

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



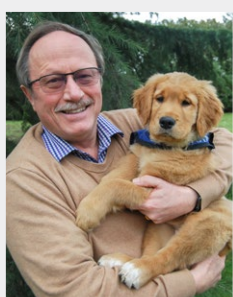
BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

PAW PRINTS

Spring 2019 – Issue No. 39



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Greetings to all. I hope each and every one of you is having a great start to the year. We are happy to announce the arrival of five puppies early this spring season. These new additions came to us from Guide Dogs for the Blind in California (more on page 13). I am always grateful for the relationships that we have with our fellow Guide Dog providers world-wide.

Our amalgamation with Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs (VICD) has gone marvelously, and we are on track to graduate 18 PTSD Service Dog teams by the end of

the year. I am very proud of the seamless way staff from BC & Alberta Guide Dogs and VICD have connected; we definitely share the same mission and heart-felt desire to make a difference in the lives of those in need. Our Paw Prints newsletter will be redesigned to better reflect this partnership and the important work being done for our military and RCMP Veterans living with PTSD. Please expect some changes for our fall issue.



Shannon and Kevin Redmond, with Danny and Guide Dog Maddy, and Kevin's father Harold. Maddy was puppy raised by the Redmonds from our very first litter.

It is with a heavy heart that I share that two long-time supporters of the organization have passed; Mrs. 'Billie' Hardie Mitchell, matriarch of the John Hardie Mitchell family foundation (founding donor of BC Guide Dogs) and Kevin Redmond, Board Member. Thank you both for your wonderful support, friendship, and dedication. Our thoughts are with both families at this time.



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ON THE COVER: Puppy Spirit from Billie and Gerry's litter, born Sept 25, 2018. The litter included eight yellow pups.



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Ed & Guide Dog Annie

Team Sponsor: Neal and Tania Cockshutt

I have been blind since birth. I was born 6 weeks prematurely and put into an incubator with oxygen-rich air which impacted my optic nerves. My mother never accepted my blindness as an excuse, and I learned to survive in a sighted world. I only received long cane training in 2015, and it took another 2 years before I put my name on the wait list for a Guide Dog.

I arrived from Prince Rupert and met Annie. The first week-and-a-half of training took place in the Lower Mainland and it was hard. I wondered what I had gotten myself into. But, Nick Toni was an extremely knowledgeable instructor and was very thorough. After Annie and I flew back to Prince Rupert, Nick flew up and finished our training.

Annie has given me more freedom than I have ever experienced. I have explored more of my hometown in the past 2 months than in the previous two years! I used to walk around using my long cane and felt that people didn't want to talk to me. Now that Annie is taking me places, people are coming up to talk to me and to meet Annie. She is a great conversation starter.

Annie is an amazing dog. She has learned my routes extremely well and her memory is incredible. When we travel, she remembers which hotel room is ours, and takes me directly to my room after only going there once or twice. This wonderful dog has gotten me from my house to the local hospital in icy conditions!

I can't believe the difference that Annie has made in my life – I wish I had applied for a Guide Dog years ago. I can't thank BC & Alberta Guide Dogs enough for this opportunity and the training Annie went through before me, and the training we had together. Annie has given me a new 'leash' on life.



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Kye & Autism Support Dog Corky

Team Sponsor: Loyal Protestant Association

We knew from an early age that our son Kye was going to give us a run; little did we know that the running would be literal. He was diagnosed at 16 months with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and today at almost 11 years old, he is still very limited verbally. He is unaware of dangerous situations and is considered a 'bolter'. If he sees something that interests him, he runs towards it - leaving our family in a state of high alert at all times. We avoided many events, time together with friends, and community outings because of this.

We registered Kye with BC & Alberta Guide Dogs and waited an agonizing 5+ years to be placed with a beautiful *BIG* Lab named Corky. If we had a million dollars, we would give it to this amazing organization so they could hire as many trainers as they needed to shorten wait times!

The bond between Kye and Corky has been gradual and slow, but profound to watch. Each day the two demonstrate a little more non-verbal connection and build a foundation more solid than any we could have hoped for. We are able to go out without fear of Kye running into traffic or running ahead so far we can't catch up. This is a pleasure not many people will understand.

Michelle, Corky's trainer (and the hero that trained us), saw the potential match between Kye and Corky from the start. She helped us see that they would be able to take on the world together. She will always be forever in our hearts.

We would like to express our sincerest thanks to Corky's puppy raisers and to his boarder family. Their love helped shape Corky into the loving, humble, pushy pink-nosed boy he is today. Also, to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs - we applaud the time, energy and love you provide to the families, the clients and the gorgeous intelligent dogs you put out to make the lives of others more complete.



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Mike & Guide Dog Laika

Team Sponsor: Joyce Stratychuk

Laika is my third Guide Dog from BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, and like the other two, she is a superstar! With my first dog Luke, I had no concept of what a Guide Dog could do for me, so I was very apprehensive at first; it was hard to let a dog lead me. The transition with my second dog Cody was so much smoother. I was able to trust him completely right from the beginning. When Laika and I were paired, we had an immediate connection, there was no second guessing.

