

PAW PRINTS

2023 FALL



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS
WELCOMES THE WORLD



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

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MISSION

The mission of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs is to meet the demand for professionally trained Guide Dogs, Autism Service Dogs and OSI-PTSD 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.



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

William S. Thornton, GDMI

I would like to welcome you all, to our most recent edition of Paw Prints. We have some wonderful stories to share from our exceptional graduate teams. Over the last 12 months, we have been able to gear up post-Covid, and have graduated a further 30 new Guide Dog and Service Dog Teams combined.

Since our inception, we have been active members of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) and indeed, currently, I am proud to serve as the Chair of the IGDF. BC & Alberta Guide Dogs were the very privileged and proud hosts of the IGDF 2023 Conference at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver. We were joined by 282 delegates from 30 different countries representing 76 guide dog organizations. It was a wonderful gathering and reunion of like-minded professionals who had not attended a conference since 2018 in Sidney, Australia, due to Covid. www.igdf.org.uk/

Our Autism Service Dog Program continues to be overwhelmed with requests for service. To better respond to this demand, we have moved the Autism Service Dog Program to fall under the Service Dog OSI-PTSD Department. The reason for this move, is that 90% of the dog's preparation for real life work, is essentially the same for both the Autism Service Dogs and PTSD Service Dogs. We have recently recruited two new Apprentice Instructors to join our Service Dog Team Program and they, with the existing Instructors, will all go through training to be dual certified as Autism Service Dog and PTSD Service Dog Instructors. With this change, we will now be training Autism Service Dogs in Edmonton – a new program for Alberta. We are presently looking for an office in Edmonton to support the instructors located there.

You will see inside this edition of Paw Prints, that we have made a special effort to support the community of Vernon through the provision of three Autism Service Dog Teams. Many of our smaller communities in BC and Alberta, are underserved and we are trying to make a difference to these communities in partnership with local organizations, and in this case, with the Vernon Lions Club.

I hope that you thoroughly enjoy this copy of Paw Prints, and remember that whilst you read your copy, through your support, you have enabled us to support all of these wonderful people and their families.

Wishing you all the very best for the holiday season and Happy New Year to you all!

William S. Thornton,
CEO

VANCOUVER 2023 INTERNATIONAL GUIDE DOG FEDERATION CONFERENCE



BC & Alberta Guide Dogs puppy raisers support the IGDF Conference and meet the press

THE GLOBAL GUIDE DOG COMMUNITY GATHERS IN VANCOUVER

BC & Alberta Guide Dogs welcomed the global Guide Dog family to Vancouver in late April as hosts of the International Guide Dog Federation's (IGDF) 2023 Conference.

William Thornton, CEO BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, and the Chair of the IGDF says it was a great privilege and honor for our organization to host the IGDF Conference. There were 282 delegates from 30 countries. Plenary sessions and workshops were held discussing topics such as Breeding, Puppy Raising, IGDF Accreditation, Positive Reinforcement Training, Guide Dog Traffic Training, Care and Maintenance of Breeding Stock, Communications and Fund Raising, Social Barriers Facing Guide Dog Users and a great many other topics.

Congratulations, and thanks to our BC & Alberta Guide Dog staff and volunteers for making the Vancouver Conference an outstanding success.



The Honourable Minister Carla Qualtrough meeting the IGDF Board Members prior to opening the Conference



BC & Alberta Guide Dogs Staff hosting the IGDF Conference

This edition of Paw Prints Cover Photo features;
The International Guide Dog Federation's prestigious
2023 Ken Lord Award (KL) presentation.

The Ken Lord Award is presented in recognition of
"Exceptional Services to the Guide Dog Movement".

Left to Right:

Lukas Franck USA, 2023 Ken Lord Award,
John Gosling Australia, 2018 KL,
IGDF Vice Chair Christine Baroni-Pretsch Switzerland,
IGDF Chair William Thornton Canada, 2006 KL,
Jane Russenberger USA, 2014 KL and
Satoru Tawada Japan, 2023 Ken Lord Award.

Escorted by members of the Royal
Canadian Mounted Police Ceremonial Troop.

ROARING SUCCESS THANKS TO VERNON LIONS CLUB

AUTISM SERVICE DOG TEAM

Team Sponsor: Vernon Lions Club

RECENT
GRADUATE
2023

Shay is not just a dog; he's a lifeline, a companion, and a source of hope for Reece and our family.

