

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



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

PAW PRINTS

Fall 2016 - Issue No. 34

*Celebrating
20 years*

1996 - 2016



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



This is a very special year for BC & Alberta Guide Dogs! Our life-changing dogs have been helping those in need of their services for 20 years. In honour of our milestone year, we held a Volunteer Celebration Luncheon at Tsawwassen Springs in Delta, BC. At the event, we recognized over 240 volunteers including over forty 20-year volunteers, patrons, Leah and Howie Meeker, CM, the Hon. Linda

Reid, MLA Richmond East, and Scott Hamilton, MLA, Delta North. Thank you to everyone who attended the successful celebration and to the many sponsors, volunteers and staff who made this day possible.

I would like to make a special mention of Jeremy Gomersall who stepped down as Director this year. Thank you to Jeremy for being the longest serving Board Member and Secretary since 2002, and for launching our Collecting Tin Program in 2000. In addition, we would like to welcome, Kevin Redmond to our Board of Directors. We look forward to working with him for many years!

I encourage you to read through the success stories of the Guide Dog and Autism Support Dog Teams. We are especially humbled and grateful this

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*Success stories have been edited for space.
Please visit our website for full stories.*



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Sawyer, Ryker & Autism Support Dog Roman

Team Sponsors: Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island and Puppy Sponsors

Roman joined our family this summer and our lives have been forever changed. Our story, like many, includes sadness, fear, helplessness and uncertainty but is now filled with joy, happiness, love, and hope. We are a mommy, a daddy and two beautiful boys, Sawyer and Ryker. Our boys are very different but share their love of video games, toys, music, being active, animals and nature, they also both have ASD.

I could explain in detail how Roman makes us feel, that all of us have less anxiety, that with Roman I can take the boys out on my own so we aren't isolated anymore, how we've gone places we could never go before and done things we didn't think we could do, but instead I'll share words from our family over the past weeks...

"I don't feel sad and angry anymore, how does Roman make it so I'm not sad and angry?", "Roman made it so I could button up a shirt! I never did that before! Can you believe it!", "We never went for walks here before!", "Roman, you're my bestest friend ever", "What adventure are we going on today?", "I'm glad Roman keeps me safe because you know what? I don't know why I run away I can't help it", "I love him so much", "Can we go to Disneyland tomorrow because we have Roman now?".

"I feel like I can breathe for the first time in years", "I never knew he could change things this much and I could love a dog this much", "How is thank you to everybody involved in bringing Roman into our lives ever enough?".

"This is Roman, he's our Autism Support Dog, me and my brother have autism and he helps make us safe". "You know what Roman does? He makes my heart happy". - Roman, Sawyer, Ryker, Mommy and Daddy, our family of 5 with thanks and gratitude to all involved in the process of bringing Roman into our lives.



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Lynn & Guide Dog Misty

Team Sponsor: Provincial Employees Community Services Fund

I would like you to meet Misty, rookie guide dog and my newest best friend! Misty is a 2-year-old black Labrador-retriever cross who exemplifies the expression, "All work and no play is no fun!" When Misty isn't pounding the pavement in harness, she can usually be found rolling onto her back to get her belly scratched – in or out of harness! Misty and I graduated as a team in March 2016. Since then, we have racked up thousands of kilometres travelling each day to and from my workplace via the Skytrain and West Coast Express. And everywhere we go, Misty is a superstar!

Misty is my third guide dog. She follows in the paw prints of my first beloved guide dog, Mae, and my most recently retired and equally adorable guide dog, Howie.

Misty, Howie, and I have perfected the tandem walk. This is a process in which I walk Misty in harness on my left and Howie on leash on my right. I look like I have two bodyguards. I refer to the two furry four-legged companions as, "my posse"!

I promise Misty an 8-year-long career filled with exciting adventures and endless love! Misty has some big paws to fill, but I have no doubt she'll do it!

Special thanks to all the staff and volunteers at BC & Alberta Guide Dogs (BCAGD) for bringing Misty into my world! I am especially grateful to Misty's puppy trainer, Linda, her boarders, Eileen and Mitch, and Misty's BCAGD instructor, Nick Toni, for their passionate dedication to Misty's transformation from a care-free puppy into a full-fledged guide dog -- Misty and I will make you proud!



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Sarah & Autism Support Dog Brady

Team Sponsors: Variety the Children's Charity

Sarah was diagnosed with autism at two years old. We focused all of our time and effort into ABA therapy in the hopes of finding her the help she needed. Her therapists were amazing and the differences in Sarah's development were nothing short of remarkable. But there were still issues that we just didn't know how to deal with. Her behaviors made getting through the day a difficult struggle.

