

PAW PRINTS

Fall 2020
No. 42



Official newsletter from the staff, graduates and volunteers of:

BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

GUIDE DOGS • AUTISM SERVICE DOGS • PTSD SERVICE DOGS

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



We entered this year with exceptional momentum and were on track to graduate a record 30 Guide and Service Dog teams in 2020, but due to the pandemic, we had to adjust that goal to ensure the health and safety of our staff, clients, and volunteers. We were however, despite the challenges facing us, successful in graduating a further 13 new teams, and plan for a bumper 2021, favourable conditions prevailing. We are beyond grateful

to everyone involved for prioritizing the well-being of our community and keeping positive through all the unknowns that 2020 has brought us.

The deluge of 2020 bad news was countered by a barrage of good news and support from our amazing volunteers who have stood with us at every stage. Our legion of volunteers have absolutely risen to the occasion, and continued to provide exceptional care for all our puppies and adult dogs in the program despite the Covid-19 challenges. On behalf of my professional team, I thank each and every volunteer from the bottom of my heart for your dedication and "Puppy Pawsitivity" - if I could give you all a standing ovation, I would – thank you!

The upcoming year will be an unprecedented challenge for us, yet I have complete confidence that we can continue the work we do with the unfailing support from our donors, volunteers, and staff. This is truly a family to be proud of! Please have a safe, calm and kind holiday with your families, and best wishes for the New Year! Looking forward to seeing you all in person in the not too distant future.



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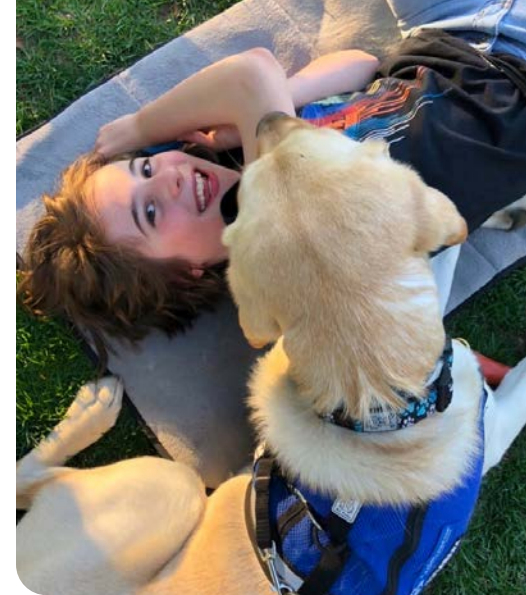
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Ryley with Autism Service Dog Beau

Team Sponsor: Pacific Blue Cross
Beau has been a wonderful addition to our family. He is a special friend and safety net for our son, Ryley.

Since being paired with Beau, Ryley has a newfound sense of independence and pride. Going out in public, whether to a sporting event or grocery store, Ryley is tethered to Beau and is able to walk alongside him, instead of always with either Mom or Dad! Being tethered to Beau has also really helped Ryley understand his boundaries. He doesn't seem to feel the need to dart off or even pull. We can stay at the soccer field (with ease) for the entire game now. **It has taken a lot of the stress of keeping Ryley safe off our shoulders.** Having Beau has helped us to be able to focus more on our other children, while out in public, instead of it just being Ryley.

Beau has also made transitioning to bed much easier. Ryley has his nightly routine in which Beau is a part of. Beau is also his companion in bed, which helps him to calm and feel safe. Someone used to lie down with Ryley for hours in order for him to go to sleep. Now we rarely have to do that anymore.



Beau gives Ryley some of his own responsibilities, like feeding time! Beau loves to be fed and (with our guidance) this is Ryley's job. It has been a great bonding activity. Ryley is the only one of the kids to give Beau his meals or treats and this has helped Beau to know exactly who his most special buddy is!!

Because Beau has a large family with four kids in total, and there's always something interesting going on, he's one happy dog! For fun he loves to get out for runs, play fetch and play with other dogs at the dog park.

Beau is Ryley's special friend, but we all love him so very much. **We are thankful for the freedom Beau has given to our son and to us.** Ryley is proud of his dog and it's really heartwarming to see.



