



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS



2024

SPRING **PAW PRINTS**

ISSUE NO. 49: A LIFE LONG JOURNEY



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends & Supporters,

I am delighted to connect with you once again to share some truly heartening testimonials that underscore the profound impact of our Guide Dogs and Service Dogs.

In this edition of Paw Prints, we have received stories from those whose lives have been touched by our canine companions. These inspiring testimonials serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of our mission and the transformative power of our programs. In addition to highlighting these compelling anecdotes, I would like to take a moment to shine a couple of spotlights on our exceptional team members. Their dedication and passion are integral to the success of our organization and the fulfillment of our mission.

In January we transferred the Autism Service Dog Program over to the PTSD Service Dog Team. We made this change for two main reasons. Firstly, the training of the dogs for PTSD and Autism are really quite similar. Secondly, we will now greatly increase the number of Autism Service Dog teams each year. During 2023, we graduated a total of 30 Guide and Service Dog Teams. With this change, we will graduate a total of 40 new

teams in 2024. We now have two clearly defined professional training departments. The Guide Dog Training Department and the Service Dog Training Department.

As we navigate these changes and, as always, the known and unseen challenges and opportunities that may lie ahead, I extend my deepest gratitude to you all, for your continued support and unwavering commitment to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs Volunteers, Professional Staff and all working Guide and Service Dog Teams.

William S. Thornton,
CEO

MISSION

The mission of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs is to meet the demand for professionally trained Guide Dogs, Autism Service Dogs and OSI Service Dogs for citizens of British Columbia and Alberta. At all times we meet or exceed international standards as established by the International Guide Dog Federation and Assistance Dogs International.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair: Linda Reid
Vice-Chair & Secretary: Tammy Winters
Treasurer: Kelly Guichon
Director: Peter Hrdlitschka
Director: Steve Darling
Director: Peter Roaf
CEO: William S. Thornton, GDMI

ADVISORY BOARD

C. Wayne Reeves, B.Arch
Charlotte Keller, DVM, DACVO, DECVO
Daniel Schwartz, DVM
Graham T. Lewis, DVM, DIP, ACVO
Irene O'Brien, DVM
Norman E. Sayfy, B.Comm
Rupert Bullock



A GUIDE DOG'S JOURNEY

2024 - AMBER THOMAS WITH GUIDE DOG, BEAR

Bear, my beloved Guide Dog, recently turned 10, and we're extending his service for another year where he is enjoying a semi-retired life. Despite his semi-retired status, Bear's zest for life remains undiminished. One of our cherished pastimes together revolves around our local golf tournaments, where Bear's fascination with golf carts has always been a source of delight and wonder. It's a sight to behold: Bear's eyes light up at the sight of golf carts and his curiosity piques by their presence on the course.

I vividly recall the first time we approached a golf cart together. Without hesitation, Bear leaped onto the seat, his tail wagging eagerly as if to say, "I'm ready to ride!" From that moment on, our golfing adventures became synonymous with joy and camaraderie.

Additionally, he adores our annual trips to Mexico, where his calm demeanor on the beach earns him the title of "beach bum."

I've experienced firsthand the profound freedom that comes with Bear's assistance. His intelligence and intuition surpass many expectations, offering me physical support and a sense of security in unfamiliar environments. I can visit unfamiliar places, knowing that Bear will stop at curbs and will find doors, benches, and railings when needed. His steady progress is a testament to his resilience and sensitivity, reminding me to communicate with him gently and patiently.

Bear has been an unwavering source of support, alleviating numerous stressors and enhancing my quality of life. As he enters his twilight years, I'm filled with both gratitude for his companionship and apprehension about his eventual decline, hoping for a graceful transition into retirement.

I will definitely miss having Bear as my Guide Dog but am also glad that he will finally get a chance to vacation in Mexico and jump on golf carts indefinitely!