As Laika is my first female dog, it took a bit of getting used to saying, 'Good girl' rather than good boy. She is quite petite, so when I want to pet her when she stops at a curb, I have to reach much lower down! As with my other two, Laika is a real head-turner, so I will have to continue to live vicariously through my dog!

Having been without a dog for over 10 months, it is a real blessing to have Laika by my side guiding me everywhere I need to go. I almost forgot what it was like to just go out whenever I want to, and not need to worry about finding a sighted guide to accompany me. I'm hopeless when it comes to using a cane, so having my independence back is so amazing.

When my neighbours first saw me out with Laika, many of them came up to us in tears as they were SO thrilled to see me with a dog again – they knew how hard it was when Cody passed. It is very tough and very lonely without a canine buddy as a constant companion.

My thanks to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, the puppy sponsors, and Laika's trainers for giving me my new guide and best friend. I literally could not imagine getting around without a dog, so this is such an incredible gift.



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Jeremy & Autism Support Dog Ginger

Team Sponsor: Grand Chapter of Alberta, Order of the Eastern Star

We've definitely noticed a lot of changes in Jeremy since getting Ginger, but the biggest change is his sleeping. Falling and staying asleep have always been very hard for Jeremy – not being able to turn his brain off, having anxiety about the weather outside, different noises, being alone, etc.

Before Ginger, many times it would take hours before he would finally fall asleep. But since getting Ginger, just having her in the room beside him has resulted in Jeremy not only falling asleep quickly, but staying asleep all night. Her presence is calming for him and that's made such a difference for the entire family. We are all sleeping better.

The two have bonded like glue. Jeremy loves to play rope with her, he feeds her every day and really enjoys the responsibility of having a job to do.

In the past, it was rare for us to take Jeremy to places like the grocery store. Not only was the store a sensory overload, causing him to have anxiety, but it was stressful for us trying to keep an eye on him to make sure he didn't wander off when we were trying to finish our errands. The difference is like night and day now that he has Ginger to hold on to. His anxiety is so much better, as is ours.

We look forward to Ginger accompanying Jeremy to school. We hope she will be a calming presence for him. We've already taken her for a visit to the school and all of Jeremy's classmates love her.

Ginger has been an absolute blessing to our entire family and we are so thankful to have her in our lives.



PTSD SERVICE DOG TEAM



Greg & PTSD Service Dog Charley

Team Sponsor: BC/Yukon Command of the Royal Canadian Legion Foundation

The incredible bond formed during the VICD training program means that the dog has insight into the Veteran's condition and knows his/her handler inside and out. The only hiccup is that the dog ages 7 times faster than a human.

Such was the case with my good boy, Ace. He proved that a rescue dog could make a great Service Dog. After discussion with staff about his health, it was decided that Ace would retire. I began the process of selecting a new dog.

I met with several dogs, but Charley made the biggest impression. When we went for a walk, she matched my pace exactly. I looked down at her in surprise and she lifted her eyes to meet mine. I felt she was the best match for me.

The challenge was to get Ace to feel that way, too. Charley was dropped off and old dog Ace was not at all welcoming. I felt that it was important to keep an open mind and allow them to figure each other out. As the days became weeks, it became apparent that there was unspoken communication between Charley and Ace, and that he was teaching her much more than I ever could.

Eventually Charley and I progressed to the Public Access portion of our training. Unlike Ace, who was stubborn and feared everything new, Charley loved to try out new things - she passed the assessment with no problems!

During this 're-dogging', I realized a sense of family and belonging I had not known before as I was divorced from my family early on in my PTSD. Somewhere in it all, we became a tight supportive group at VICD. It has been my experience that if you stick with the program long enough, you get the dog you need, but you also get the family you need.



VERY SPECIAL PLACEMENT



Connor & VSP Rasteau (Rasto)

Rasto is an amazing dog. Since he joined our family, I have felt a strong sense of confidence in myself. He helps to take away my worries and fears with his sweetness, especially when he licks my hand.

Rasto's courage fills me with courage, and now I feel I can talk to, and build relationships with other kids. I help Rasto with his anxiety and he is doing so good at overcoming his fears. He is so tolerant of our puppy Cali and he shows me how to ignore someone bugging me and stick up for myself.

Sometimes Rasto can be a bed hog, but that is ok with me. He helps me feel calm when I stroke his fur and feel his paws, nose and mouth. He is so loving and tolerant when I snuggle up tight with him. I used to wake in the night with terrible dreams, but now I just have dreams of playing with Rasto.

My bond with him has been super strong from the first day I met him. He is so patient and gentle and he knows that I am his '*purpose*', which I think is just amazing. When I walk him he barely tugs, the leash just dangles between us like it should. When other people walk him, he tugs a lot more and the leash doesn't dangle as much. If I stop to tie my shoe, he just stops and waits patiently for me. If he sees me, he wants to be with me.

I have taught him to jump over obstacles, give me high-fives and play hide-and-go-seek, which is lots of fun. He is my best friend forever. He will always be my greatest treasure in life.

Thank you so much to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, and especially Sandra and Norma for making my dreams come true. I love my beloved Rasto.