Dave with PTSD Service Dog Storm

**Team Sponsor: Eldon & Anne Foote Fund
at Edmonton Community Foundation**

I am a Veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, and my life has been in shambles for many years due to PTSD and MDD. I found myself locked in the house not wanting to do anything or go anywhere. I applied for a Service Dog several years ago, and recently I received an amazing, beautiful, energetic Lab named Storm.



He has changed my life in so many ways, that I find it hard to explain how wonderful it has been for me.

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He has changed my life in so many ways, that I find it hard to explain how wonderful it has been for me. I now get up every morning to feed and walk him; I play with him and train him. **It's truly incredible how one dog can change the life of a Veteran in such a positive way.**

Storm has also influenced my spouse, grandson, as well as everyone who visits our property. We live on an acreage, so Storm has lots of room to run and play and that's exactly what we do together.

Storm does not permit me to go into those deep dark places because of the bonding we have done.



I can't believe that in such a short time, **Storm has become family. I absolutely 100% love this dog.**

Many thanks to VICD Service Dogs and to the team of volunteers, fosters, and staff that made this possible. I wish to send out a big hug and a heartfelt thank you for all you do, and have done, and continue to do, for our Veterans and First Responders.

Howie Meeker, CM - Remembering a Legend

We are saddened to share that Howie Meeker, CM has passed away. Howie and his wife Leah, Patrons of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, have played an enormous role in the development of our organization.

Howie likened the placing of a Guide Dog to winning the Stanley Cup in that it requires strong teamwork from many people, most of whom do their work quietly behind the scenes. One of the main reasons he enjoyed being out on the course every year at Golf for Guide Dogs was that it gave him and Leah a chance to meet some of the amazing volunteers, supporters and staff that all worked so hard to produce these life-changing Guide and Service Dogs.



He admired the dogs immensely, often referring to them as **“absolute magic”** and was always in awe at the communication between a Guide Dog and its handler when he used to take recipients out canvassing with him around Vancouver Island.

As Howie was a Veteran of the Second World War, he strongly supported our amalgamation with VICD Service Dogs, and both he and Leah were happy to participate in fundraising events, such as the Evening of Compassion for Veterans in Qualicum Beach, BC.

He will be greatly missed by everyone that knew him. Thank you, Howie for your wonderful support, friendship and dedication to our cause. Our thoughts and condolences are with Leah and the family at this time.
Leah Meeker will continue in her role as Patron.



Golf for Guide Dogs Goes "lite" for 2020

Thank you to all of our golfers for making our 23rd Annual London Drugs Golf for Guide Dogs "lite" Tournament a great success! Participation has always made a difference, but this year it was imperative to have your support. Thank you for your patience as we made the necessary changes for a safe and enjoyable game.

The day started with a toast to long-time supporter Joe Collins with his friends and colleagues from Sea Agra Seafood. Joe passed away early this year, and we very much missed him at the tournament.

All teams were assigned tee times throughout the morning to ensure physical distancing on the course, and the players finished the rainy day at the dining room and patio, warming up with a "lite" meal.

The organizing committee would like to acknowledge London Drugs for once again being our Tournament Sponsor. We are most grateful for your ongoing dedication to our organization.

We would like to dedicate this year's event to the memory of Howie Meeker and Verne Blyth, two powerhouses behind the success of every tournament.



Verne at the 2019 tournament

Verne Blyth was a treasured part of our BC & Alberta Guide Dogs family who first got involved in 1998 when he took on puppy 'Misty'. This would begin a Puppy-Raising journey that spanned 20 dogs. Fellow Puppy Raisers remember him as a kind, gentle, and caring person who was fully committed to his passion of raising future Guide and Service Dogs for people in need.

Verne was Bill's "right-hand man" at each and every event, helping wherever he was needed. He participated in Dog Days of Summer, Rock and Roll for Little Souls, judged at Trivia Nights, walked in parades, and co-chaired the Golf for Guide Dogs committee for many years.

Verne was also on the Board, and served as Chair from 2006 - 2015. As part of his tenure, he helped oversee the formation of Autism Support Dogs in 2008, an expansion of our mandate to include providing Service Dogs for children with autism and their families.