The addition of Shay, with his four furry paws, has truly been a transformative blessing for my family. When we were all feeling burnt out and in desperate need of help, we could never have imagined that this help would arrive in the form of such a beautiful dog.

Reece's journey and challenges are not just his alone but also our family's. Every night, the simple act of teeth brushing became a battleground, and bedtime required my presence for Reece to settle down.

Despite the numerous therapies I've pursued for Reece, there are moments of exhaustion and frustration that seem insurmountable.

The toll on my family was palpable. While loving their brother deeply, my daughters couldn't help but feel frustrated at times. They saw him as the reason for missed family activities and disrupted meals, but deep down, they knew it was the weight of autism that bore down on us all.

Shay became a part of the family in May. From day one, he and Reece have formed an incredible team. The changes in our daily life are nothing short of miraculous. I no longer spend my nights lying beside Reece to help him fall asleep. Instead, like clockwork, Shay and Reece will sit side by side to brush their teeth and prepare for bedtime, with Shay tucking himself in next to Reece.

Dinnertime, once a source of dread, has become a pleasant part of everyone's day. Reece no longer hides under the table; he sits confidently on a chair with Shay by his side. I can even be in another room away from Reece, knowing that Shay is there to provide support and comfort.

Shay has brought Reece a newfound sense of independence, allowing him to practice important life skills like buttoning up a shirt, holding eye contact, and following two-step directions while caring for Shay. Reece's confidence has grown, and my family has gained the security to take him out to try new experiences. Thanks to Shay's calming presence, Reece could sit through his brother's graduation in June, marking a significant achievement.

As a family, we've ventured out to places like the fair, camping



Reece

Shay

COMMUNITY OF CARE

Whelp: Mark Bunsko
Brood Bitch Caregiver: Mark Bunsko
Stud Dog Caregiver: Guide Dogs UK
Puppy Raiser: Amélie Schumacher
Boarder: Kim Yee & Jordan Hauschildt

trips, and the zoo, all made possible by Shay's invaluable assistance.

My daughters have also noticed the positive changes in our family dynamic since Shay's arrival. His presence has brought peace into our lives, and now that Shay helps put Reece to bed, I have more time to help my daughters with their school assignments and enjoy one-on-one moments with them.

One of the most remarkable developments Shay has facilitated is Reece's ability to voice his needs. Reece can now express himself, preventing potential tantrums and improving his interactions with others. For example, during a recent BBQ, Reece tugged on my arm and said, "Shay is feeling done and would like to go home."

I am eagerly looking forward to witnessing the new opportunities and doors that will open for Reece with Shay by his side. I never imagined an extra set of hands or paws would make such a difference.

Reece and Shay form a "Team Terrific," and Shay's impact on our lives is immeasurable.

AUTISM SERVICE DOG TEAM

Team Sponsor: Vernon Lions Club

RECENT
GRADUATE
2023

The unconditional love and companionship that Jovie provides has made an immeasurable difference in our lives.

We are incredibly grateful to BC and Alberta Guide Dogs and all the individuals involved in bringing Jovie into our family.

From an early age, Benjamin was meeting his milestones on time or even ahead of schedule. However, around 10 months of age, we noticed that his sensory seeking became more intense. Between ages two and three, he had limited awareness of his environment, struggled to follow verbal directions, and exhibited significant delays in social communication. It wasn't until his

sixth birthday that he was diagnosed.

Over the past year, Benjamin's world seemed to shrink, and we found ourselves exhausting all available support. As a family, we began isolating to meet his needs. Benjamin requires full-time one-on-one support. His bolting behaviour had escalated to the point where he would attempt to leave school property. Furthermore, his social communication delay hindered his ability to engage in meaningful conversations, often resulting in one-sided monologues.

Since Jovie joined our family in May, our lives have been positive. The changes we have witnessed in Benjamin have been nothing short of remarkable.

Often, when Benjamin becomes overstimulated, he wants to hide. This would result in running or crouching into a ball. Since having Jovie, Benjamin automatically reverts to crouching. Now he has somebody happy to be on his level and lay on the floor whenever he must take a moment.

He has a positive connection with her locked eyes, and this interaction has significantly reduced meltdowns in public.

