Dual Purpose Guide Dog
Seizure Alert Dog Training in the UK

Introduction of a New Harness Handle

The R+ Project
Expanding Positive Reinforcement Training
First and foremost, membership of the IGDF enables Guide Dog Schools around the world to join a community dedicated to serving the visually impaired. That community needs and wants to share its knowledge and the IGDF facilitates that.

The map below outlines the contributing countries for this edition of Visionary.
Message from the Chair

Jane Thornton – C.O.O.
Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind

Welcome to the latest edition of The Visionary, the official publication of the International Guide Dog Federation. We thank all contributors to this edition for their submissions. We were very pleased to see so many articles submitted and are sorry that we are unable to publish all of them. Thank you to the Communications Committee for their time in putting together our newsletter.

I start with the very sad news that Ken Lord recently passed away. I am sure I speak for the guide dog community around the world when I say our thoughts, prayers and best wishes are with Arleen, Ken’s widow, and family. We aim to reflect back on Ken’s life and work in the next edition of the Visionary newsletter.

We are well underway with preparations for the next IGDF Seminar, May 10-12, 2014, in Tokyo which will be followed by a Breeders Workshop. I look forward to seeing many of you in Japan.

Planning for the 2016 Seminar has just started. If you are interested in hosting the seminar in 2016, this is the time to begin thinking about your bid.

A significant component of new and continued IGDF membership is the assessment and accreditation process. We will be seeking new assessors to effectively carry out these tasks. If interested please contact the IGDF office for more information.

On behalf of the IGDF Board, I would like to offer special recognition to The Task Force, who have been considering a number of issues and are now at the stage in which initial reports and recommendations have been received by the IGDF Board.

The IGDF Board meets monthly via teleconference, and semi-annually in person to focus, in more depth, on a number of current issues. Thank you to Guide Dogs UK for hosting the most recent IGDF Board meeting.

As always, I wish you all much success and extend my best wishes.

Jane Thornton
IGDF Chair
2nd Breeders Workshop Announced

The Asian Guide Dog Breeding Network (AGBN) warmly invites all breeding programme managers of IGDF member organisations to attend the 2nd IGDF-endorsed Breeders Workshop to be held in Japan on May 12-14, 2014. Following conclusion of the IGDF Seminar in Tokyo on Sunday, May 11, Workshop participants need to pay for an extra night in Tokyo at the hotel. Tour buses will leave Tokyo at noon on Monday to transport participants into the Mt. Fuji region. The afternoon will be devoted to relaxing and sightseeing, with stops en route at:

1. Shiraito Falls
   (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiraito_Falls)
   and
2. Kawaguchi Lake

By 6:00 p.m. Monday, May 12, Workshop participants will arrive at a hotel near to Fuji, - only a short bus ride the next day to Fuji Harness, a facility owned by the Workshop’s gracious host, the Japan Guide Dog Association where the 2nd Breeders Workshop will officially convene at 9:00 a.m.

Building upon the foundation laid in 2006, during the first Breeders Workshop, topics to be covered in the 2nd Workshop include:

- an overview of basic genetic principles;
- steps to follow to build and then manage a small breeding colony;
- an overview of estimated breeding values (EBVs);
- tips and strategies on how to use EBVs effectively;
- an introduction to the Behavior Checklist (BCL).

The BCL session will also include an opportunity for practice in using the tool to score real dogs in a test environment, followed by group discussion.

In an attempt to overcome some of the language barriers, organisers plan to display all slides used in each presentation to be shown on three separate screens, one each in Japanese, French, and English. There will also be simultaneous translation from the speaker’s language into the other two Workshop languages. Following each presentation, three smaller discussion groups will provide participants an opportunity to ask questions in their language of choice, among Japanese, French, or English.

Registration fees for the Breeders Workshop are anticipated to be about 30,000 yen (approx. $300 USD). This cost will include transportation to / from Fuji Harness, hotel room accommodation for three nights (all nights at hotel in the city of Fujinomiya), and meals and coffee breaks during the Workshop. Thursday’s return bus trip to Tokyo will arrive in Tokyo at about 12:00 p.m.

To help facilitate communication and to obtain a current e-mail list for potential participants, the AGBN invites each IGDF member organisation to send an e-mail containing contact information for at least one breeding programme person to IGDFbrdrs2014@gmail.com.

The BCL is a recently developed tool for obtaining objective scores on aspects of canine behavior, which has been translated into a number of languages. The long-term goal is that BCL will provide common terms, translated into different languages, for scoring aspects of canine behavior.
Dual Purpose Guide Dog / Seizure-Alert Dog Training in the UK

Lee Stanway - Additional Needs Manager Guide Dogs, UK

The UK’s first dual-trained guide and seizure-alert dog partnership has been going from strength to strength, and was the centre of attention at a prestigious awards ceremony.

