



Best Dogs in Sight

A PUBLICATION OF GUIDE DOGS OF TEXAS INC.,
A TEXAS NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Summer 2008

Our Mission

To raise, train and provide
guide dogs to Texans who are visually impaired,
to enhance their mobility and independence.

Repeat Business

Ten years of placing guide dogs comes full circle
as first clients with second dogs complete training

The second generation of Guide Dogs of Texas dogs is giving independence and confidence to their visually impaired masters, as the first generation of dogs reaches retirement age. This spring, GDTx's first two repeat clients returned for training with their second dogs.

Guide Dogs of Texas placed its first guide dog in 1998. Since that time, 34 dogs have been placed with visually impaired Texans.



JAZZ IS NANCY'S SECOND
guide dog through GDTx. The dog
was carefully chosen and pre-
trained for Nancy.

Experience Leads to Confidence

Nancy recently said good-bye to her first dog, Sherman. The two were a team for seven years, during which time they faced a grizzly together in the Rockies. Diagnosed with cancer last fall, Sherman died on May 31.

Nancy came back to GDTx this spring to train with her second guide dog, Jazz. The second time around was much easier than the first, she said.

"With Sherman, I was afraid I would ruin this expensive dog with all the training," she said. "I didn't know what I was doing and had no confidence in myself."

What Nancy liked most about working with GDTx was the staff.

"They are a very helpful, compassionate group to work with," explained Nancy, who lost most of her vision suddenly in 1996. "You don't feel like just another person on a con-

veyor belt, never to be contacted again once you're in the world with the dog."

She also appreciates that her dogs have been carefully **chosen to fit her lifestyle and needs, rather than on a first-come-first served basis.**

Jazz is a small lab and curls up tight, so when her husband retires in two years, they will be ready to travel.

"I don't have any reluctance in going and doing—I'm not afraid now. Before having a dog, I would think twice," said Nancy, who volunteers at OWL radio, which provides daily radio broadcasts of print media for those unable to read.

"These dogs are more than just companions," she explained. "They say the dog is 'my eyes,' but she's more than a thing or a device to help me like a cane or Braille. You're a team: you know and trust each other."

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Thanks to Derek Freeman grant!
Taking the first steps to our own puppy breeding program
 To better serve multiple-disability, special needs clients

Guide Dogs of Texas was awarded the full amount of the Derek Freeman Scholarship, an award of £2,500 (about \$5,000), at the International Guide Dog Federation seminar in England in June. Four staff members (twice as many as two years ago) accepted the award while attending the seminar and visiting the largest guide dog breeding program in the world, in Warwick.

The funds will be used to build knowledge to ensure a successful puppy breeding program. This program will help us better respond to the growing demand for quality guide dogs that best meet our clients' needs.



GUIDE DOG INSTRUCTORS Sandy Merrill, Sarah Mumme and Jamie Landy toast GDTx's Derek Freeman Award in London

Applicants with special needs often find their way to GDTx's waiting list because we pre-train each dog for the client, offer small class sizes, one-on-one training and work on clients' home turf. Labrador-Golden Retriever (Goldador) crosses have a **significantly higher success and matching rate with these types of clients.**

Also, more puppies mean the chance to expand our number of prison inmates raising dogs in the PAWSitive Approach program.

GDTx projects its first dedicated litter in 2010. To that end, Michelle Pelletier (puppy program manager), Larry Gelvin (puppy raising pro-

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Dear Friend of Guide Dogs of Texas,

GDTx is the only school in Texas accredited by the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF). Of the 84 accredited schools worldwide, only 12 are located in the United States.

At GDTx, we work to accomplish very noble tasks – improving mobility and increasing independence of the visually impaired with dignity and compassion. That is what GDTx is known for!

*During its biennial seminar in London in June, members of the IGDF community recognized GDTx as a **quality training institution emphasizing one-on-one, personalized training.***

*More importantly, at that conference we were awarded the prestigious **Derek Freeman Scholarship for assistance in creating our own puppy breeding program.***

We are thrilled to report that initial steps are now being taken to launch a breeding program within the next 18 months.

Along with recognition from our colleagues, a growing number of visually impaired Texans recognize GDTx as the preferred provider of guide dogs. Our list of potential clients is growing and we are placing more dogs this year than ever before.

Increased demand for a quality product is an enviable situation for any organization! Being in this position allows Guide Dogs of Texas to look to the future with optimism and determination. Improving efficiency is critical in this time of increasing costs and expanding operations as we strive to serve all of our client teams.

