

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



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

PAW PRINTS

Spring 2018 – Issue No. 37



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



At our most recent Annual General Meeting, two long serving and very committed volunteer Board Members retired. Chair Rupert Bullock retired having served eight years on the Board, and Verne Blyth, our immediate Past Chair having served fourteen years on the Board. Both remain as very active volunteers. Verne and his wife Linda, having puppy raised eighteen puppies, are continuing to puppy raise today. Rupert and his wife Bev have puppy raised seven puppies and boarded countless dogs. They are still involved providing a home for stud dog Max, who has fathered over ninety puppies.

I am delighted to have Tammy Winters, Kevin Redmond and Wayne Reeves continue on the Board. Tammy continues to serve as Vice-Chair and represents our interests in Alberta. At our AGM, the Members elected three new board members and I am pleased to welcome them to the Organization. Linda Reid, MLA Richmond South Centre, immediate past Speaker of the BC Legislature, has joined the Board and is serving in the capacity of Chair. Linda has been a long-time supporter and mentor of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs. Kerry-Lynne Findlay, PC, QC was also elected to the Board and is serving as Treasurer. Kerry-Lynne is a certified civil and family law mediator and collaborative lawyer, and has served as Federal Minister of National Revenue and on other cabinet committees. Kelly Guichon was elected to the Board and serves as our Community Liaison Board Member. Kelly has a long history of community involvement in Delta, serving as a Director or President on a number of local organizations.

Our Board changes are part of the strategy developed by the previous Board to help us expand our community reach. Verne and Rupert are more than just past Board Members, they are friends, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them one last time for their support and stewardship over the many years they served on the Board.



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair: Linda Reid, MLA

Vice-Chair and Secretary:

Tammy Winters (Alberta)

Treasurer: Hon. Kerry-Lynne D.

Findlay, PC, QC

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Director: Kevin Redmond

Director: Kelly Guichon

CEO: William S. Thornton, GDMI

Success stories have been edited for space.

Please visit our website for full stories.

ADVISORY BOARD

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Rupert Bullock

Charlotte Lycett Davis

Charlotte Keller, DVM, DACVO, DECVO

Victor Kern

Graham T. Lewis, DVM, DIP, ACVO

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Daniel Schwartz, DVM

Joanne Sutton



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Lee Ann & Guide Dog Cuba

Team Sponsor: British Columbia Provincial Employees Community Service Fund

My name is Lee Ann and my Guide Dog's name is Cuba. She joined our family on her second birthday in November 2017. Although we were on the waiting list for 7 years, she was well worth the wait. It took just a few days for Cuba to feel like another member of our family. Her boundless energy and enthusiasm quickly won over the hearts of my four teenagers, my husband and me.

She has become very devoted to me. Cuba tends to follow me every time I stand up, even if she is already cuddling with one of my kids. She loves greeting people every time they come in and bringing them her toys, so she can play.

Cuba likes going to the dog park, playing catch, fetch and, even though she's not a fan of the rain, she loves to swim. But at the end of the day, she knows when she's had enough and will take herself to bed.

Now that I have her in my life, I can venture out in to the world unassisted by my family. I can now go to the doctor's office, grocery store and pharmacy all on my own. I have noticed since getting her that people are more open to talking to me, whether it is at church, the store or on the streets.

Every day Cuba is happy for me to put on her harness and head out. Quite often we will spend more than an hour walking the streets of our neighbourhood. She loves walking down streets that she has never ventured down before and exploring new environments.

I can't imagine life without Cuba, even after such a short period of time. The feeling of confidence and freedom she has given me has opened my whole world. Thanks to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, her puppy raiser and Nick, her instructor, for giving me such a valuable gift.



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Robert & Autism Support Dog Danny

Team Sponsor: Mackenzie Financial Charitable Foundation

We will start by saying that getting a service dog for our son Robert was one of the best decisions we ever made.

His name is Danny and he's a two-year-old beautiful black Labrador, who came into our home in November 2017 – bringing happiness and unconditional love. With his beautiful brown eyes, shiny coat and big wet cold nose, he melts our hearts by just looking at us.

He is a true friend, companion and support for our five-year-old son Robert, who was diagnosed with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) when he was four.

Robert is very smart, very friendly and verbal, but he uses script language most of the time and is less functional talking. He likes to be around people and kids, but does not interact with them too much.