Thank you Verne for all of your love and care. **You leave behind a beautiful legacy of many lives transformed by your outstanding contributions.**



Taking Trivia Online and Across North America

Despite having to cancel our in-person Trivia Nights in both Calgary and Delta this year, we had an absolute BLAST playing with everyone online. **1,000 players joined us** for the six games we held from Spring to Fall! An amazing benefit of holding the games virtually was that players could join us from all over North America; we had players from Illinois, Newfoundland, the Yukon, Ontario, Texas, and the list goes on! We would like to thank players for joining in on the fun, and **we look forward to "seeing you online" for next year's Virtual Trivia Nights - stay tuned!**

Thank you Ledcor Group who was our title sponsor for five of our games, and **Family Insurance Solutions** and **Miss604** for their support and sponsorship as well.

The Deep Bonds Shared Between Us Phil with Guide Dog Piper

Team Sponsor:
Susan Walsh and Gord Arich

Piper is my third dog from BC Guide Dogs and he came to me a few months after my Guide Dog of twelve years, Faith, passed away. It's quite an experience to switch from a dog to a cane, and then back to a dog again. Without a dog you lose your freedom – you're not as smooth or quick and it's very tedious!

Something that became very clear to me when I started training with Piper was how different each dog is. They each do the same job but have their own nuances and personalities. Piper is a great dog, who's lots of fun and super smart.



We bonded immediately, but it took patience to get used to each other. **I paid attention to his reactions, and he learned my routines, and we started to blend together. But it's so natural – just like wearing a nice pair of gloves.**

Piper is out walking with me every single day, although we're staying clear of public transit at the moment due to Covid-19. A friend comes with me when we head to the grocery shop and the cart is a perfect size for keeping physically distanced! People have been very good to let me know they're coming by with a "Hello! On your left/right", and that's been very helpful.

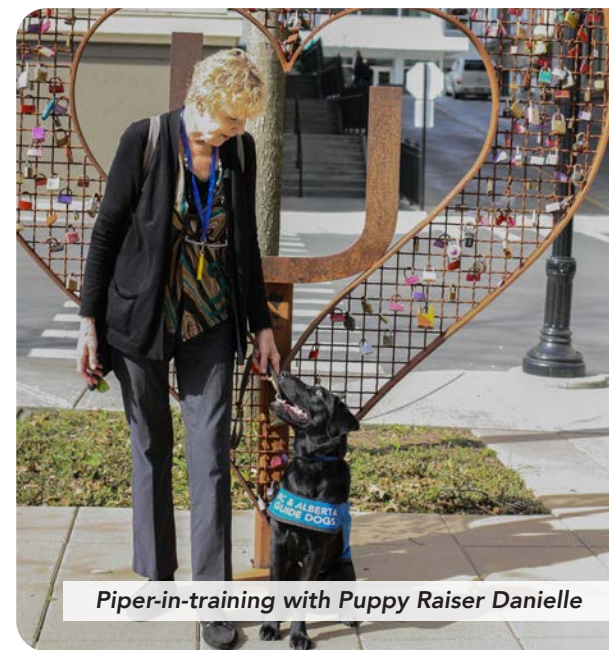
A special thing that I enjoy is the teachable moment that happens when someone asks, "Can I pet your dog?" Each and every opportunity is a chance to teach the public in a nice and friendly way about how to interact with a working Guide Dog, and I hope that helps others.

When he's not working, Piper loves to play and is an absolute goof! We have a drawer full of toys for him and he's just a regular dog when he's at home. Some close friends of ours come over and take him for a free

run a couple times a week, which is a great opportunity for him to let off some steam.

I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone for the interest, the love, and the training that went into making Piper a Guide Dog. **I can't describe how much of a pleasure and a need that a Guide Dog is for me. The freedom that a dog gives is unbelievable, and the trust between the both of us is very special.**

Shortly after getting him, I was downtown and met the Trainer that helped Piper's Puppy Raiser. Well, I took off his harness so that he could have a visit and he went bonkers! This really made me realize how much of a bond exists between everyone involved in training these puppies. It must be so difficult to let these dogs go, so I have a huge respect and admiration for those that do. I hope this lady had a smile on her face after we met and knew, "Yes, we did a good job."