Having to get Jovie's attention before giving a command has already started to help Benjamin develop the same connection when communicating with people, which had been an ongoing challenge with minimal progress.

The bond between Benjamin and Jovie is genuinely heartwarming. They spend much time cuddling, and Benjamin takes immense joy in learning basic commands and observing Jovie's response. Simply following through on commands has instilled a sense of thrill in Benjamin and contributed to his emotional growth.



Benjamin

Jovie

COMMUNITY OF CARE

Whelp: Mark Bunsko
Brood Bitch Caregiver: Mark Bunsko
Stud Dog Caregiver: Guide Dogs UK
Puppy Raiser: Linda Chitwood & Cyndi Park
Boarder: Kim Yee & Jordan Hauschildt

Jovie has already made a significant impact in terms of play and physical activity. Benjamin had been interested in playing soccer and joining a team for two years. However, previous attempts at engaging in such activities always resulted in frustration and overwhelm. With Jovie by his side, Benjamin is gradually developing soccer skills, learning to aim for the net, navigating around Jovie, and exploring his physical boundaries through play.

Given Benjamin's increased risk of bolting and experiencing meltdowns, having Jovie present ensures smoother transitions.

Family outings have become more enjoyable, more frequent, and stress-free since Jovie joined us. Previously, trips to the playground were complicated. We had to search for empty playgrounds to avoid triggering selective mutism and bolting. However, with Jovie's support, Benjamin requests more walks to the nearby playground.

Words cannot adequately express gratitude to everyone involved in bringing Jovie into our lives. We will forever be grateful for this remarkable gift.

DUCKS FOR DOGS DELIVERS A DELIGHTFUL DAY



Vernon Lions Club raised more than \$28,000 at the 3rd Annual Duck for Dogs Event at Polson Park.

With a three-year total of close to \$70,000 raised, the Vernon Lions Club and the citizens and business community of Vernon have rallied around the BC & Alberta Guide Dogs Autism Service Dog Program.

With the help of the Vernon Lions Club, we have now placed 3 Autism Service Dogs with families in Vernon. Many thanks to the hard-working members of the Vernon Lions Club.

GOLF FOR GUIDE DOGS "FORE!"



The 26th Annual London Drugs Golf for Guide Dogs teed off at Tsawwassen Springs Golf Course on August 11 with another successful fundraising round on the books. Our new venue was well received, and the golfers were as generous as ever.

Thanks to our title sponsor, London Drugs and more than 100 golfers who supported the event, BC & Alberta Guide Dogs raised more than \$60,000 for our Client Training Programs.

Hosting a successful tournament for 26 years, speaks volumes to the commitment of our golfers, sponsors, donors, and supporting volunteers and dogs. We are so grateful to everyone who took part and made this event a fixture in our annual calendar.

Save the Date: Friday, August 9, 2024



TIES & TAILS GALA MAKES A GRAND RETURN



The return of our Ties & Tails Charity Auction and Gala after a three-year hiatus proved our community stands behind BC & Alberta Guide Dogs. The event reconvened at its new location, Tsawwassen Springs, and raised more than \$50,000 for our Guide and Service Dog Programs.

"It was incredible to be back celebrating with our supporters, volunteers and staff," says Linda Thornton, Director of Breeding, and the lead event organizer. "We want to thank everyone who played a part in creating such a wonderful evening."

The night featured BC & Alberta Guide Dogs' Board member Steve Darling serving as MC, and highlighted speeches from Guide Dog recipient Angell Lu-Lebel with her dog Tipper at her side, along with videos featuring a pair of our recent OSI-PTSD graduates.

The successful return means supporters of the event can expect

to see Ties & Tails return in May of 2024. Plans are already underway, and details will be released in early February.

"We didn't know what to expect after being away for so long, but once again, our supporters and volunteers stepped up and delivered – thank you everyone."

DASH FOR DOGS TO CELEBRATE A DECADE OF DOGS

RunGo Dash For Dogs is just around the corner and is ready to celebrate 10 years of fundraising for BC & Alberta Guide Dogs.

The popular event is set for February 25, 2024, with its guided 10 km, 5 km or 2 km run/walk through Stanley Park in Vancouver.

Expect big smiles in the fun-filled, non-competitive race, which looks to build off last year's momentum that raised more than \$28,000.