We saw changes in our son the first day Danny set foot in our home. Robert's face lit up when he woke up the first morning and saw Danny in his bedroom. Right away he started calling Danny's name and wanted him to join in his play in the basement. It was music to our ears to hear Robert say, "Come Danny! Let's go downstairs!" and "Come Mommy! Come Daddy!"

A few days ago, Robert invited Danny on to the trampoline and in the ball pit and they had so much fun together playing. Shopping and going for a walk is easier and safer for us now, with Robert tethered to Danny. Also, Robert says, "my dog" and we see on his face how proud he is to hold on to the handle and walk along with Danny.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to the staff, volunteers and supporters of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs. God bless you all for your hard work, dedication and support.



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Riley & Guide Dog Eileen

Team Sponsor: Estate of Doreen Marjorie Powles

A Guide Dog is a life changing experience for many blind individuals. A companion that literally guides the blind person around the world he/she walks in. It gives a blind individual the confidence to be independent. It is especially life changing for someone like myself who is deaf/blind.

My name is Riley. I was born with Goldenhar syndrome, along with some other challenges. For me it means I am profoundly deaf and legally blind and I communicate with sign language and technology.

I would like to thank everyone with BC & Alberta Guide Dogs and the donors from the bottom of my heart. You made this possible for Eileen and me to be a Guide Dog team. As I write this testimony, Eileen sleeps with her head on my feet. It comforts me and keeps me warm, for sure.

I love to go out for a walk in the evening and Eileen is amazing. During winter, I often find myself lost and confused – Eileen guides me and lets me know if there are elevation drops (like curbs) or obstacles in our path. Before Eileen, I would ask someone to drive me to certain locations when it was dark and in the winter. No longer. She has allowed me to be more independent in my everyday life.

There are always unexpected situations, Eileen is great with that. She gives me confidence to navigate crowded malls, transit stations, college/university halls, grocery stores, downtown, etc. She picks up things very fast – I'm talking about teaching her new commands that she learned within a day. Believe it or not, Eileen understands sign language commands.

We have a great bond, I look forward to our journey together.



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Holden & Autism Support Dog Jewel

Team Sponsor: Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island

What a blessing! Jewel came to us at the end of January and so many things have changed for us because of this beautiful dog!

Before Jewel, as life before she arrived is now called, when we went out, it was an ordeal. I had to be sure someone had Holden, our 12-year-old son, in their grasp at all times. This meant avoiding going to any stores with him because I had to let go of his hand to pay. We arranged all our walks for areas in which he couldn't bolt. We arranged everything around where we could safely go with Holden. No more! Thanks to Jewel, we can go anywhere, tether her to Holden, and trust that he can't run. That's better for me and that's better for Holden. He's Like any 12 year old, he has no desire to hold hands with Mom or Dad. Jewel gives him freedom too.

Having Jewel with him gives Holden the confidence he didn't have before. He walks with his head high now. He practically struts through the mall, showing her off. And best of all, he's not afraid of random dogs when Jewel is with him. She gives him a sense of security. She's clearly not a guard dog by anyone else's standards, but to Holden, she's protection and security. We can walk trails without worry that he might get very scared. It's incredible! The first time we were out walking and some dogs ran for us, I braced myself for the screaming, but it never came. The first time!

We can do anything and go anywhere now. It's truly a blessing and I cannot thank the people of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs/Autism Support Dogs enough. Their hard work and dedication to our communities is truly a blessing in our lives.



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Josette & Guide Dog Lois

Team Sponsor: The Rix Family Foundation

Lois became a beautiful addition to our family on her very first visit. With her easy going manner, she made quick friends with my retiring Guide Dog Leila. Leila took on the task of introducing Lois to all the fun toys and is delighted to have a new playmate.

I tuck them in at bedtime and awake to find them snuggled in each others' beds with their favorite toy.

Lois and I work together daily and she is amazing at keeping me from walking into sandwich boards, bicycles and other obstacles. We walk in quiet neighborhoods and busy streets and intersections in downtown Duncan, Sidney and Victoria – where she negotiates through large crowds and locates crosswalk buttons. Lois finds the Bay Center for shopping, guides me to the escalators and guides me up four levels, ending up at a welcome bench for a rest in the food court.

We live in a rural environment and have favorite nature walks that Lois expertly guides me around by navigating around parked cars and finding benches. She loves free play at the end of the walk.

I am forever grateful to Bill and Linda Thornton for their commitment to raising and training awesome Guide Dogs. A special thank you to Nick Toni for his numerous hours training dogs and helping Lois and me become the amazing working team we are today.

