



**Guide Dogs of Texas**

# Best Dogs in Sight

Newsletter of Guide Dogs of Texas, Inc.  
San Antonio, Texas

[www.guidedogsoftexas.org](http://www.guidedogsoftexas.org)

WINTER 2005

A PUBLICATION OF GUIDE DOGS OF TEXAS, INC., A 501 ( C ) (3) ORGANIZATION

## VOLUNTEERING FOR GUIDE DOGS OF TEXAS

by Phil Stanley, Director of Training

**V**olunteers are the lifeblood of all not-for-profit organizations. The ability of a charity such as Guide Dogs of Texas (GDTx) to provide a highly specialized, quality service is greatly enhanced by having the support and commitment of a motivated group of individuals who give their time and energy to our cause. The success of our puppy-raising program is proof of this.

Lack of time and resources could have a major impact on our ability to sustain a quality service. Inevitably, our clients would be most affected and our reputation would be tarnished. The possibility of this happening has been the catalyst for the training department to concentrate on recruiting volunteers to look after dogs in the advanced training program.

Our goal is to get all dogs cared for, away from the training facility, overnight, and on weekends. Through the efforts of the GDTx staff, board members, and existing volunteers, we have been successful so far in enlisting a small band of wonderful temporary boarders for our training dogs. This small group of caretakers has enthusiastically adopted not only the dogs but all the rules and advice that are essential when caring for these special dogs. They collect their charges from the training annex and drop them off in time for training on a daily basis. This is **crucial** to ensure that the training of these dogs is not compromised – as future guides and companions to vision impaired

*(Continued on page 3)*

## MAKING A DECISION

by Charles Matt

**W**e face decisions every day. Some are minor but others are major decisions that can affect future generations. Among the most important decisions we ever make are those that can change our lives and the lives of others. This is why your will is so important. A will is a written expression of the significant decisions you have made and can impact generations to come. Through your will, you can provide for your loved ones as you wish. You can also arrange to help organizations that have played a special part in your life.

Unfortunately, most people don't have wills. They are leaving one of the most important decisions in their life for others to make. With a will, however, **YOU** make the decision about how your family will be taken care of, and **YOU** make the decision about remembering the organizations that you care about.

The decision to remember Guide Dogs of Texas in your will has a lasting impact on the lives of untold numbers. By including a bequest or gift to Guide Dogs of Texas in your will, you will help provide mobility and independence for years to come for Texans who are visually impaired.

For more information on how you can help Guide Dogs of Texas, Inc., and be among those who leave a legacy to their favorite charities, contact J. Michael Mason, Executive Director, at 210-366-4081.

*Charles Matt is a financial advisor with Moss & Matt Financial Services. Mr. Matt enjoys helping people discover ways to leave a legacy.*

## MEET THE BOARD

Guide Dogs of Texas, Inc., is pleased to have a dedicated Board of Directors who lend their expertise in guiding the organization. We would like to introduce you to all the board members and tell you a little about each one.

### **David Neathery** -- Board Chair

David earned his Master's degree in health administration from Southwest Texas State University in 2000. Before turning to health care, David spent 17 years in retail management. He is currently the Operations and Grants Manager of Strategic Planning, Corporate Communication and Business Development, for University Health System in San Antonio.

### **Gail Walden** -- Board Vice-Chair

Gail, the first San Antonio-based client to graduate from Guide Dogs of Texas, earned her Master's degree from Texas A&M University. Gail has more than 20 years experience in medical research and currently works at the Veterans Administration Hospital as a medical researcher.

### **Dr. David Henzi**

Dave is an Education Development Specialist for the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA). Dave received his Bachelor of Art degree in psychology from the University of Texas at San Antonio and his Master's and Doctorate degrees in Education from Texas Tech University.

### **Sue Simmons**

Sue was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, raised in Houston, and graduated from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio with a BBA. Sue has over 14 years experience in logistics, both in the private sector as well as the government sector, and currently does government consultant work.

### **Marilyn Dusek**

Marilyn was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and worked as a system analyst in Washington, D.C. and Illinois for 7 years. Later, Marilyn set up a boarding and grooming kennel in Illinois, and also showed and bred Dalmatians. She moved to San Antonio and began to manufacture dog collars and leashes. Marilyn is currently retired and serves on several boards.