Toni Brown-Griffin and her dog Hetty were the stars of the show at the British Animal Honours Awards. Hetty scooped the Guardian Angel Award for assistance dogs at the televised ceremony in London. This ground-breaking partnership came about thanks to a joint effort from Guide Dogs UK and Support Dogs.

Toni has Retinitis Pigmentosa and was finding that her life was becoming more challenging as her vision started to deteriorate. She also has Epilepsy, which has a significant impact on her life as she has little or no prior warning of a seizure. This has resulted in potentially serious injuries from incidents such as crashing headfirst through a glass shower screen and breaking ribs after falling from the street.

Toni is also a Trustee of a UK Charity called Support Dogs based in Sheffield. Support Dogs has a number of assistance dog programmes including the training of seizure-alert dogs. As fellow members of Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK), Guide Dogs UK and Support Dogs decided to work together to find a suitable dog that would be able to successfully fill a unique dual-purpose role for Toni – a guide and seizure-alert dog.

In 2011 two potential dogs were identified from the Forfar Guide Dog Training School in Scotland; Forrest - a Labrador / Retriever, and Hetty - a Black Labrador / Retriever. Both dogs were assessed to ensure that they had low suspicion levels, a high drive with motivation and good initiative.

As part of the matching process Toni was invited to Sheffield where both dogs were in training and she completed a walk with each of them. Hetty was eventually chosen as the most suitable for Toni’s needs, although both dogs had the appropriate temperament and characteristics to alert to seizures.

In order to introduce Hetty to Toni at a time when she was experiencing a seizure, she was invited into the Support Dogs’ centre where carefully placed cameras enabled staff to determine the exact point at which Toni was experiencing a seizure. As the seizure began, Hetty was introduced to Toni in a manner that was positive but low-key until she became used to Toni’s seizures. Gradually, Hetty spent more time with Toni and staff were able to see signs that Hetty was beginning to anticipate a seizure a few minutes before it happened. This behaviour was then reinforced by food reward.

Toni recently referred to Hetty as "her best friend and saviour"

Although dogs can alert in different ways, Hetty was tending to put a paw up and place it on Toni’s leg for major seizures and sit away from Toni at a slight angle to indicate minor seizures.

Toni was able to take Hetty home following a guide dog training programme with Ian Armstrong – an instructor from the Sheffield Mobility Team. The seizure-alert work continued to be developed throughout the guiding training and Hetty’s alerts started to occur 10 minutes or longer before a seizure. Toni continued her training at home, with Ian working closely alongside instructors in Toni’s home area and staff from Support Dogs. Eventually, the alerting occurred on a regular basis, 42 minutes in advance of a major seizure. From this point on, Toni had 100% confidence in being alerted to an impending seizure.

One initial concern was that the desire to alert would interfere with Hetty’s guiding skills - this hasn’t, however, been the case and Hetty continues to be an excellent guide with Toni recognising a potential alert through the handle, stopping and lowering – at which point Hetty then turns and places a paw on Toni’s leg.

Previously, Toni was afraid to go out unaccompanied - she now enjoys a full and active lifestyle, knowing that Hetty can guide her safely, and that a 42 minute seizure warning gives her sufficient time to either return home or to ask to rest in a quiet area until the seizure has passed.

People often ask how a dog knows so far in advance that their owner will have a seizure. The short answer is that no-one knows for certain. It may be scent-based or due to subtle physiological changes in the body that the dog picks up on. Research is continuing into this amazing area of a dog’s ability to alert to seizures as well as other medical conditions such as Diabetes.

Another question asked is whether the dog is constantly on alert without getting a break. This has proven not to be the case and Hetty enjoys her guiding role as well as being with Toni and alerting. Hetty can be fast asleep in the bedroom and then wake when an alert is needed. From observation, she clearly has a happy and rewarding time as part of Toni’s family.

Toni recently referred to Hetty as “her best friend and saviour”, and refers to her as a “superdog”.

United Kingdom | Guide Dogs
A partnership between Guide Dogs Victoria and Guide Dogs Association of the Blind Singapore has worked to effectively overcome some surprising challenges.

Guide Dogs Victoria (GDV) and Guide Dogs Association of the Blind Singapore (GDAB) have entered the second year of an incredibly successful programme that has resulted in Victorian-bred and trained guide dogs serving Singaporean clients.

There are now two GDV dogs living and working in Singapore; a process that has required immeasurable but highly rewarding work from both organisations to navigate through climatic, cultural and logistical barriers.

GDAB selected their Victorian counterpart largely as a result of their long-standing and high-quality breeding and training reputation. The fact that Australia is rabies-free was also an important consideration from an importation perspective. Yet what most endeared GDAB to GDV was the latter’s immediate interest in assisting the guide dog movement from its infancy.