I greatly appreciate the special efforts made by the puppy raisers, boarders and all the BC & Alberta Guide Dog support staff.



VERY SPECIAL PLACEMENT



Ellie & VSP Millie

Millie came to live with us in December 2017 and it has been life-changing for our family. Our family consists of Dad, Mom and two wonderful kids – Ellie and Will.

Our daughter Ellie is on the Autism Spectrum and is considered high-functioning so she often doesn't qualify for the supports she needs. We knew our daughter wouldn't qualify for a Certified Service Dog, even though it would help her with self-regulation and calming. So we never pursued one, but when the VSP opportunity came up, we knew it would be perfect.

Ellie is nervous around dogs and when we were preparing for our home visit with Millie, I asked her if she would be afraid of Millie. She said "No, of course not" and that was the end of that discussion.

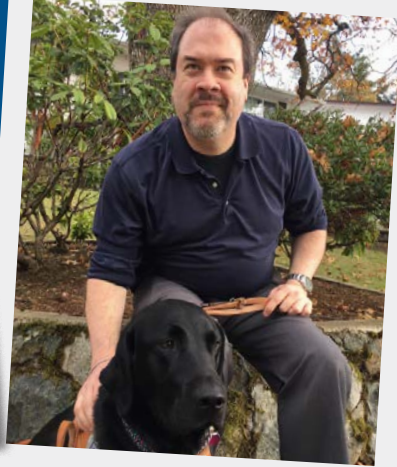
Millie came bounding into the house and into our hearts and our kids looked at us and said, "I think she's a perfect fit". She came to live with us three days later and it has been remarkable.

How has she impacted our family? For our neurotypical son, he now has a friend he can love unconditionally. Being the brother of a special needs sibling can be challenging and there are things he has to sacrifice because Ellie can't handle it. Now he has a dog and there's something "normal" in that.

For our daughter, the change has been nothing short of amazing. Ellie often introduces Millie by saying "this is my dog who helps me because I'm autistic." While we know Millie is a VSP Dog and our family pet, she lives up to her training and provides an incredible service to our family. She is a gift and we are so thankful for her in our lives.



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Darryl & Guide Dog Drake

Team Sponsor: The Victor & Anna Kern Foundation

I wanted to take some time and thank the amazing people at BC & Alberta Guide Dogs for the incredible gift of my Guide Dog Drake.

He has opened up new opportunities and experiences for me.

As someone with extremely low vision, I am now aware there were a number of social interactions I was simply missing because I couldn't read non-verbal social cues, and people were often unaware of how limited my vision was. Drake makes social encounters when I'm out far more frequent and remarkably positive.

I travel to Europe fairly often and Drake has made this a wonderful experience. His assistance in new environments is incredible and people seem to love interacting with us and helping when we need it. Drake loves Westjet and Lufthansa.

The work that Drake does is remarkable and he's served as a remarkable addition to our home as well. My sons and I feel incredibly lucky to have Drake in our lives.

The folks at BC & Alberta Guide Dogs have been fantastic every time I've interacted with them. In particular, I want to thank the trainer Nick Toni, who was remarkable in helping me get used to working with Drake. He clearly did an amazing job training him.

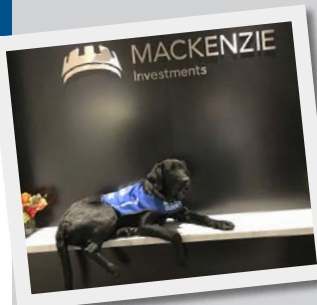
Drake and I also want to thank the boarders and puppy raisers who helped Drake become the fantastic companion and guide that he is today.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Mackenzie Investments

Earlier this year, we received \$20,000 from the Mackenzie Financial Charitable Foundation as their 2017 donation for Autism Support Dogs.



This is the fourth year in a row they've donated this amount. In 2013 they donated \$15K and in 2012 \$10K. They also named Mac, a puppy in Calgary. We recently visited the Mackenzie Investments office in Calgary to receive the donation and show them how much Mac has grown since they first met him as a young little puppy.

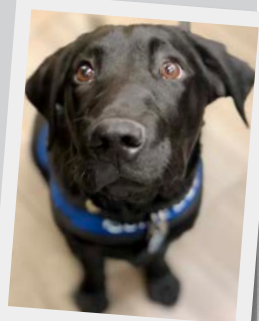


Pure Multi-Family REIT LP

When Pure Multi-Family REIT wanted to launch an initiative to get involved with a local charity, they chose to support BC & Alberta Guide Dogs.