SINCE 2016

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Receiving my first Guide Dog, Tom, at thirteen was a transformative experience, granting me newfound independence and trust. Now, eight years later, working with my second dog, Bear, I continue to deepen my bond and reinforce the invaluable sense of security and confidence that guide dogs provide. Beyond aiding mobility, they offer companionship and a reassuring presence at home, enhancing my independence and easing daily stresses. Bear, my "mellow yellow," excels both on and off harness, effortlessly navigating our surroundings with remarkable memory and unwavering dedication. Transitioning from Tom to Bear was challenging, yet Bear's loyalty and protection quickly reassured me, solidifying our partnership. As I reflect on their impact, I'm reminded of the profound difference guide dogs make in my life, fostering confidence and gratitude each day. My heartfelt thanks to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs for their invaluable support and the enduring gift of Tom and Bear's companionship!

AN OSI-PTSD SERVICE DOG'S JOURNEY

STÉPHANE MARCOTTE

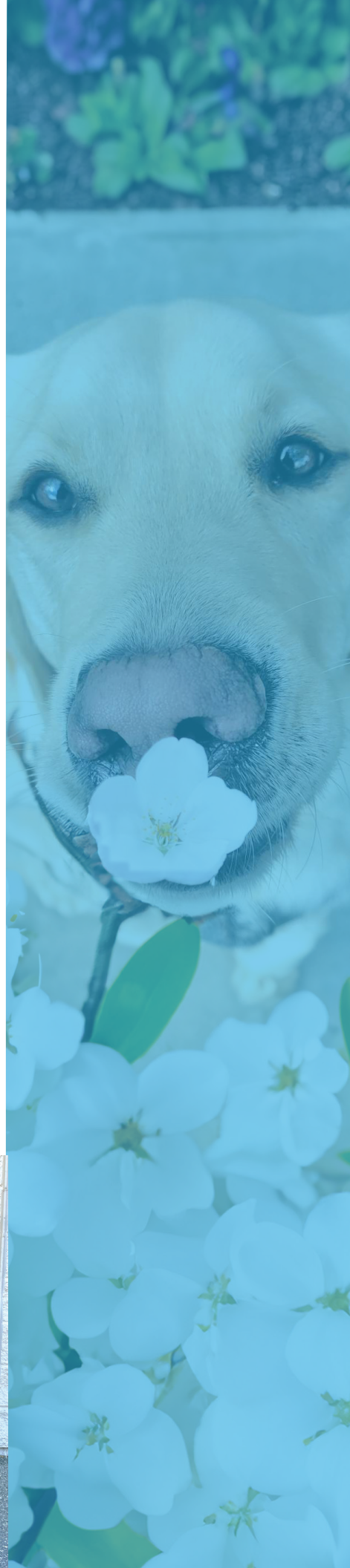
WITH SERVICE DOGS BUNKER & SARGE

Sarge, my faithful companion for 8 years, was more than just a Service Dog—he was my confidant, always ready to offer comfort and support. As his retirement approached, we noticed changes in his mobility and health, prompting us to carefully plan his transition. Welcoming my current Service Dog, Bunker, into my life marked the beginning of Sarge's retirement journey, a period of adjustment for us all. Despite the initial challenges, we embraced new activities that involve both Sarge and Bunker, ensuring that Sarge continues to enjoy an active and fulfilling life post-retirement. While Sarge's role has evolved, his presence remains cherished, a constant reminder of the profound impact of service dogs on our lives.

Since retiring, Sarge has been livelier than ever, enjoying up to 4 walks a day and tagging along with my wife, Susan, on our outings. It's heartwarming to see him still maintaining his attentive stance, almost like he's still on duty. Taking care of both Sarge and Bunker feels like parenting two kids, but Sarge's newfound freedom means he can choose when to stay in, adding a new dynamic to our family.

During the initial days of Bunker's journey with me, he would encroach on Sarge's territory, not fully grasping the concept of personal space! However, they've since become inseparable best friends, even travelling together and enjoying playful moments at the park and at home. As Bunker and I continue to bond, I've noticed his unique communication style—he prefers eye contact and gentle touches to convey his message. This reinforces the importance of listening to our dogs to strengthen our relationship with them, whereas Sarge was more vocal and would use his voice to get my attention.