GDV has helped Singapore in assessing and confirming clients that are guide dog eligible, a process that is then followed by GDV returning to Australia to select the most appropriate dogs. The predominantly-Chinese community means Singaporeans have an aversion to black dogs (they are regarded as aggressive and uncontrollable) and so, for the first time in their breeding history, GDV was required to be colour-selective. Smaller-bodied dogs were also preferred on the assumption they would manoeuvre more efficiently through the metropolitan rush of Singapore (the island nation’s population is 5 million).

It was also assumed a smaller-bodied dog would be less conspicuous, a characteristic that has proven particularly important when introducing the dog, and the concept of working guide dogs, to Singapore.

Just seven years old, GDAB has made impressive inroads in educating its local public about the necessity, need and purpose of guide dogs. Such general awareness and acceptance is relatively de rigueur in Victoria, where GDV has been in operation since 1957. Further education is, however, required in Singapore and so GDV’s client / dog training period required extra work to overcome initial hesitation from store owners, supermarket management, etc. about having ‘pets’ on the premises.

Aaron Horsington, Senior Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, GDV, explains:

“A degree of diplomacy has been required – we wanted a softly, softly introduction to the concept of Guide Dogs in Singapore, where it is unusual to see dogs outside of their home environment. We needed to appreciate that the work these dogs do, their very existence, is not yet a part of the public DNA as it is in Victoria.”

A gradual introduction has been required for the dogs as well, who learned to work in hot, humid conditions versus the seasonal changes of a southern Australian climate. This has been a gradual process, with the selected dogs trained during Victoria’s summer. The final stages of training in Singapore required dogs to be worked outdoors in the morning or evening, when temperatures were more bearable for the new-comers. Indoor (air-conditioned) mobility and orientation would be scheduled during the peak heat of the day.

Singapore has, however, played an important role in mitigating other adverse affects that may have otherwise encumbered the dogs’ transition. For instance, clients give commands in English so that the dogs are not required to re-learn key words. Infrastructure has also played a role; the public transport system is much safer in Singapore than Victoria, with glass doors protecting commuters from falling into platforms, footpaths are modern and well-maintained, and the Government has installed extensive Tactile Ground Surface Indicators throughout the island.
An Asia-Pacific Partnership, Cont’d

The clients themselves have been required to fly to Victoria for three weeks training, followed by a further fortnight training back in Singapore with GDV’s full participation. Mr. Horsington returned to Singapore after three and six months, with the intent to conduct annual visits thereafter, as is the standard procedure in Victoria. These visits, along with routine veterinary checks, are important to maintain the privilege of an access card now made available to GDAB clients with the support of the Ministry of Social and Family Development in Singapore.

Singapourians have an aversion to black dogs (they are regarded as aggressive and uncontrollable) and so, for the first time in their breeding history, GDV was required to be colour-selective.

Although the official number of legally-blind people registered in Singapore is 3,300, GDAB estimates this figure could be as high as 50,000. As such, they perceive an ongoing need to sustain and indeed grow the existing programme with Guide Dogs Victoria.

Certainly, both organisations now have a strong relationship and mutual respect, yet it is, of course, the clients who ultimately determine the programme’s success. To that end, both Singaporean clients now lead highly independent, fully mobile lives and, whether they realise it or not, they will pioneer a cultural shift in the way Singapore regards guide dogs and, indeed, vision impairment.

Development Committee (DC) Update

Ian Cox – Chair, IGDF Development Committee
Vision Australia, Seeing Eye Dog and Mobility Division DC member

Our much loved friend, mentor and colleague, Ken Lord passed away suddenly from a heart attack on the morning of Thursday 25 July following recent successful brain surgery. Amongst a myriad of personal, family and professional achievements - a career spanning 52 years in the field of Guide Dogs/Orientation and Mobility, Ken was one of the 4 founding members of the Development Committee, and is survived by his wife Arleen, 4 children and their 7 grandchildren. Ken’s lifetime achievements will be captured in the next edition of Visionary.

The Development Committee continues to work on behalf of the IGDF Board and all Member, Applicant and Enquiry organisations in order to support the on-going development of guide dog services throughout the world.

Currently, we are actively involved, to varying degrees, with 10 Applicant organisations and a further 11 Enquiry organisations.

We have also had contact with over 30 groups and individuals who have expressed an interest in ‘starting up’ around the globe.

Jane Russenberger, a member of the DC, has been working on developing a database to match Member organisations who have generously offered to assist other Member schools who have requested additional support and also emerging GD organisations. This work has been evaluated and approved by the IGDF Board.

In the meantime there are several enriching initiatives developing with promising outcomes predicted between Members and new organisations.

One example relates to an outcome of the 2012 DC review of IBT / Huikuang GD’s whereby the additional support required in staff training is now being provided by Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc., USA. (See photo).