### **Jeremy McGilvrey**

Jeremy was raised in San Antonio. After graduating from high school, he attended the University of Texas at Austin, earning a degree in finance. Jeremy, a certified financial planner with Raymond James Financial Services, brings a wealth of investment knowledge to the Board.

### **Chris Shindler**

Chris, a native Texan, was born in Yoakum, Texas. After graduating from Yoakum High School, he moved to San Antonio, where he attended the University of Texas at San Antonio. Chris is currently a Mobility Consultant for The Scooter Store in New Braunfels.

### **Tom Ard**

Tom was raised in New Jersey and attended Northwestern University in Chicago on a full baseball scholarship. After graduating from Northwestern, Tom returned to New Jersey and graduated from Seaton Hall School of Law in 1993. Tom is currently a personal injury attorney with the firm of Carabin & Shaw.

### **Elizabeth Thompson**

Elizabeth (Liz) is a Marketing Officer for Randolph-Brooks Federal Credit Union. Liz was raised in San Antonio and received her Bachelor of Business Administration degree from St. Mary's University in San Antonio. She also holds an MBA from the University of Texas at San Antonio.



### Dear Friends & Supporters of Guide Dogs of Texas,

The beginning of a new year is always an appropriate time to look back at where we've been and look forward to where we want to go. Looking back, 2004 was a year of extraordinary transition and change: we gained new leadership, a new trainer from Great Britain, and many new board members. All of these dedicated individuals, both employees and volunteers, work diligently to further the mission of Guide Dogs of Texas. And, as we look forward, I would like you to consider the mission of Guide Dogs.

The mission of Guide Dogs of Texas is to raise, train, and give guide dogs to Texans who are visually impaired. This mission is the reason for our existence and the driving force behind everything we do. Yet the simple language of this brief and businesslike phrase, read in a monthly newsletter or on our website, belies the immense amount of time, labor, and resources required to produce one trained guide dog. What makes this effort worthwhile is what these dogs do for our fellow Texans, friends, and neighbors who have suffered the loss of one of life's most precious gifts - their vision.

Personally, I can think of few prospects more frightening than to lose one's sight, although it is a gift we often take it for granted. Just for a moment, imagine no longer being able to cross a busy intersection, navigate a shopping center, or even walk to your own front door without assistance. Sadly, many Texans are forced to confront these same realities. What they need to restore independence to their lives is a partner, a trusted friend and constant companion who, 24 hours a day is always ready to help them cross that intersection or navigate that shopping center. What is needed is a guide dog.

When I was first introduced to Guide Dogs of Texas, I learned that it is the only such school **in Texas**. Since then, I have come to think of it as a guide dog school **for Texas**, for our challenging environment, dedicated to its mission of providing the best trained, highest quality guide dogs possible for the visually impaired citizens of our great state. So, for 2005, as we continue this work and face new challenges, including the building of our first permanent home, I would ask all of our neighbors in the community and friends throughout the state to truly consider the unique and indispensable nature of the mission of Guide Dogs of Texas and to join us in its support. Remember, there is no substitute for what these dogs give back to those who have lost their sight.

Sincerely,

David Neathery, Board Chair



**NEW RESIDENTIAL TRAINING FACILITY**

It is an exciting time at Guide Dogs of Texas. We have finalized building plans for our new training facility, to be built on Allena Drive in San Antonio. Hopefully, we will break ground within the next six months. We will have more details about our new facility in the spring newsletter.

## TAILS FROM THE PUPPY SIDE

By Michelle Pelletier

It has been a busy time around here for us in the puppy department. We graduated two pups from the prison program in January:

Yukon, raised by Michael Lares, Randy Levine, and Kenneth Olivarez, and

Autumn (started with Joe Nemeth) and finished at the prison with Randy Hansen and Cortney Brown. Both dogs were walked by Larry Gelvin and Dave Peters

Congratulations to all the guys for producing two really great pups! The prison will be getting two new puppies in February, and their teams are waiting patiently (ok...not so patiently) for their arrival.