The bond that I have with Sarge and Bunker are different. Sarge was the one who did the groundwork to get me out of my basement, while Bunker is extremely well-trained which made it a seamless training process for us. For those considering getting a service dog or already have one, my advice is to practice patience. If your dog isn't responding as expected, take a moment to tune into their cues—they might be trying to communicate something important. Remember: "Listen to your dog" to strengthen your bond and understanding.



TEAMWORK

MEET OUR TEAM

MATTHIAS LENZ

DIRECTOR OF PUPPY TRAINING

Matthias Lenz is a Karen Pryor Academy graduate and Family Dog Mediator. He has been with BC & Alberta Guide Dogs for 8 years and he oversees 3 staff and over 120 volunteers that make up the Puppy Raising Program.



What are some challenges and rewards of your role?

This job is always engaging as each dog and handler team is unique, requiring creative problem-solving. Currently, our main challenge is recruiting new puppy raisers, prompting us to explore innovative methods for increasing engagement. The ultimate satisfaction lies in witnessing the dogs transform into life-changing companions. Personally, facilitating connections between dog and handler, improving understanding, and reducing frustration for both parties is immensely rewarding.

What is the most critical aspect of your role?

One of my primary objectives is to focus on retaining puppy training volunteers as they are pivotal to our mission, contributing their time and effort towards nurturing and training our dogs. Another aspect of my role is to foster effective collaboration between the Puppy Training and Advanced Training departments. I try to understand the specific requirements and challenges they face and ensure that they are heard and resolved.

How do you see your role evolving at BCAGD?

Since becoming Director of Puppy Training, I have more time to focus on enhancing our Puppy Training programs, including consolidating our puppy raising manuals from three books to one, enhancing our video library, and restructuring our teaching approach by expanding our foundation classes to more manageable intervals.

KIM KENDALL

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Kim Kendall is the glue at our BC & Alberta Guide Dogs Delta office! She has been with the organization for 5 years and effortlessly juggles various roles while maintaining the overall functionality of our workspace. Her ability to adapt to any situation makes her an invaluable asset to our team.



How has your role developed over the past 5 years?

After 5 years, I've expanded my skills beyond my initial role and gained a deeper understanding of the organization, allowing me to assist other departments as needed. I've helped colleagues in accounting, sponsorship, and fundraising sectors, in addition to distributing tax receipts and thank-you letters to donors in a timely fashion.

How did you end up with one of BCABGD's stud dogs, Finn?

After working here for a year, I cared for Finn's dad, Bert, during his family's vacation, and I became enamoured with him. Linda, our Director of Breeding, was aware of my affection for Bert and offered me the opportunity to adopt his son, Finn, who has been with me for 3.5 years since he was a 15 month-old puppy!

What are your favourite moments working at BCABGD?

We are on the brink of breaking ground for our new building, and the anticipation surrounding this fills us with excitement and pride, symbolizing a transformative moment for our organization and the community. Imagining the sight of dogs training on-site and having puppies and their mum in our new nursery evokes a sense of pure joy!

2024 EVENTS

DISCOVER, ENGAGE, EMPOWER

TIES & TAILS GALA

MAY 4, 2024

Join our community of supporters in raising funds to help meet the growing demand for professionally trained Guide Dogs, Autism Service Dogs, and OSI-PTSD Service Dogs.

It's a fun-filled evening at the Tsawwassen Springs Ballroom featuring a fantastic dinner, inspiring speakers, silent and live auctions, and back this year, the WestJet Flight for 2 raffle.



DUCKS FOR DOGS

JUNE 22, 2024

The 4th Annual Vernon Lions Club Duck Race & Family Day is at Polson Park from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. BC & Alberta Guide Dogs Instructors will be on-site to host a Blind Fold Walk which helps participants experience what it would be like to be blind. A BBQ lunch can be purchased on-site throughout the day.

This event, hosted by the Vernon Lions Club, has helped place Autism Service Dogs with families in Vernon.



GOLF FOR GUIDE DOGS

AUGUST 9, 2024

Golf for Guide Dogs is a prestigious fundraising event designed to raise funds to breed, raise and train Guide Dogs, Autism Service Dogs and OSI-PTSD Service Dogs.