The DC would like to share the news that Pam Byfield’s health continues to improve. Pam, wife of former founding DC member John Byfield, is known to many in the IGDF community.

Cadet GD Trainer Esme Lee being trained by mentor instructor LiniJo Kircher
Many of you will remember the arrival of the French Federation of Guide Dog Associations (FFAC) at the 2012 IGDF Seminar following their parade across Paris - their access campaign continues.

119 guide dog users from FFAC Member Schools tested 1044 places during February 2013 with mixed results:
- In 15% of cases, guide dogs and their owners did not have free access to places open to the public;
- Their accessibility was reduced in 8.8% of cases and denied in 6.3% of cases.
- This represents, on average, at least one difficulty per week for guide dog users in France.

The ambitious but realistic goals of zero denials was, unfortunately, not reached – despite the fact that laws authorise access to guide dogs and their handlers to all public places without additional cost. Non-compliance with the laws is repressed by fines.

These accessibility problems are real and regular. They represent:
- 40.2% denied access in a guest house (not so common in France)
- 32.9% in a taxi
- 23.9% in a hotel
- 16.8% in a theatre or concert hall
- 15.4% in a cinema
- 12% in a department store
- 8.4% in a restaurant
- 7.2% in a public service establishment (e.g. Town Hall)
- 7.2% in a food shop (e.g. bakers)
- 3% of cases in a shop providing local services (e.g. florist, pharmacy)

These are some of the things that guide dog owners have heard:
"You cannot come in here with your guide dog, the ban comes from our company headquarters" was the reply from the manager of a department store in Nancy;
"There is a strict ban on all dogs, including guide dogs!" - a cinema manager in Rodez;
"Law or no law, no guide dogs" - a hotel manager in Dijon.

In early April, a delegation of guide dog owners met at the office of Mrs Marie-Arlette Carlotti (Minister in charge of people with disabilities and the fight against exclusion) to hand-over a 30,000 signature petition – all backed up with the results of our survey.

Although guide dogs, provided free-of-charge, offer greater freedom and comfort to a visually impaired person, and despite favourable legislation being in place, guide dog owners are still suffering too many denials; they have to explain the presence of the guide dog at their side, remind people of the law and even justify their sight-loss! Efforts still need to be made to end these discriminations in order to improve the daily lives of guide dog users.

To be fair, however, it should be added that guide dogs have an excellent image in France and, whilst it shouldn’t be necessary, a few words of explanation do resolve most of the difficulties.
In a career with the United Kingdom’s Guide Dogs for the Blind Association spanning 30 years, Derek was responsible for the breeding, rearing and training of some 20,000 puppies, raising the Association’s level of success to unprecedented heights. His achievements, which were recognised through his induction as a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE), are legendary both within and outside the guide dog movement.

Granting Guidelines

The Derek Freeman Scholarship supports new or established breeding & puppy-raising programmes undertaken by accredited Members and Applicant organisations of the International Guide Dog Federation.

Grants from the scholarship will be in the range of £2,000. The scholarship encourages cost-sharing or matching funds from the applicant or third party sources.

Funding from the scholarship will provide support for travel, accommodation and study at host organisations assisting with the applicants continued education in the field of guide dog breeding and puppy raising.

The Derek Freeman Scholarship is awarded bi-annually and the successful candidate will be announced at the International Guide Dog Federation’s bi-annual seminar.

Applications will be invited for scholarship early in 2014 and the winner to be announced at the conference in Japan. Please consider taking advantage of the Derek Freeman Scholarship. In previous years the scholarship has been awarded to organisations in South Africa, the UK, Japan, Australia, Slovakia and Taiwan.

Now would be a great time to think of any possibilities that may assist you in your work.

With the support of the Chair of the Development Committee, Applicant Members of the IGDF may also apply.

For further information please contact Bill Thornton at: william.thornton@bcguidedog.com
Forward Into True Inclusivity - Singapore's Unique Experience

Cassandra Chiu - Guide Dog Client Representative, Guide Dog Association of the Blind, Singapore

Despite the faltering first steps of a young child, he will eventually gain mastery of his world - only when the transition from a developing to a developed nation is complete, can there be capacity to move forward into true inclusivity.

In 1982, Singapore's first known guide dog from the then Lady Nell Seeing Eye Dog School started life in her new home – her working life was, however, cut short due to access issues.

Some 20 years later, a Foreign Service officer attached to the American embassy in Singapore faced similar challenges when he attempted independent mobility outside of the embassy compound with his guide dog. He shared his thoughts in a newspaper interview: "I thought Singapore was a forward-thinking country. But I must say I am disappointed with this attitude which is still stuck in the 5th century!"

Following a personal gift from an American guide dog school in 2005, Singapore's infant guide dog movement was given a new lease of life.