Everything changed this year when Sarah met her best friend, protector, companion, therapist, and brother. From the minute Brady walked into our home, he changed our lives forever! Watching the two of them together was amazing. She told me she'll never be lonely again as long as she has her trusted furry friend. He doesn't judge her behaviors, he lovingly accepts her for who she is. Going out to run errands and visit new places is so different now; when she starts to feel nervous or tense she just turns to her buddy and he's there to comfort and support. She's excited to take walks with Brady and is so careful and cautious because she needs to keep her buddy safe. When Sarah gets upset Brady is quick to show her love and affection. Their relationship is so beautiful.

To say thank you to all of the people responsible for bringing Brady into our lives seems so inadequate. You have given us a gift that has brought us such joy and happiness. It has changed our family forever. Our daughter is happy and safe. The quality of her life has improved beyond anything we could have ever hoped for. We are so very grateful! Sarah often refers to her dog as a superhero and we agree, his superpower is unlocking his best friend's superpowers too.



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Tamara & Guide Dog Diesel

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

It should be said that Magnus, who was my first guide dog from BC & Alberta Guide Dogs was the best dog and friend a person could hope for. He provided me with eight years of faithful service and true companionship. He accompanied me all over the world without complaint or incident. His gentle spirit is sadly missed, and I know that Diesel will now fill Magnus's empty paw prints faithfully.

Initially I was apprehensive that I would be able to love a new dog as much as my first, especially when Diesel arrived only a few weeks after Magnus's passing. Now, at the end of training, I have no worries. Diesel's happy-go-lucky (and sometimes goofy) attitude would make anyone fall in love with him instantly. His love is boundless and infectious. He frequently curls up in my lap and takes naps and follows me everywhere around the house, on my heel even if I move only a few feet. A few people have jokingly referred to him as my four-legged shadow.

I must congratulate Nick and Rebecca on a job well done turning Diesel into a smart and vivacious guide. I am extremely grateful to the dozens of people at BC & Alberta Guide Dogs who helped raise Diesel into the incredible dog he is today. Many thanks to Diesel's generous sponsors. I would like to take pause and give a special thanks to Diesel's puppy trainers Rob and Patty and his boarder Deb without whose many hours of patience and love would not have allowed him to become the guide and friend he is to me today.



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Apprentice Autism Support Dog
Instructor, Nicola, with Elly



Damohn & Autism Support Dog Eleanor

Team Sponsor: Kitz4Kids

Like many other autistic kids, Damohn had a very normal early development till he turned 1.5 years old. Then he suddenly regressed. He could not walk or talk anymore. Damohn got diagnosed at age 2.5. After hours of different therapies, he slowly learned to walk again. He still walks very slowly and always on his tiptoes. His communication skills never improved though. He vocalizes all the time, but they are mostly sounds, sometimes even words but not functional.

Damohn loves his daily walks, he watches tall trees and touches leaves and verbalizes his joys with loud sounds to express happiness. To other people though, the loud sounds translate as loud screams that interrupts their quiet afternoon. People would stare at us, younger people sometimes even laughed; sometimes we received very ignorant comments. As you can imagine, this made the walk very uncomfortable.

For the past 2 months that Elly has stayed with us, things have changed. Now I am looking forward to our long walks together. We've never had any mean comments since Elly joined us. Damohn is not as loud around Elly when we go for walk. The belt around his waist provides sensory pressure that he likes, but would not wear if Elly was not attached to it. He thinks that he is the one who is helping Elly to walk. We have told him that he is Elly's big brother and Elly can not walk by herself.

I know I am supposed to say how helpful Elly has been with Damohn, but to be honest; I think her biggest effect has been on me. When Damohn screams and Elly approaches her calmly, I feel like I can do this too. I am much happier when she is around and I think it makes me a better mom for Damohn. I also would like to thank Nic and Laura. They are very passionate, knowledgeable, and kind people.



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS



This past summer, BC & Alberta Guide Dogs held a 20th Anniversary Volunteer Celebration Luncheon at Tsawwassen Springs in Delta, BC. It was a successful afternoon where we were able to recognize our special guests and wonderful volunteers for their many years of service. On behalf of our Founders, Linda & Bill Thornton, our Patrons, Leah & Howie Meeker, CM, and the Board of Directors, we would like to thank our dedicated volunteers, donors and community for 20 years of loyalty, commitment and support! A big thank you to the sponsors of the event for making this day possible: Dignity Memorial, Mainland Sand & Gravel, TD Canada Trust, The Flower Shop in the Village, Vancouver Graphics Group, Delta Optimist and WestJet.



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS



IN THE LITTERBOX

These pups are currently living with their Volunteer Puppy Trainers in Vancouver, Victoria and Calgary! Puppy training is a full-time volunteer job, and is fundamental to our success. We want to say a heartfelt THANK YOU to all our amazing volunteer breeders, whelpers, trainers, and boarders for all your time and the loving homes you provide to our pups.