GUIDE DOG TEAM



Angell & Guide Dog Tipper

Team Sponsor: Nemetz Foundation

My name is Angell and I recently just qualified with my third Guide Dog, Tipper. I received my first dog Kobe, when I was 16 years old, and we had a long and happy partnership. He accompanied me through my high school and university graduations and travelled with me all over the world! In February of 2017, he retired and I received my second guide, Macy, which you may remember me writing about not so long ago.

Unfortunately, earlier this year, she developed bone cancer and I sadly had to let her go this past July. This unexpected loss took a big toll on myself as well as my family. We still miss Macy terribly, but when I got the call about a new guide, I knew I was ready to get back into a canine partnership once more.

Tipper has been a wonderful companion since the first day. He is always ready to work, eager to learn a new route or to locate anything when he is asked to do so. He likes to play with all his toys and fetch balls, and especially loves his stuffed tiger that he sleeps with!

We've been for some nice walks together, but I am definitely a *LOT* faster at getting around with Tipper, as he is quite the speedy dog. I was certainly a lot slower when I had to use my cane for the months without a guide.

I would like to thank Bill and Linda Thornton for running this amazing organization, Nick and Erika for all of their training expertise and countless hours of hard work, as well as the puppy raisers, boarders and any other people involved in Tipper's upbringing.



AUTISM SUPPORT DOG TEAM



Darcy & Autism Support Dog Bailey

Team Sponsor: Hunter Family Foundation

My son Darcy was diagnosed with autism when he was 2 and a half. He is now 8 and a very happy, energetic boy. He is non-verbal and has been recently diagnosed with ADHD as well.

Bailey joined our family about 5 months ago and she has changed our lives for the better. Darcy had to be held on to at all times before. If you let go, even for a moment, he would bolt. This was a major stress for us as he would run onto streets or disappear into crowds. Now when we go on outings, Darcy has more independence and freedom tethered to Bailey and no longer tries to run away.

In and around home, Darcy and Bailey have become very close. They enjoy chasing each other up and down the halls and playing in the backyard or at dog parks. When Darcy uses his swing, Bailey will climb in to swing with him. She puts him to bed at night and wakes him with kisses each morning!

Bailey is a great distraction for him in most, if not all, overwhelming situations. We have noticed a huge difference when cutting Darcy's nails and hair. Bailey will sit next to Darcy and sometimes on his legs giving him licks and deep pressure helping him through these tasks. Darcy cries less and is better able to sit still.

Bailey is incredibly well behaved and trained. She transitioned into our family seamlessly and it's like she has been with us for much longer. I can't begin to express our gratitude to the breeders, boarders, trainers and everyone who is a part of the team at BC & Alberta Guide Dogs. Thank you for making this possible for our family and other families. The work you do goes beyond what any words could ever say. Thank you.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT



This year's RunGo Dash for Dogs fun run raised more than \$18,000 for BC & Alberta Guide Dogs.



The 11th annual Kitz4Kids fundraiser, held at the River Rock Casino on Jan 19th, raised \$45,587 for our Autism Support Dog program.



Puppy in Training Porter visits his puppy namers at Porter Communities in Vancouver.



Enthusiastic attendees tested their brain cells at Trivia Night in Calgary, raising over \$9,800.



Trivia Night in Delta was a huge success. Over \$22,000 was raised and tremendous fun was had by all.



BC/Yukon Command of the Royal Canadian Legion Foundation with their \$60,000 contribution to the VICD program.



DOGS ABOUT TOWN



Can you spot Mac under the appreciative hands of the children he led through a blindfold walk at Delta Gymnastics' Spring Break Camp?



Guide Dog Mobility Instructor Nick Toni leads a participant through a blindfold walk course at the RunGo Dash for Dogs fun run in February at Stanley Park.



More than 160 people got an inside look at Alberta Guide Dogs, and showed their support at the first annual Open House in December.



Theoren, Harlo and Violet Dolejsi at the Kitz4Kids gala fundraiser at the River Rock Casino. The children raised an incredible \$9,000 for the Autism Support Dog Program.



IN THE LITTERBOX



MOLLY & GERRY
NOVEMBER 30th, 2018



Volunteer Puppy Whelpers Needed!

Are you able to provide a loving home to house and care for an expectant mom and her new puppies for up to 10 weeks? If you live in Delta, BC, and are interested in this very special volunteer opportunity, please contact us!

All food and vet costs are covered, and our volunteers receive training, supplies and support. Experience with dogs is preferable.

NEW ARRIVALS

We are grateful for the relationship we have with Guide Dogs for the Blind in California. A donation of five puppies was received in early March and they are now settled in with their BC & Alberta Guide Dogs Puppy Trainers.



Jan and Teagan are part of the Puppy Sponsorship program. Starting at just \$15/month, you can help provide these life-changing puppies with the training they need. Call our head office at 604-940-4504, toll free at 1-877-940-4504.



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BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS



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**You can make a visible difference.
Leave your legacy today.**

Your support helps breed, raise and professionally train life-changing dogs for individuals who are blind/visually-impaired, children with profound autism, and military & RCMP Veterans living with PTSD.

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