The journey of guide dog advocacy took its first faltering steps with the establishment of the Guide Dogs Association of the Blind (GDAB) in 2006. For a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation like Singapore, this task took delicate consideration of its unique cultural environment. Through the past 8 years, GDAB has continuously engaged in constructive dialogue with multiple governmental agencies and the capacity of work within the blindness field progressively evolved.

The turning point for the guide dog movement in Singapore came in a parliamentary session in September 2005. The then Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan expressly stated that his Ministry "supports the use of Guide Dogs as another form of mobility guide for blind persons." The Ministry's report "Enabling Master Plan 2012-2016" further demonstrates understanding towards the challenges faced by guide dog handlers. The Committee suggested "improving the software such as mindsets and attitudes" and "enhancing public education initiatives to promote inclusiveness and graciousness".

Singapore enables access for guide dog teams through a unique approach that combines supportive Governmental policies and public education.

Also advocates “acceptance and support on the use of guide dogs to help persons with visual impairment negotiate their way in public places.”

When Singapore welcomed home its next two guide dogs (2011 & 2012 respectively), the teams still faced immense challenges in access. Many government agencies came to the rescue and steadfastly worked alongside GDAB to ensure the realisation of true independence with a guide dog for both current and future handlers. These agencies introduced policies that were supportive towards guide dogs, and also concurrently launched extensive guide dog awareness campaigns with their stakeholders that involved the guide dog teams.

The Land Transport Authority (LTA), responsible for providing an efficient, cost-effective and people-centered land transport system for different needs, not only have supportive policy allowing guide dogs onto public transport but have also engaged its stakeholders and the latter’s frontline personnel in extensive education and continues to facilitate consultations to make travel on the public transport network seamless for guide dog teams. Similarly, the Environmental Public Health Division of the National Environment Agency (NEA), which is responsible for the overall cleanliness in Singapore and imposes a high standard of hygiene requirements on the food retail industry, have also embarked on comprehensive education on guide dogs for industry stakeholders, while at the same time having supportive policies. More importantly, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) continues to work tirelessly with GDAB to expand guide dog awareness and even welcomes guide dogs into Halal certified restaurants. This is significant as Singapore has a sizable ethnic Malay-Muslim community that is culturally sensitive to dogs.

Rather than use anti-discriminatory legislation to facilitate guide dog access, Singapore enables access for guide dog teams through a unique approach that combines supportive Governmental policies and public education. Extensive media coverage and support from fellow Singaporeans also help to educate service providers about access when encountering refusal of service to a guide dog team.

In the past 18 months, Singapore as a nation has matured into a people of true inclusivity. The success of working guide dog teams in Singapore continues to encourage those that would benefit from a guide dog to consider the possibility of gaining confidence, true independence and safety in mobility.
Navigating an airport in darkness

Matthew Barwick - Media and Communications Coordinator
Guide Dogs Queensland, Australia

Finding your way through an airport terminal during the morning rush can be a daunting task for anyone, but it can be especially difficult for travellers with low or no vision. Despite this, thousands of vision impaired people take up this challenge every day, as travel for work and leisure becomes more of an integral part of everyday life.

In the state of Queensland, Brisbane Airport is the major connector to both domestic and international routes and, with about 21 million people passing through each year, is a busy place. Despite Queensland being vast in size (about 1.7 million square kilometres or about seven times the size of the United Kingdom), the majority of airline traffic travels through this one airport, meaning most travellers will need to navigate it at some point during their journey.

To help address the challenge this environment presents to vision impaired travellers, Guide Dogs Queensland (GDQ) teamed up with Brisbane Airport Corporation to offer a travel training day through the airport’s Domestic Terminal.

With sufficient interest to fill the 20 available places in a single day, the goal of the pilot travel training day was simple – to familiarise vision impaired clients with their surroundings in order to help take away some of the fear and stress busy environments like this can present. The day offered a chance to explore the terminal as a group and, with support from instructors, go through the regular check-in and security procedures you’d expect when visiting any airport.

The visiting group with the support of eight GDQ Orientation and Mobility Instructors used a range of vision aids, low vision strategies and equipment to explore; from guide dog users to long canes and GPS devices. From a navigation starting point at the Airtrain arrival gate and carpark area, the group moved through the different entries and exits to the terminal, travelled through security, and explored both the facilities and gate areas of the terminal. The day session also included lunch and various refreshment stops to familiarise participants with the variety of food courts and services available within the airport precinct.

Airport Approval Manager Colin Stewart travelled with the group to explain the many features installed at the airport to improve access for travellers with a vision impairment. The group was also joined by a journalist from a local feature magazine, who stayed with the group under blindfold and was sight-guided by an instructor so she could truly experience the busy environment as the vision impaired group did.

The day was a great success with positive feedback received from all involved and a general feeling of promoted confidence in the group. GDQ now plans to offer the training to a wider pool of applicants, with plans to run the event regularly up to three times a year and also expand the route to cover the international terminal.