Piper-in-training with Puppy Raiser Danielle

Kyle's Kindness

Kyle and his family (incl. brother Jakob) began selling hand-made fire starters at the beginning of summer by donation to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs. His initial goal was \$500, so he was very pleased with his final tally of **\$6,700**, and the support of his community in Prince George, BC! *Autism Service Dog Rufus was placed with Kyle last year.*



Twenty-two participants signed up for our first ever **Woof-a-Thon Virtual Challenge** and raised **\$26,530** - that's an average of \$1,200 per person! Everyone got active together - *virtually* - from October 4th to 10th with all sorts of creative activities. **A big thank you to all!!**

Top fundraiser, Puppy Raiser Jill, raised an incredible **\$4,460** by making 66 tug toys that she donated to our puppy program!



Jill with Skye

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



100 Women Who Care - Oceanside \$26,400



Raymond James Canada Foundation \$5,000



Wesley handcrafted an amazing cigar box guitar and auctioned it off for **\$250** in support of VICD Service Dogs. Thank you for such a creative donation!



First West Foundation \$10,000

Masks for Nacho

Puppy Raiser Leah sprung into action with her sewing supplies and her mask-making abilities to fundraise for BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, and for Nacho, who had just started his advanced training in the Autism Program when the pandemic hit. She has raised an impressive **\$3,565** so far! Thank you!!



All Aboard! Transit Training for our Puppies



We are excited to seek out unique partnerships and opportunities to help with training wherever we can, and we thank TransLink (Vancouver), BC Transit (Victoria) and Calgary Transit for allowing us to socialize our dogs in the program to their buses.

The pandemic made it very difficult for our Puppy Raisers to use public transit, so the transit companies in each location let us into their bus depots and provided dedicated buses and drivers for our physically-distanced training exercises.

The puppies were able to practice getting on and off the bus, managing the ramp, and getting used to the doors and the many distracting smells and noises that the buses make.



Robert with PTSD Service Dog Jaggar

Team Sponsor: Wounded Warriors Canada
Life with Jaggar has been great. It was quite overwhelming when we first met as I have two Shih Tzu's, and Jaggar is a big dog. But he came home, and it was clear there were going to be no issues. He is one of the family now and we would not trade him for anything.

Jaggar has helped me to get out of the house, get more active, and has also helped me establish a healthy routine. His face greets me each morning, and after I get his breakfast, we go on our first walk of the day together. He's helped me go to new and different places and meet people, which I wouldn't have done without him. The children in the neighbourhood love him and he is so good with them and enjoys getting pets.

I've never had such a supportive dog who is entirely focused on me. “

When I get nervous, he's always there. He sits at my feet or lies on my lap and really calms me down. His head is on my shoulder whenever I'm in the car and that keeps my anxiety down. He'll always be close by (he's even dropped his favourite stuffed teddy into the shower while I'm in it!).



The degree of training that Jaggar has had is amazing. I'd like to send a big thank you to the Puppy Raiser and trainers as Jaggar makes me look good in class with how obedient he is! They have done a fantastic job raising a wonderful companion. I've never had such a supportive dog who is entirely focused on me.



The 'PUP'ulation Increases!

Jackie & Bert - June 11, 2020



1

Penny & Felix - Sept. 2, 2020



10

Taz & Finn - Oct. 6, 2020



7

Roo & Gerry - Oct. 14, 2020



8

Dogs with Wings - Gunner

We are grateful for the relationship we have with the Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society in Alberta. Gunner joined us in August. Date of birth: June 22, 2020. Welcome little one!



Meet Bonnie & Henry!

Introducing "Bonnie" and "Henry" named in honour of BC's Provincial Health Officer, who has responded: "It is an honour to have such adorable namesakes. I would like to extend my warmest wishes for the continued success of your organization during what has been a difficult time for all of us. Taking a moment to appreciate the joy of two little puppies is so welcome."



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BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

Registered Charity #: 89131 1763 RR0001

The 'Paw'fect Holiday Gift Idea

Give a gift with purpose this holiday season and help our puppies become life-changing dogs for individuals who are blind/visually-impaired, children with autism and their families, and Veterans and First Responders living with Operational Stress Injuries, such as PTSD.

Puppy Sponsorships come in all sizes, so please visit bcandalbertaguidedogs.com to find the 'Paw'fect gift.

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