We added four puppies to the program in February. Houston, one of the pups to join the ranks, is a black lab that came to us from Guiding Eyes for the Blind in New York. He will be raised here in San Antonio by Karey Packard and her family. This is the first puppy for Karey, and we wish her all the luck in the world.

I'd like to welcome Ann Bearden to the ranks of Puppy Walkers. Ann will join our growing core of walkers in the Austin area. Ann is also waiting for her first puppy. Welcome, Ann! I am sure you will have as much fun as those who have come before you.

Everyone has been asking me for an update on Cooper. After having a second surgery to correct the same problem in his other knee, he has made a great recovery. He gotten the "all clear" from his surgeon and he is 100% sound mechanically. He has some muscle strength to regain, but he should make a full recovery. Thanks to Michelle Dolan and Larry Gelvin for taking such good care of him and working him so hard!

### Special recognition to:

- To **Brenda Ortiz** at South Texas Veterinary Specialists, who gave so much love and attention to Cooper while he did his underwater physical therapy. Thanks, Brenda - Cooper misses you!
- Thanks to all the Puppy Walkers past and present - without you, we would be lost!



**Our newest recruits: (Clockwise from left) Houston, Beau, Jazz, and D.J.**

## FIRST ANNUAL JERRY GROTE FOUNDATION GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Jerry Grote Foundation has been formed to provide support to organizations that benefit children in all areas of life. The focus of the newly formed foundation is to provide children, including children with visual impairments, with a positive experience in life. For example, they support programs that teach visually impaired children to fish and play golf. The Jerry Grote Foundation will work cooperatively with Guide Dogs of Texas, Inc., in areas of publicity and sponsorship of our programs.

The golf tournament is May 9, 2005 at Tapatio Springs Resort. Registration begins at 11:00 a.m. with a 1:00 p.m. shotgun start. For all those interested in participating in this fund raising event, please contact: Holt Taylor at 694-4323

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**FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF GUIDE DOGS OF TEXAS, INC. 2004**
**PUPPY PALS (\$1-\$99)**

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**FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF GUIDE DOGS OF TEXAS, INC. 2004**

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San Antonio Kennel Club, Inc.	Mr. Chad L. Sthele
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LTC Regina H. Schiffman	<b>TOP DOG (\$1000-2499)</b>
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Michael Lares on a walk with Yukon.

**I WILL MISS HIM TERRIBLY**

By Michael Lares

“Giving frees us from the familiar territory of our own needs by opening our minds to the unexplained worlds occupied by the needs of others.”

Barbara Bush

“It is every man’s obligation to put back into the world at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it.”

Albert Einstein

I consider myself very fortunate to have had the experience of working with Yukon. Rarely did it feel like have a job - it was more like a gift. I’m sad it ended so quickly but it was a great learning experience that taught me about responsibility and dedication, and a whole lot about patience. I never thought I would have the chance of caring for a dog while incarcerated. I was surprised and happy to find out I had the chance to raise a guide dog puppy. Little did I know what I was in for.

*(Continued on page 10)*

(Continued from page 9) **I WILL MISS HIM TERRIBLY**

I was very eager to start training, but I didn't know that the training was so extensive. I have owned several dogs before, but I have never had a dog with a personality like Yukon. When I received him, I was taking over for another offender who had been training Yukon, for nine months. It was a big challenge for both of us during this period of transition. I was a new face for Yukon so it was difficult to get him to obey. Frustration is an understatement for what I was feeling. I felt like Yukon just didn't care about anything but himself. At the time, I thought it was pretty selfish of him -- although it is quite funny now that I think about it. But at the time I was so close to just throwing my hands up and yelling, "I give up!"

I don't know how to explain what happened next. The "penny dropped" and something just clicked between us. A bond was born and we started to get along the way we were supposed to. It was as if Yukon said, "Alright, I've had my fun. Let's get down to business."

I have two beautiful children and yet I feel I gained another addition to my family while training Yukon. It is a big responsibility caring for and training a guide dog -- one that requires deeds and not just the word "responsibility." As a caretaker, I must provide everything that Yukon will need at that point in time. I feel a void in my heart for not being able to provide and be there for my family. Although that void will not be filled until my release, a part of it was filled while I was with Yukon.