Your contributions to Guide Dogs of Texas are valued dearly! Together we can share in making an enormous difference in the lives of the visually impaired. Thank you!

Larry Futtler

Executive Director, Guide Dogs of Texas

Helping More Than the Visually Impaired

PAWSitive Approach: GDTx is the only organization of any kind in Texas that is using offenders off the prison grounds to work with animals.



AARON SPENCER is raising Roxie as a PAWSitive Approach guide dog in the Dominguez State Jail.

“Guide Dogs of Texas does more than help the visually impaired,” said Aaron Spencer, a puppy raiser with GDTx’s PAWSitive Approach program. **“They help change the lives of people like me** that have made some poor decisions in their lives.”

Every puppy placed at Dominguez State Jail through the PAWSitive Approach is raised and socialized for future guide dog work by a team of two dedicated men and a volunteer Puppy Raiser. Men in the program are allowed up to five officer-supervised walks around San Antonio per week with their puppies.

Roxie, who happens to share the name of Aaron’s dog when he was a child, is the third puppy he has raised.

“This program has taught me patience and responsibility,” Aaron said. “It has also shown me some positive things I can accomplish.”

Another participant in the program, Alex Garcia, raised Eric’s dog, DJ, who as a team graduated from training this spring. Alex recently responded to a letter of thanks from Eric.

“Seeing you and D.J. just brought back tears,” he wrote. “It’s a little hard for me to express my emotions about D.J. He was my best friend during what was to be the worst and hardest part of my life, and without having met him, or the wonderful staff from GDTx, I don’t know how I would have gotten through it.

“Having you tell me that I did a good job with D.J. and that I should be proud of myself just makes me feel so wonderful.”

PAWSitive Approach Leaving Footprints

PAWSitive Approach is a joint effort between the Dominguez State Jail, the Windham School District (correctional education) and Guide Dogs of Texas.

Detainees enrolled in the program are carefully screened,

non-violent offenders. Trained by GDTx, they must be in good standing in school.

Good behavior is also required to participate. This requirement **saves the State of Texas about \$25,000** a year. As the program expands, the sav-

ings to the state will grow.

And as far as we know, there has been **zero recidivism** among the program’s participants during its first eight years.

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Guide Dogs of Texas, Inc. is a member of the
International Guide Dog Federation.



Take a prison puppy home for the weekend!

Pups raised in prison lack the experience of home. This is where you can help!

Each PAWSitive Approach puppy is assigned a volunteer raiser to bring them home for weekend home visits and indoor training walks. Call us at (210) 366-4081 for more information.

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Blind Artist Gets Second Dog

Eric was the first GDTx client to return for retraining with DJ after Chelsea retired. He now lives with both yellow labs.

DJ was raised in the Dominguez jail through the PAWSitive Approach program.

"The independence a guide brings is almost indescribable," Eric wrote to Alex, DJ's raiser. "You have every reason to be proud of yourself. You are helping a blind man see."

DJ is Eric's fifth dog. He's had 25 years of dog-handling experience since he got his first dog in high school.

"Every dog has had both wonderful qualities and challenging qualities, just like children," he noted. "Training with the dog is an emotional experience, a physical experience, a challenge but a good challenge."

Eric chose GDTx because its program brings the **trainer on-site to the dog owner's home and to work on his routes in his own community.**

Eric has been progressively



GDTx's FIRST REPEAT CLIENT is Eric, here with DJ. The dog was raised in the Dominguez Jail.

losing his sight since age six. He began painting at age four and has been a full-time professional artist for over 20 years. Several of his paintings are on display in GDTx offices. He calls himself "the paint brush from which God paints."

Independence, Responsibility & Exercise Go Up

Getting used to the extra walking was part of the hard work for Jarrod when he and his first guide dog, Seymour, went through training as a team this spring. Jarrod said he has actually lost weight since getting Seymour because he's able to get out and do so much more now.

Another key part of the training for Jarrod was learning to rely on a dog after being on his own with a cane.

"I just have to trust him, which after a few days of not falling down stairs, I did," he explained.

Born legally blind, Jarrod lost his vision completely at age 16. Now 28, Jarrod recently graduated from UTSA with a degree in liberal arts. Seymour would have helped immensely in college with navigating the crowds, he said.

"It's wonderful! He's changed my life for the better in a lot of ways," Jarrod said.

"Having Seymour has also made me more responsible, because I have to be there for him as much as he is for me," he noted.

