are at a point in our lives that we did not think having another dog for 13 to 15 years makes sense, especially as we love the big breeds. Being a Puppy Trainer is a perfect compromise - we get to have another dog to love, care for and raise, but we are not tied down for years to come.

What do you like best and least about being a Puppy Trainer?

The best - how can you not love having a new pup in your home? The first two years of a dog's life are just so rewarding and tons of fun. And, without a doubt, seeing how much these dogs are capable of, and the huge heart and soul they give you every single day. The least - the day you have to give your pup up.

What is the funniest thing a dog you have been working with has done?

It was Christmas of 2016 - Honey was five months old. We put the baby gates around the tree and presents. However, Honey found a way to reach over the gate and grab an end of the sparkly silver garland - a firm mouthful and she was off across the room trailing a spool of silver garland in a flash. Fortunately we were able to stop the silver streak before any real damage to tree or pup!

Lots of people say they couldn't be a Puppy Trainer because saying goodbye to the puppy would be so hard. What do you say to these folks?

Saying goodbye is hard, there is no doubt about it. But these pups are moving forward to a wonderful life and we have been part of that. So it is truly a bittersweet moment.

Any other comments you'd like to share....

Without a doubt, through some trials and tribulations, triumphs and celebrations, I would not trade a moment of being a Puppy Trainer. The support and guidance from Sandra and Trish and the rest of the Puppy Trainer "family" is what makes this program the success it is.



Calgary volunteer Puppy Trainer Betty Robinson with Honey, the first puppy she trained.



DOGS ABOUT TOWN



Sue Foty, a volunteer whelper for BC & Alberta Guide Dogs brought Madison along with her for the 18th annual Delta Trivia Night on Nov. 17. More than 370 people participated in the fundraising event, held at Sacred Heart School.



Dexter and Bailey were greeters at the Victoria Pet Expo, held April 14-15 at the Pearkes Recreation Centre in Victoria.



Samantha Falk, emcee for the Golf for Guide Dogs dinner and auction, gets a puppy kiss from Penny. This year 124 golfers teed it up at Mayfair Lakes Golf and Country Club in Richmond.



BC&AGD volunteer Brian DesChamps and Mumford were part of our 15-person, 9-dog team which took part in Calgary's Scotiabank 5-kilometre Charity Challenge on May 27.

IN THE LITTERBOX



BILLIE & GERRY
SEPTEMBER 25th, 2018



JACKIE & MAX
NOVEMBER 16th, 2018



PENNY & BERT
NOVEMBER 15th, 2018



MADISON & TOBY
AUGUST 6, 2018

Here are just a few of our most recent litters. Many thanks to our volunteer whelpers



DONOR SPOTLIGHT



Suzanne & Abby

There's something about Labrador retrievers that drew Suzanne to donate to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs. A dog lover and proud owner of Abby, a 13-year-old yellow Lab, she understands the breed's traits and its ability to serve people.

"Labs are incredible with what they do. There's something about that breed that connects with us, even if they're not (service) dogs," she said.

The fact that BC & Alberta Guide Dogs breeds, raises and trains mostly Labs made Suzanne want to find out more. And when she did, the former White Rock resident decided it was a charity that needed her help through ongoing donations.

"It's a privilege to support charities like BC Guide Dogs," said Suzanne.

House on Haunted Heights

The House on Haunted Heights is a group of friends and family who are passionate about the horror genre and supporting their local community.

It is amazing to work with this wonderfully passionate and energetic group. They work hard to raise funds throughout the year by hosting a concession stand at Horror Con, renting their collection of hearses out and running their House on Haunted Heights Halloween event among other efforts.

This year is the second year in a row they have chosen Alberta Guide Dogs as their charity of choice and we couldn't be more grateful.



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BRANCH 263
\$500 DONATION



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**THANK YOU TO
OUR DONORS
FOR YOUR
ONGOING
SUPPORT AND
GENEROSITY!**



PUPPY SPONSORSHIP CALGARY

PUPPY SPONSORSHIP DELTA



Puppy Charo peeks out while Puppy Trainer Tracey Aubin chats with a guest at the Calgary Puppy Sponsorship Appreciation Party, held Oct. 13.



Guest Jan Dingle receives a smooch from puppy Winston.



Oona gets attention from Fred Wechselberger at the Delta Puppy Sponsorship Appreciation Party, held Oct. 27th.



Willie is a centre of attention for volunteers at the party, attended by 170 guests.



Puppy Damien gets some extra attention from Kathy Vandersteen, Laura Atfield and a friend.



Riley Hiltz told the 125 guests at the Calgary Puppy Party about his positive experiences with Guide Dog Eileen and how the partnership impacts his life.



Oona's Puppy Trainer Annie-Rae Pennington answers questions from a family at the party, held at Harris Barn.



Mike Annan, Executive Director of Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs spoke about PTSD Dogs and veterans.



Mac meets one of the younger guests attend the Calgary party.



Puppy-in-training Damien greets a guest at the puppy party. A total of five puppies were in attendance.



Puppy Trainer Sue Sagman with Chevy.



Puppy Chevy was excited to meet some of the younger guests attending the party.



Plant a legacy that continues to grow



A planned gift to a charity like BC & Alberta Guide Dogs is comparable to planting a tree. Once the gift is given, the legacy continues on and bears fruit in the future for the charity and the people it serves.

These thoughtfully planned gifts help us breed, raise and train Guide Dogs, Autism Support Dogs and PTSD Service Dogs. However, the need for our professionally trained service dogs continues to grow and BC & Alberta Guide

Dogs must grow to meet the demand.

When you support us with your planned gift, you help blind/visually impaired individuals, children with profound autism and military and RCMP veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

You may not be able to give the gift of sight, cure autism or help veterans overcome PTSD but, through your planned gift, you can help improve someone's quality of life through increased independence, safety, mobility, confidence and freedom.

Remembering us in your will is a wonderful way to continue supporting an organization that makes a difference.

To learn more about creating a lasting legacy, please contact Jan Hawkins at 1-877-940-4504 or jan.hawkins@bcguidedogs.com.

SAVE THE DATE

Alberta Guide Dogs' Open House

Dec. 8, 2018 - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
#11, 6115 – 4th Street SE, Calgary

Kitz4Kids Fundraiser

Saturday, Jan. 19, 2019 - 6 to 11 p.m.
River Rock Casino, Richmond

RunGo Dash for Dogs

Sunday, Feb. 24, 2019 - 9:30 a.m.
Brockton Pavillion, Stanley Park

Calgary Trivia Night

Saturday, April 6, 2019
Marda Loop Communities Assoc. Hall,
3130 16th Street SW
Calgary, AB

Ties & Tails Auction & Gala

Saturday, May 11, 2019
Fairmont Hotel Vancouver
900 W. Georgia Street.
Vancouver, BC`

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Leah & Howie Meeker, CM

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***So I can grow up to become
a Life-Changing Guide Dog,
Autism Support Dog or
PTSD Service Dog for a Veteran.***

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