CAPRICE & NANOOSE
9 PUPS - MAY 6, 2016



CALYPSO & GERRY
7 PUPS - AUGUST 17, 2016



EVELYN & BERT
7 PUPS - MARCH 12, 2016



MOLLY & FOLK
9 PUPS - JULY 15, 2016



MADISON & TRUMAN
6 PUPS - JULY 13, 2016



POPPY & MAX
6 PUPS - FEBRUARY 5, 2016



SACHA & CANE
3 PUPS - APRIL 20, 2016



COMMUNITY SUPPORT



FIRST WEST FOUNDATION
\$1,000 DONATION



LONDON DRUGS RICHMOND
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TEAM TELUS CHARITABLE GIVING
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**THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS FOR THEIR
ONGOING SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY!**

For full donor stories and more, please visit our blog:
bcandalbertaguidedogs/dogblog

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DOGS ABOUT TOWN



PUPPY SPONSORSHIP
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PUPPY SPONSORSHIP
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WESTJET RAFFLE WINNER
VICKI JONES (LEFT)



DELTA TRIVIA NIGHT 2016
'BEST DRESSED TEAM'

For more on these events, please visit our website:
bcandalbertaguidedogs/dogblog

SAVE THE DATE

9TH ANNUAL KITZ4KIDS FUNDRAISER

Friday, January 20, 2017
Riverrock Casino, Richmond, BC
Tickets on sale now: kitz4kids.com

LOVE IS BLIND

Friday, February 17, 2017
Calgary, AB

RUNGO DASH FOR DOGS

Saturday, February 18, 2017
Brockton Pavillion, Vancouver, BC

BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS CALGARY TRIVIA NIGHT

Saturday, April 29, 2017
Calgary, AB

BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS 'TIES & TAILS' GALA/AUCTION

Saturday, June 24, 2017
Fairmont Hotel Vancouver
Vancouver, BC



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

ALLIES FOR AUTISM FOUNDATION

Allies for Autism Foundation is a Canadian charitable granting foundation located in Calgary. They support individuals on the spectrum of autism and their families indirectly by funding autism treatment organizations for "opportunities" that have the ability to enhance the experience of individuals in their care. The Foundation has been in operation for 18 years and has granted close to one million dollars to local Calgary autism endeavours comprising of more than 110 grants and numerous agencies. Earlier in 2016 they gave us \$5,000 to support our Autism Support Dog program and we thank them for their generosity!



ALLIES FOR AUTISM FOUNDATION
17TH ANNUAL FAMILY FUN RUN



MAINLAND SAND & GRAVEL
VISIT FROM 'PEBBLES'

MAINLAND SAND & GRAVEL

Our local community partners, Mainland Sand & Gravel ULC, have been great supporters of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs for the past couple of years. They have sponsored our golf tournament, auction and most recently, our 20th anniversary celebration.

Mainland Sand and Gravel ULC has been a proud supplier to many of the major construction projects throughout Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley of BC for over 40 years. Their attention to excellence in caring for their staff and community is like none other. Their generosity will help us breed, raise and train both Guide Dogs and Autism Support Dogs for clients in need of our services.

We are honoured to have them as part of the BC & Alberta Guide Dogs family and are doubly pleased that they have named one of our Guide Dogs or Autism Support Dogs in training, "Pebbles". Thank you for all that you do.



TRIBUTE

Tribute to Ana-Maria Davies 1965 - 2016



In the summer edition of Paw Prints, we shared a success story from Ana-Maria Davies and her Guide Dog, Lois, who graduated in 2015. We are saddened to share with you that on July 26, 2016, Ana-Maria passed away at the age of 50. She was a proud Canadian who was born in Peru. She was a teacher in the community and was beloved by her students and admired by her friends and colleagues. Ana-Maria was known for her positive spirit and amazing sense of humour. Her courage in the face of adversity carried her forward with grace and inspired those around her. She was a tireless advocate for animals and created a rescue organization dedicated to Boston Terriers.



In 2011, Ana-Maria started to lose her sight and received Guide Dog, Lois, from BC & Alberta Guide Dogs last year. Lois, who was named by the Delta Firefighters in honour of Delta Mayor, Lois Jackson, was in Ana-Maria's own words, her best friend, lifeline, independence and her eyes. Since coming into contact with our organization, Ana-Maria attended events and wanted to help out wherever she could. She was a very bright light for our organization and she will continue to shine light on us. We are grateful that that we knew her. She will be deeply missed by not only us, but also her many friends, family and husband, Geoff.



SPECIAL THANKS & PATRONS

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Leah & Howie Meeker, CM

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BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

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