GDQ regularly holds mobility and travel training days across the state to ensure all Queenslanders with a vision impairment have access to the services and support they need to remain active, mobile and independent.
The R+ Project – Expanding Positive Reinforcement at Guide Dogs for the Blind, USA

Since 2006, Guide Dogs for the Blind has progressively increased the use of Clicker Training (positive reinforcement) methods in our formal guide dog training programme. Following several years of impressive results, GDB has now embarked on a project to further expand its use of positive reinforcement techniques into all canine programs.

The “R+ Project” is a 5-year project to maximize positive reinforcement training throughout all canine departments at GDB. The project committee is comprised of staff representing each canine programme department (other than formal training). The committee will review all current techniques for puppy and dog handling used in their departments. The R+ Project goal is to discover ways to maximize the use of positive reinforcement in all aspects of dog care, puppy development, and dog management. Each department representative works with the staff in their department for educational needs, ideas, implementation and feedback.

The Departments included in the R+ Project are:
- Puppy Raising Programme (puppies 8 weeks to 16 months old)
- San Rafael and Oregon Campus Kennel Departments
- San Rafael Whelping Kennel (Whelping to Weaning)
- Early Puppy Socialisation (puppies 5 weeks to 12 weeks old)
- San Rafael and Oregon Dog Placement (Career Change Placement)
- San Rafael and Oregon Foster Care Programme (Out of Kennel Care)
- Breeding Department (Breeding stock custodians and Breeding colony)
- San Rafael and Oregon Veterinary Departments

The R+ Project Leader, Michele Pouliot, is providing a considerable amount of technique education to staff members while also bringing in outside experts to assist in teaching positive reinforcement methods. In January, committee members were treated to a very motivational 2-day training seminar with behaviorist and clicker-trainer extraordinaire, Kathy Sdao. Here’s what a few R+ project members had to say about the first workshop:

Pup trying the stairs

Puppy Programme Specialist: “I walked away from the workshop feeling energized and excited about all the possibilities. It is a little overwhelming to think about all that we need to do and what we have yet to learn but I am truly looking forward to the challenge.”

Breeding Manager: “Michele and Kathy were able to customise our training day to really address the things that were relevant in each of our departments. It was awesome to see how excited and enthusiastic everyone is about using more positive reinforcement techniques in our programme”.

SR Kennel Supervisor: “This was my first clicker workshop and it was fun and fascinating! The hands-on portions I found invaluable and it made me realise that the real challenge lies in training me”!

Kennel Manager: “It’s super exciting to be part of the group that is expanding and maximizing the use of positive reinforcement throughout the organisation. Kathy S. is a great presenter and I really look forward to incorporating some new ideas in the kennels with both staff and volunteers, and in the OR Foster Care Programme.”

Puppy Raising Director: “The Puppy Field Managers are very enthusiastic about the R+ project and excited at the direction Puppy Raising is taking. We got lots of ideas for working with puppies in raiser-homes and look forward to the implementation over the next few years.”

Dog Placement Coordinator: “I really enjoyed the combination of Kathy’s enthusiastic, insightful and scientific approach to positive training techniques, along with hands on practice throughout the 2 day seminar. It allowed all participants to share in the experience and gain a better understanding of the methods discussed. It was very motivating and exciting to work alongside such a knowledgeable group of people.”

Over the past several years, GDB canine departments other than training have observed major changes in formal guide dog training. Now they are very excited about adopting these positive methods into their own departments, creating happier dogs and even making their jobs more enjoyable.
Introduction of a New Harness Handle

Sam Tawada – GDMI
Guide Dog Association, Japan

We would like to introduce a new harness handle design that we developed based on the ergonomic research of Mr. Lukas Franck from The Seeing Eye Inc. and presented at the IGDFA Seminar in Korea in 2002. As Mr. Franck mentioned, when you are involved in the guide dog movement for a long period of time, you often find yourself with discomfort in the shoulders, elbows and wrists. Personally, I’ve been taking part in this movement since 1974 and am chronically battling pain in my own left shoulder and elbow, and receiving treatment. About 40 of our guide dog trainers who answered our survey said that they suffer from wrist and elbow pain. This made us summarise the issues we had with the current harness and encouraged us to develop a new one.

Eight out of ten guide dog schools in Japan, instruct their clients to walk on the left side of the street, holding the handle with the left hand. It is due to the client’s needs to walk on streets without any sidewalks, which may be specific to Japan. Whichever side the handle is, with the U-shaped handle, a person’s wrist is constantly twisted 90 degrees.