Having a companion in a place like Dominguez is a gold mine. It's hard to live with 57 other guys and not have problems. Yukon was my silent partner, but I feel he spoke to me on another level. Whenever I was sad, he would know, and it was as if he tried to cheer me up. When I was happy, he was even happier. I was lucky to have been partnered with Yukon, and I hope that if he could talk he would say he was lucky to have met me.

Where did the time go? If I had a chance, I would do everything in my power to go with him. Now I know how my family felt when I was taken away. I know he is in a good place and is well cared for. I know one thing: although Yukon is gone physically, his memories will stay with me wherever I go. I will miss him terribly.

*Editor's Note: Michael is an offender at Dominguez State Jail and a puppy walker in the Pawsitive Approach Program. Yukon, a puppy in the Pawsitive Approach Program, recently graduated to the formal guide dog program.*



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## HOSPITAL WINDOW

Author unknown

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm-in-arm amidst flowers of every color and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the

*(Continued on page 11)*

## GDTx AND MY SENIOR PROJECT

By T.C. Huerta

Hello everyone! My name is T.C. Huerta and I am a freshmen at Texas A&M – Corpus Christi. Last year as a senior at Alice High School, I did a Senior Project: a year-long project consisting of 4 phases. First, we picked a topic and wrote a research paper (8-10 pages), and then we had to find a mentor who specializes in our field and do a project presentation pertaining to our topic. Later we put together a portfolio of all our work and then had our Senior Boards. This may not seem like a lot of work but believe me, it is!

I picked visual impairment for my topic, and for my thesis I chose to defend the fact that being blind does not render one helpless. While doing my research, I came across the subject of guide dogs and became fascinated with them. I contacted Guide Dogs of Texas (GDTx) and told them of my Senior Project. I asked if I could do a fund-raiser for them as my project. They jumped at the idea and soon I started collecting donations.

During Spring Break, I visited GDTx to meet everyone and see for myself all the good that was being done. Everyone there was so nice and helpful, and the pups were adorable! I definitely wanted to go back as soon as possible for another visit. When it came time to do my project presentation I was very nervous, but I was also thrilled to present GDTx with the sum of \$663 that I had raised!

After I finished my portfolio I had my Senior Boards in May. This is the most important phase of the project. I had to dress up (semi-formal) and present my project to 3 panel members. The members were either teachers or members of the city. For the presentation, I had to have visuals and at least an 8-minute speech prepared. When the presentation was finished, there was a short "lightning round" where the panel members asked questions. When the results came in, I learned that I passed with flying colors! I was so relieved.

Graduation day came quickly, and I was sad to see my time ending with GDTx. Then I realized that my involvement shouldn't have to end with my Senior Project. So I contacted GDTx once again and asked if I could continue to do more fundrais-

ing and was excited to be back on board! I fell in love with the foundation and the people are awesome!

The "dreaded" Senior Project turned out to be a blessing in disguise. During all this time, I had the pleasure of working with Debra Baker, Henri Schmidt, Teresa Beck, Michelle Pelletier, and Michelle Dolan. So I would like to thank each of these individuals and everyone else that helped make my project a success. I'm glad y'all let me stay around!

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*(Continued from page 10)* **HOSPITAL WINDOW**

other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene.

One warm afternoon, the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man couldn't hear the band, he could see it. In his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words. Days and weeks passed.

One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away. As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch and, after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone. Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed.

It faced a blank wall! The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."

*The origin of this letter is unknown and was retrieved from the Internet.*

## SCRAPBOOK 911 IS HOSTING A PARTY!

On March 12th, *Scrapbook 911* is hosting a party for Cooper, their guide dogs in training, before he graduates to advanced training. We are also welcoming Ruby, who was recently re-homed from the advanced training program with the Scrapbook 911 owners.

A portion of ALL sales on March 12th will go to Guide Dogs of Texas! Be sure to come wish Cooper farewell and welcome Ruby to the family!

Sign up early to take some of the pet-oriented scrapbooking classes on this day!

Scrapbook 911 is located at 1120 West Blanco Rd., 1/2 mile inside loop 1604 at Blanco Rd.  
For more information, please call (210)492-1984

## OUR 2005 GOLF TOURNAMENT

Saturday, September 17

Silverhorn Golf Club

Start time: 1:30 PM

More details to follow

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