Thanks to RunGo, almost \$160,000 has been raised in support of our programs for our clients.





GUIDE DOG TEAM

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



COMMUNITY OF CARE

Whelpers: Trish O'Meara
Brood Bitch Caregiver: Leah Rempel
Stud Dog Caregiver: Connie Caldwell
Puppy Raiser: Linda Chitwood
Boarder: Leslie & John Forbes

It's not always easy going out, but Sherlock's enthusiasm for work makes life easier.

With the help of Certified Guide Dog Mobility Instructor Landra Berwick and GDML apprentice Rachel Nelson, Sherlock and I officially qualified as a team in early August, and I couldn't be happier.

Sherlock has so many great qualities that make him a perfect fit for me and my family. He's quiet natured and a gentle, loving dog, yet once the harness is on, he is ambitious to work and willing to take on any adventure with me. I love exploring knowing Sherlock is by my side. Best of all, after a hard day of guiding me around Edmonton, Sherlock loves to cuddle.

Sherlock has also renewed my energy to go back out and explore after my second Guide

Dog retired. We have bonded so much and so quickly that we seem to be in sync with each other.

I love Sherlock's energy. Nothing slows him down because he always overcomes any challenges we find along the way when we are out. Whether it's when he finds a post, a door, or navigating around an object that could be a potential problem, Sherlock safely helps me find my way, which is a big confidence boost.

I look forward to working with Sherlock for years to come. Thank you to everyone who made this possible, from the volunteers to the donors to everyone at BC & Alberta Guide Dogs.



OSI-PSTD TEAM

Team Sponsor: Donald & Margaret Garnett
Family Foundation



COMMUNITY OF CARE

Whelpers: Zoe Stronge
Brood Bitch Caregiver: Elaine Meech
Stud Dog Caregiver: Kim Kendall
Puppy Raiser: Donna Jacobson
Boarder: Janette Sandoval-Baillie and
Chris Baillie David

Early on, they told me "trust the process". They were 100 percent right ~ The program's training process is effective!

Hope is what my service dog Teja has brought to my life. The VICD Service Dog program and training approach resounded with me. I learned more through their intake process, I started to see a sliver of light — maybe I did not have to live being afraid to go out in public and being anxious. Maybe having a four-legged companion by my side would make things better.

My trainers were incredibly supportive and showed genuine care and went above and beyond to help and guide me through the challenges Teja and I faced as a team. Early on, they told me "trust the process".

I dreaded the mornings before Teja came into my life but now, with him coming to the side of the bed and ever so gently licking my hand, and seeing his adorable face, makes a big difference

to how I start my day. Teja gives me purpose and my motivation to get out walking and exploring my neighbourhood is greatly improved too.

Not a day goes by that I don't reflect on how all of this has come about for me. There are countless individuals who got Teja ready to be my partner. There are also countless others who provided financial support. None of the generosity and kindness has been lost on me. I am immensely grateful. I hope some of them read this and know how special they are.

The name Teja means strength, courage, and brilliance. He truly embodies all these qualities. Teja is making my dark days brighter and when I feel weak, and afraid, he is there with his chin on my lap, shining his bright light on me.

EMPOWERING INDEPENDENCE

349
TOTAL
GRADS

166
ACTIVE
TEAMS

74
COMMUNITIES
SERVED

98
PUPPY
RAISERS

143
PUPPY
CLASSES

1,102
BAGS OF
DOG FOOD

Thank You to our Founding Patrons and Founding Donors:

PATRON Leah Meeker

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AUTISM SERVICE DOG FOUNDING PATRONS

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Order of the Eastern Star
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Photo by Lorna Shaw, Puppy Raiser

This Holiday Season

UNWRAP THE GIFT OF INDEPENDENCE



BC & ALBERTA GUIDE DOGS

EMBRACE THE TRUE SPIRIT OF GIVING BY SPONSORING A PUPPY ON A REMARKABLE JOURNEY!

For \$15 a month, you can join us in transforming lives and spreading warmth with the gift of supporting a future Guide Dog, Autism Service Dog, or an OSI-PTSD Service Dog.

Visit our website or call the number below to become a part of this heartwarming journey. Your generosity this Christmas will light up lives and make a lasting impact.

Legal Title: British Columbia Guide Dog Service

Registered Charity Number: 89131 1763 RR0001



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