In order to solve this issue, Japan Guide Dog Association has worked alongside with Yokohama Rehabilitation Services and finally developed a single-bar handle. With this handle, twisting does not occur, because when you drop your arms to the side, you can naturally grip the handle. We have also used the operation analysis device at the Yokohama Rehabilitation Center to compare the current and new harness handle. We found that the leaning of the body to the left was not observed using the new one. It also feels like a long cane that for those who are transitioning from cane to dog guide will experience very little change in the way they obtain information. A harness is a device to receive information from the dog, such as starting, stopping, turning right and left, and not something to control the dog, and we believe that this new form does not interfere with the purpose. In Japan, the shape of the harness is regulated by law but it has been amended to meet our new style. This amendment was made possible through the network of all 9 guide dog schools in Japan at the time.

Another handle, developed from the bar-harness, was created specifically for a client who lost his tactile sense in his hands and was having difficulty gripping the handle. He keeps his palm up, holding the T-shaped handle to obtain information from his guide dog.

At Japan Guide Dog Association, we have gone through many trial and error and officially started instructing our clients to walk not only on the left, but also on the right side of the street in 2013. This means a client needs to switch the position from the left to the right hand, depending on the environment. The twisting of the arm and difference in sensitivity seems less obvious with the bar-handle. We also found that when the guide dog team walks along a rut in the snow, the client has to walk a couple of steps behind the dog, but the bar-handle works effectively in this case as well.
On the Move:
The Seeing Eye relocates... for five months

The Seeing Eye Inc, USA

Michelle Barlack - Senior Associate, Public Relations

The Seeing Eye prides itself in providing a warm and homelike environment to the students who travel from across the United States and Canada to train with their new Seeing Eye® dogs. All student needs are met during their intensive three to four week period so they can focus on training and bonding with their new dogs.

However, the building that is the epicentre of the training programme, called the Main House, had not been renovated in a meaningful way in nearly 50 years. In 2012, The Seeing Eye began long-planned renovations to replace the building’s failing infrastructure, meet current building and safety codes, and improve student comfort and training. When completed later this year, the improvements will dramatically lower the cost of ongoing maintenance and operation, and bring new training opportunities to the campus.

The renovation was carefully coordinated to minimise disruption to staff, but the biggest challenge was faced by the Instruction and Training department. It would take five months to renovate the dormitory, kitchen and dining room, and during that time we wouldn’t be able to house students on campus. The programme would have to be moved – but where else could we replicate the comforts of home that staff members work so hard to bring to the students during their stay?

Director of Instruction and Training David Johnson began the search for a temporary home in December 2011, long before the first construction equipment arrived on site. “Closing our doors to the more than 100 students that come for training during a five-month timeframe was never an option,” Johnson said. “It was an exciting challenge. We were faced, for the first time, of really having to transplant the entire programme from one place to another.”

College facilities were unable to meet the programme’s needs, and many hotel managers were not open-minded about having so many dogs still in training at their hotel. But Johnson’s perseverance paid off. He contacted the Dolce in Basking Ridge, N.J., a hotel and conference centre that typically served corporate clients, and offered to take in the students temporarily. The Dolce was open to the idea. In my mind, it was a long shot,” recalled Johnson. Much to his relief, “They welcomed us with open arms. They were open-minded and willing to think out of the box from the start.”

The Seeing Eye reserved a 26-room block – 20 rooms for students, five to be used as staff offices, and one as a nurse’s station. Since the programme took up 25 rooms – but none of the students would be driving – Johnson negotiated to have the 25 parking spaces they would have used to be fenced off with a portable chain link fence to use as the relief area for the dogs.

A meeting room was set up as a private dining area where all student meals were served, and Seeing Eye staff from other departments signed up to take a shuttle bus from the campus to the Dolce to have lunch each day with students. The Seeing Eye’s own dietary and household staff served the students at the hotel, so no employees were lost during the temporary move.

Some programme changes had to be made to accommodate the temporary location and several became permanent changes that were transferred back to the newly renovated building!

For example, when tie-downs were replaced by soft crates in each student’s room, staff immediately noticed a change. The dogs settled faster in the soft crates and the set up was quieter for the students because there wasn’t a noisy bed chain rattling on the floor. The dogs were eager to rest in their soft crates and stayed there without any fussing.

Feeding time changed too. Traditionally, staff members delivered premeasured amounts of dog food already in bowls to each student, a practice that began years ago when the dogs were fed raw meat, which required preparation by the trainers in a separate kitchen. Even after switching to kibble, instructors retained the practice of bringing bowls of dog food to the students. But at the hotel it wasn’t feasible to store, serve, and deliver dog food; instead, each student was given dog food and a measuring cup and taught how to feed their dogs and clean the bowls afterward. Students really liked the experience of feeding their own dogs and the bonding process progressed much faster. “It was such a simple thing that we just never thought about,” Johnson said.