Golf-day registration opens at 11:00 AM. The tournament will begin with a light lunch followed by a Shotgun start at 1:00 PM. There will be refreshments and activities on the course throughout the day.



LEARN MORE AND JOIN US
BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS



THANK YOU OUR FOUNDING PATRONS & DONORS:

PATRON

Leah Meeker

FOUNDING PATRONS

William & Linda Thornton
(Co-founders)

Allard Foundation

Diamond Foundation

Dr. Hugo Sutton, MD, FRCSC

Dorothy & Rondy Dike

Eldon & Anne Foote Fund at Edmonton
Community Foundation

Gordon & Suzanne Thornton

† Irene Lyttle

Janet Li

John Hardie Mitchell
family foundation

Leah & † Howie Meeker, CM

Nestlé Purina Pet Care

Novartis Animal Health Canada

Percy & † Bette Adlington

Robin & Kathryn Thornton

The Arthur J.E. Child Foundation

The Calgary Foundation

The Fisher Foundation

The Nemetz Foundation

The Robert Tegler Trust

Vancouver Foundation

Victor & Anna Kern Foundation

Victoria Foundation

Wild Rose Foundation

FOUNDING DONORS

Susan & † David Baker

Edmonton Public Teachers (Local No.37,
Alberta Teachers' Association)

Greater Victoria Dog Obedience Training Club

Husky Energy

Leanne Palylyk Children's Foundation

Qualicum Pet Food & Grooming

RC Pet Products

REALTORS® Community Foundation

Rotary Club of Ladner

Rotary Club of Tsawwassen

Susan & Victor MacKenzie

The Independent Contractors & Businesses
Association of BC

Western Communities Dog Obedience Club

AUTISM SERVICE DOG FOUNDING PATRONS

BC Guide Dog Services

Diamond Foundation

Grand Chapter of Alberta — Order of the
Eastern Star

Grand Chapter of British Columbia & Yukon —
Order of the Eastern Star

The Allen & Loreen Vandekerckhove Family
Foundation

Variety — The Children's Charity

OSI-PTSD PATRONS

Mike Annan

Deborah Maddocks

Barbara McLaughlin

BC Guide Dog Services

Candy Ashbridge

Mary Jane Alyward

BC/Yukon Command of the
Royal Canadian Legion Foundation

Wounded Warriors Canada

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS:

Associated Veterinary Purchasing Co.

Big Steel Box Victoria

Chase River Veterinary Hospital

Crestwood Veterinary Centre

Royal Canadian Legion - Devon Branch No. 247

Elanco Veterinary Canada

Fish Creek 24 Hour Pet Hospital

Grey Wolf Animal Health

Ladner Baptist Church

Dr. Charlotte Keller, DVM, DACVO, DECVO

McKenzie Veterinary Services

M-pressions Sportswear Limited

Nestlé Purina Petcare Inc.

Nylabone

Qualicum Beach Veterinary Hospital

RC Pets

† Sue Paege

Scottsdale Veterinary Hospital

Dr. Brian Skorobohach, DVM, DACVO

Vancouver Graphics Group

VetCor Canine Reproductions

Westjet

Zoetis Animal Health

Island Veterinary Eye Specialist / Victoria



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

JOIN THE JOURNEY SPONSOR A PUPPY!



Sign up today, and let your sponsorship be the bridge to a brighter, more inclusive tomorrow!

Make a Meaningful Impact with Your Gift

Starting at just \$15/month, you can help provide life-changing puppies with the training needed to become a Guide Dog, Autism Service Dog or OSI – PTSD Service Dog. Your sponsored pup will send you regular 'pup' dates and photos as you follow them on their amazing journey to change someone's life! Our dogs are provided to recipients FREE OF CHARGE, thanks to the generosity of sponsors like you.



1.877.258.0819



BCANDALBERTAGUIDEDOGS.COM



PUPPYSponsorship@BCANDALBERTAGUIDEDOGS.COM

British Columbia
Guide Dog Services
Registered Charity No.
89131 1763 RR0001