Jarrod, who runs a concession stand on his family's paintball ranch near San Antonio, expects to be able to do even more, as Seymour continues to learn more

routes. **GDTx's lifetime commitment to its guide dog teams** includes a follow-up visit from the trainer three months after initial training and then yearly maintenance visits.

One of Jarrod's goals is to become an educator for the public about guide dogs: what they can do and how to react to them.

"It's really helped me out and I really love my dog," Jarrod said. "He's turned me into a goofy dog person."



SEYMOUR has turned Jarrod into a "goofy dog person."

Feeling at home

"A dog is better than a cane, because it gets better and better the longer you are together," said Leonel, a new GDTx owner.

While he and Annie, a black lab, are still getting to know each other, he appreciates her ability to go around obstacles. He also feels safer with the dog.

"I've always been a go getter, but it's better with a dog," he added.

One of Leonel's goals with Annie is eventually to be able to go on long walks of four to five

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Inspired to Go the Extra Mile

Volunteer hostess makes homemade bread, meals for new guide dog teams in training



GRAMMY HAWK brings home-cooked meals for the new clients while in training with their guide dogs at the GDTx residential training center. With her here is her granddaughter, GDTx instructor Sarah Mumme.

When Grammy Hawk's granddaughter asked her if she'd cook a homemade meal for some folks who were learning to work with their new guide dogs, she didn't know what she was getting herself into.

"Before I went down there, I didn't know there was such a need," she said.

"After seeing first-hand what they go through in learning to work with the dogs, I realized it's quite an ordeal—much more involved than I ever dreamed."

So Grammy's been cooking ever since, whenever there are clients in the residential training facility. Clients especially love her cinnamon rolls and her homemade bread, included with every meal. She averages three client meals during a three-week session, and sometimes filling in.

"To be able to help with any part of it makes me feel good," she explained. "I know there's a need so I just do it: to be a help to others is all, and I enjoy it. There's a bonding with the clients afterwards that you don't forget," Grammy said.

It's also a way to support her granddaughter, Sarah Mumme, who is in her third year as an apprentice instructor at GDTx, said Grammy, who is retired. She spends much of her time with her five grandchildren or helping friends and others through her church.

Grammy is one of several hosts/hostess (most of whom just make their favorite dishes or bring take-out) for clients in training. The help of approximately 90 volunteers make possible all we do at GDTx. A wide variety of volunteer opportunities include puppy raising, sewing and staffing special events.

To find out more how you can join our volunteers, call (210) 366-4081 or visit our website at www.guidedogsoftexas.org.

Guide Dogs' Wish List

- Liver treats
- Itty bitty dog biscuits
- Blankets, area size rugs, large carpet pieces (for the dogs to lay on)
- rope toys for large dogs
- one gallon NON ZIP top bags (we use them to pickup poo)
- HEB gift cards for client support while in training
- Wal-Mart gift cards for client support while in training
- Old cell phones and printer cartridges to be recycled for cash

Just arrived!

Toy 'Guide Dog in Training' Puppies

Available for \$10 on our website and in our offices

We're on video!

See us at
www.guidedogsoftexas.org
Click on "Puppy Raiser Program" and scroll down to "About Puppy Walkers"

Volunteer Puppy Raising Family Gets Return on Investment

With feeling of accomplishment, blessing to others

Volunteer puppy raisers with Guide Dogs of Texas have quite a job: they spend 24 hours a day with their puppy: a crazy ball of fur that chews on everything and has yet to be housebroken. Then 18 to 24 months later, they have a responsible, intelligent dog—just in time to say good-bye.



DAKOTA IS A LABRADOODLE, with the temperament of a Lab and the hypoallergenic fur of a poodle. He is being raised by Beth Lord and her family.

Beth Lord of Austin and her family have just started raising their second puppy, Dakota. Their first puppy, Willie, has graduated to the GDTx training center.

Along with the first goal of the raiser—to teach the dog good manners—the main work is to familiarize the dog with different public situations, Beth said. So the Lords take Dakota wherever they go, including routes outside their own routine that might be useful to a blind person.

The whole family is involved, including her homeschooled kids, age nine and 12, whose idea it was to become puppy raising family. The children are learning about investing in the lives of others, Beth added.

Puppy raisers are taught training techniques by GDTx staff.

“They really mentor you through the whole process,” Beth said. “For any issues with the dog, they’re on call. I never feel I’m doing it alone.”

Beth has been surprised at how many of the basic guide dog skills, such as locating objects, they’re able to teach the dog.

She was also pleasantly surprised by the reactions of people when they see the dog’s “guide dog in training” jacket and Beth’s ID badge.