As part of their commitment, Pure Multi-Family from Vancouver was given the opportunity to name a puppy. After an exciting employee contest, Rufus was chosen as the winning name (their trading symbol is RUF.U). Rufus was born in October 2017, and recently got to meet his puppy namers.

He certainly enjoyed the attention, and hopes he will grow up to make them proud of him!



COMMUNITY SUPPORT



This year's RunGo Dash for Dogs surpassed the previous year's fun run with more than \$21,000 raised for BC & Alberta Guide Dogs.



The 10th annual Kitz4Kids fundraiser, held at the River Rock Casino on Jan 19th, raised more than \$25,000.



Grade 6 students at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Delta collected \$1,710 for BC & Alberta Guide Dogs by selling unique products they produced.



The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, Boundary Bay Chapter with a \$500 donation.



Kaye Liao-Banez raised \$1,185 through the sale of her children's book *See Yah in the Morning!*



DOGS ABOUT TOWN



Penny and other BC & Alberta Guide Dogs in training wore their Easter best for the annual Ladner Easter Parade, held in March.



Apprentice Instructor Danielle Hyson leads a participant through a blindfold walk course at the RunGo Dash For Dogs fun run in February at Stanley Park.



BC & Alberta Guide Dogs was the charity of choice for West Coast Seeds' annual Tomato Seedling Sale. Partial proceeds from the sale went to BC&AGD.



Theoren, Harlo and Violet Dolejsi at the Kitz4Kids gala fundraiser at the River Rock Casino. The children raised \$4,267 for the Autism Support Dog Program.



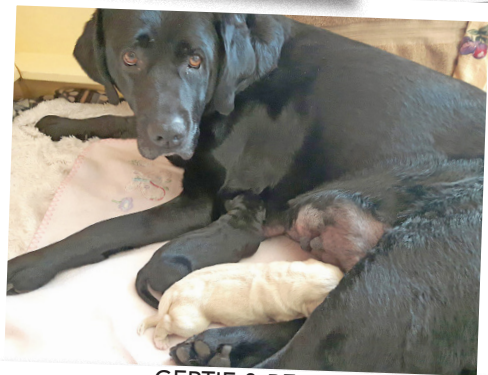
IN THE LITTERBOX



DEWLING & GERRY
APRIL 22nd, 2018



DORA & HAKA
APRIL 30th, 2018



GERTIE & BERT
APRIL 24th, 2018



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Merger on with VI Compassion Dogs

Continued from Page 2

Since their incorporation in 2014, Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs (VICD), located in Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island, has been closely aligned with BC & Alberta Guide Dogs. We have provided administrative, practical and technical assistance to what we consider our sister charity. In the fall of 2017 both boards agreed to bring the two organizations closer together for the mutual benefit of both organizations.

As such, I am excited and proud to announce to you that BC & Alberta Guide Dogs and Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs are in the process of a legal amalgamation (merger). At the same time, we have started a joint venture of expanding the Veterans Training Programs from Vancouver Island to the Vancouver area, starting in July this year. This means we will be able to graduate 24 veterans per year once the program is in full swing, 12 on Vancouver Island and 12 in the

Vancouver area.

With the completed amalgamation, we are joined by a dedicated team of professional PTSD Canine Instructors. VICD will become a division of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs. As such, the amalgamation will have no impact on the Guide Dog and Autism Support Dog programs but does require us to build up our breeding and puppy-raising program, a process that has already begun.

The entire staff of both organizations are very excited about our amalgamation. We will tell you more about this new chapter in your organization in our next issue of Paw Prints.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone one of you for your support over the years. Without you all, we would not be as far down the road as we are. I trust that you remain proud of the achievements of your organization.



21st Annual
GOLF FOR GUIDE DOGS
Hosted by Leah & Howie Meeker, C.M.



Save the Date

AUGUST 24, 2018

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VANCOUVER OFFICE:

7061 Ladner Trunk Road

Delta, BC V4K 3N3

Tel: 604.940.4504

Toll-free (Canada):

1.877.940.4504

Fax: 604.940.4506

CALGARY OFFICE

#11 – 6115 4th Street SE

Calgary, AB T2H 2H9

Tel: 403.258.0819

Toll-free (Alberta):

1.877.258.0819

VICTORIA OFFICE:

1027 Pandora Avenue

Victoria, BC V8V 3P6

Tel: 250.413.3095

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