Another change: At The Seeing Eye, the students spend their first few days with the dogs heeling until they are familiar with the layout of the Main House, which has runner carpets, different floor surfaces, and chair rails along the walls to help with orientation. In the hotel, wall-to-wall carpeting made navigation difficult, so for the first time The Seeing Eye provided students with lightweight ID canes for use during those first few days while the dogs were heeling.
On the move, Cont’d

With the canes, the instructors found the students were much better able to keep their dogs heelng and more easily orient themselves to their new surroundings.

The student area was in a more private section of the hotel so public interference with guests in the student area was minimal, but The Dolce Hotel staff and the guests were all provided with literature about The Seeing Eye program and proper etiquette around guide dogs.

“We were worried about public interference, but it worked out because of the preparations made in advance with the hotel and the support they offered during our stay,” said Dr. James A. Kutsch, President and CEO of The Seeing Eye. “We were impressed with the professionalism of the hotel staff and they were impressed with how dedicated we are to serving our students.”

At the conclusion of the five-month stay, the Dolce staff had a good-bye barbecue for The Seeing Eye staff, and The Seeing Eye named a puppy “Dolce” to thank the staff for their hard work. Their staff truly became a part of The Seeing Eye family.

The biggest take away for Johnson and the training staff, aside from the adjustments made to the training programme, was the peace of mind in knowing that if we ever had a fire or other disaster on campus, The Seeing Eye family could succeed in another location.

“Honestly, I didn’t know if it was going to be possible, but thanks to a lot of planning and the unbelievable dedication of our Seeing Eye staff, we really were able to replicate our program in another location,” Johnson said. “But we are happy to be back home in our newly renovated building.”

A Seeing Eye Legend Lost

Michelle Barlack - Senior Associate, Public Relations
The Seeing Eye Inc, USA

Dick Krokus, who retired from the position of Director of Instruction and Training in 1988, passed away in February. He was 89 years old.

Dick began at The Seeing Eye in 1946 as an apprentice instructor where, he estimated, he trained more than 300 Seeing Eye teams over the next 14 years. In 1960, he was promoted to Supervisor - a position he held until 1975, when he was promoted to Director of Instruction (later known as the Instruction and Training Department).

“Dick not only hired me, but many of the senior members of the Training Division,” said Dave Johnson, The Seeing Eye’s current Director of Instruction and Training. “We are all going to miss his wonderful stories about the dogs and the people that he loved so much.”

With his initial application in 1942, Dick submitted a photo of himself holding a large dog which he described as “a mongrel of collie and shepherd blood.” Dick was 19 years old at the time.

In the application for the position of “kennel man” – Dick wrote: “I derive thorough enjoyment in working with dogs because of my innate love of them... I will accept the minimum salary you offer for the chance to prove my sincerity.”

Before Dick could be hired however, he joined the U.S. Army, where he served as a tug boat captain in Alaska. The Seeing Eye hired him when he returned from the war, and he remained with us until his retirement in 1988.

“Dick was the consummate instructor – he was always teaching, whether it was dogs, students, or trainers,” said Dr. James A. Kutsch, President & CEO of The Seeing Eye. “Over his long career, he personally instructed several generations of trainers and they in turn instructed countless more, not just at The Seeing Eye but at guide dog schools throughout the United States and the world. His contributions to the guide dog movement are incalculable. Our deepest sympathies are with his wife, Betty, and his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.”

IGDF Assessor Recruitment

Christine Baroni-Pretsch – Chair, IGDF Accreditation Committee
Fondation Ecole Romande Pour Chiens Guides d’Aveugles

The purpose of the AC is to support the continued development and achievement of IGDF mission, objectives and Standards through accreditation and successful reassessment of Applicant and Member organisations.

Due to impending retirements and resignations of established Assessors the IGDF is currently looking to recruit new Assessors. All applicants must be qualified Guide Dog Mobility Instructors with a minimum of ten (10) years working experience within an IGDF member school. Some experience as a manager or supervisor of staff is also desirable.

The successful applicants need to be available for their first training assessments in 2014. Full training is given prior to new Assessors undertaking assignments on their own. Successful applicants must attend the Assessors workshop held prior to the IGDF seminar in Tokyo in May 2014. A qualified Assessor would normally be asked to undertake two assessments every other year. Each trip will not exceed 15 days including travel.

All applicants must be fluent in both written and verbal English. Any additional language skills are very welcome.

Applicants need to be currently employed by an IGDF member school and must submit a written approval from their CEO with their application form.

For any further information please feel free to contact the IGDF office: Jennifer Burford enquiries@igdf.org.uk or the Accreditation Committee Chair: Christine Baroni-Pretsch c.baroni-pretsch@chienguide.ch

We are looking forward to hearing from you!
The deadlines for Visionary submissions are May 31st & Nov 30th

Please supply your articles as a word file with original images sent separately as jpeg images.

Remember to include your country of origin, school name, name of the author of the article, their position within your organisation and any captions for photos.

For the index, please include a one-sentence description of your article.