The hardest part of puppy raising, Beth said, is that it’s such an investment of time and emotions.

“But on the flip side, that’s what makes it so rewarding,” she explained. “When you see the dog succeed it is a great feeling of accomplishment.”

She especially looks forward to seeing her dogs with clients.

“My hope is to give a **lifetime of freedom and mobility** to someone who otherwise would have a really challenging time of it,” she said. “Though puppies are fun, to be a blessing to someone is why we do it.”

**Get Your GDTx
Christmas Cards**

 Pre-sale begins Sept. 1,
for delivery the second week
of October.

www.guidedogsoftexas.org

Help Guide Dogs of Texas & save at

Cowboy Cleaners



Get a discount card for \$30
good for 25% off dry cleaning
once a month for an entire year!



All card sales benefit Guide Dogs of Texas

Get your card at these San Antonio locations:

25020 Blanco Rd., Ste. 110 / 231 Ramsey
19211 Huebner / 11759 Blanco Rd. / 3503 Oakgate

New Guide Dog Teams

(Continued from page #)

miles with her and with increasing speed.

Playing tug-of-war with Annie is another plus to a dog over a cane that Leonel enjoys.

“I love and take care of her like a kid,” he said.

Annie is Leonel’s third guide dog, his first with GDTx. Leonel applied for a GDTx dog based on the reference of a neighbor who had one. From his previous experiences, GDTx seemed like a good bet for him because it is a **smaller school, with more personalized, one-on-one training**, and is closer to home. He reported greater success with GDTx.

But what he liked most

about GDTx was the people.

“**They made me feel at home,**” he said.

He especially appreciated the volunteers coming and cooking for him during his weeks of residential training, and the friendly staff, who picked him up at home in Austin and took him back afterwards. The open invitation to the fridge, going out together during the training, and being sent home with dog food were other friendly touches he noticed.

Leonel, 29 and born vision-impaired, does assembly line work at the Travis Association for the Blind, known as the Austin Lighthouse. TAB trains and



LEONEL, here with Annie, chose GDTx for its personalized training.

employs visually impaired individuals in its manufacturing and distribution centers.



AT&T PIONEERS in San Antonio have selected Guide Dogs of Texas as its Focus Charity Group for 2009.

In July, 27 volunteers, including Dwayne Osbury, Ron Cardenas, and Charlie Brehmer, above, generously gave their time and talents at GDTx, cleaning and clearing the wooded area at our Training Center and creating additional storage in the attic of our client training area. The hours of work really showed results in making our site more useable as a training center for guide dogs that will help the visually impaired Texans enhance their independence and mobility.

Thank you, AT&T Pioneers!

Puppy Breeding Program is Born

(Continued from page 2)

gram supervisor), and a volunteer who will be the initial brood bitch holder will spend three weeks in training at the well-established Canine Development Center at Guiding Eyes for the Blind in Patterson, NY.

Our staff will study the practical and theoretical elements of a breeding program, such as selection of breeding stock and insemination procedures. They will learn about early raising procedures: screening and selection, handling, veterinary care, and socialization of puppies that lead to success as guide dogs.

Also on the syllabus is the development of a training module that will be used to teach local breeders, volunteers, and apprentice instructors about the elements of a successful breeding program.

2008 GDTx Board of Directors

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- Gail Walden, Vice President
- Charles Johnston, Secretary
- Andy Anderson, DVM
- Steve Cardenas
- John Curney
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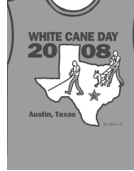
Take a Cruise with GDTx!

January 11-18

Seven Nights on the Western Caribbean

GDTx will receive \$100 per cabin for as many cabins as we can book through our travel agent Nannette Gwaltney. We have 18 folks signed up already, including two guide dog teams.

Contact Nannette at (210) 656-6668 or vacationsby-design@satx.rr.com for current prices.



White Cane Day

Austin, Oct. 15

March from the Capitol to City Hall starting at 8:30 a.m.
GDTx grad Harry Bokemeyer designed the t-shirt!

March in San Antonio

Oct. 11, 8 a.m.

Comanche Park

Guide Dogs of Texas 7th Annual Charity Golf Tournament

Friday, Sept. 5

1:30 p.m. Shotgun Start
Hyatt Hill Country Golf Resort

- Sponsorships available -
For more information go to
www.guidedogsoftexas.org
or call 210-366-4081

Do you know of someone who would like to receive this newsletter? Let us know!

Contact us: Larry Tuttle, Executive Director
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