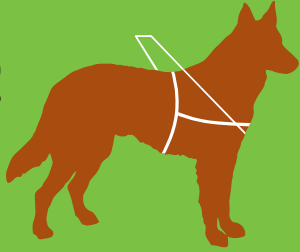


Independence Guide Dogs



Q U E S T

Winter 2013



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I patted Zakai on the head, kissed his warm, dry nose and walked out of the ER this past October, I choked back the huge lump in my throat. Zakai is my 9 year old German Shepherd guide dog. He was experiencing what is commonly known as "bloat". Zakai's stomach had rotated, effectively cutting off his digestive track. This usually results in a painful death if not immediately treated with major, emergency surgery. I left the Access Vet Emergency Hospital at 1:30 in the morning wondering if I would see Zakai again. Not only struggling with the

IGD Founder & President, Toby Willis with guide dog, Zakai

thought of losing my best friend and companion, I was also concerned with losing the independence that Zakai brings to my life.

While my girlfriend, Allison and I spent the rest of our sleepless night waiting for the call from the surgeon, Dr. Fiddler, I thought about what I would do without Zakai. Not just emotionally, but practically. Zakai does so much more than keep me safe in my travels, he gives me the confidence I need to fully participate in my personal and professional community. Of course, the question of "where will my next guide dog come from" is a lingering thought in all handlers' minds, but this tragedy brought that thought to the forefront of my conscience. As my thoughts raced, I mulled over my options. Almost all guide dog training programs require that the handler put his or her life on hold for weeks while living in a dormitory on a faraway campus. They then return to a familiar environment with an unfamiliar guide dog. And, most of the programs that offer a more personalized training schedule no longer train German Shepherds-my preferred breed.

All of these racing thoughts reminded me of exactly why I founded Independence Guide Dogs. I want to pass along the life changing experience of increased independence to any qualified blind individual who wants to use a guide dog. Of course, I had no idea that I would be facing the prospect of being one of IGD's first clients. There is a need for all the programs that are training guide dogs in the United States. Actually, there's a shortage! With more

HOME TO HARNESS

IGD's puppy raiser program offers customized support to match the skills of the puppy raiser and the progress of the pup. In order to smoothly transition the pup into the formal training program, an IGD guide dog mobility instructor (GDMI) regularly visits puppy raisers to coach the family and evaluate the progress of their pup. This ensures that pups are prepared and well-socialized before they begin their formal guide dog training work.



IGD's "Home to Harness" program (TM pending), is groundbreaking in the guide dog industry. At approximately 1½ years old, pups are ready for their formal training. In nearly all guide dog organizations, the dogs are kenneled during this next and extremely important phase of their development. As the name "Home to Harness" implies, IGD puppies in training remain with a puppy raiser family while receiving training from a certified GDMI.

Formal training begins when the pups are mature and ready to learn. The Home to Harness program allows the opportunity for the GDMI to begin introducing fundamental concepts to the pup at an earlier age to advance the pup's training and increase the likelihood of successful completion of the guide dog training program. The training continues until the pup is ready to be matched with a handler.

GIVE THE GIFT OF INDEPENDENCE

Would you like to help Independence Guide Dogs achieve their mission to increase independence for blind individuals?

Visit www.igdogs.org to make a secure online donation & learn other ways you can help.



DOGS IN TRAINING



AMMI

Ammi travelled from Seattle to Connecticut in August of 2012 where she settled in with her puppy raiser family, Gerry and Fran Kehoe. Donated by IGD Board member, Donna Morgan Murray, Ammi was born on April 1, 2011. She began her formal training in December 2012.

Ammi is on track to become IGD's first working guide dog.



QUEST

Quest is one of IGD's first two pups. Donated by Jody Potter of Rochester, NY, Quest was born on January 6, 2012 and has been raised by Toby Willis, IGD's founder and president. Days after her first birthday, Quest travelled from Seattle to Connecticut where she will live with Terry and Jon Edwards while she prepares for her formal training.

ON DECK



ROSTOV

Donated by Mother Isihia of the Russian Convent of Our Lady of Vladimir in Loomis, CA, Rostov is being raised by Andrea Crispin in Washington. The handsome Rostov is scheduled to enter his formal training mid to late spring 2013.



QUINCEY

Littermate to Quest, Quincey was also donated to IGD by Jody Potter. Over the next few months, Quincey will continue to develop her basic obedience skills and socialization abilities in preparation for her formal training. Throughout this process, she will remain with her puppy raiser, Janis Jerman.



TRAINING TIPS

Tip 1: Preventing the Great Escape

Does your dog bolt out the door as soon as it is opened? Maybe even before it's open all the way? Well you're not alone. This is a common problem. And, the remedy is easier than you might think.

With your dog on leash, have him/her sit each time they approach a door – going inside or out. The dog must stay while you open the door. If the dog breaks the sit, close the door and repeat. In time, your dog will look to you for approval before going through the door.

Tip 2: Breaking Bloodhound Behavior

Walking your dog can be frustrating if he/she constantly has their nose to the ground. To help stop the incessant sniffing, choose a clear wide sidewalk or path where trees, grass, snow and garbage are not in easy reach of your dog's nose.

Walk with a business-like, purposeful stride with your dog by your side. If your dog gets distracted by a scent, call the dog away from the distraction and reward them heavily with praise, treats, etc. for responding to you.

than 1.5 million blind people and only an estimated 8500 guide dog teams, I knew there were deserving individuals who were waiting on their key to increased independence. The year and a half waiting list at most programs reflects the severity of that need.

I also knew that I wanted to create something different. Not only did I want to use the German Shepherd breed (most programs prefer Labradors) I wanted to build an organization that was kennel-free, socially conscience, environmentally friendly and, most importantly, client focused. I surrounded myself with like-minded, passionate people who truly believe in our mission of "increasing independence for blind individuals". We knew that, in order to be successful, we would have to build a solid network of friends...like you.

Our network of puppy raisers, volunteers and friends allows us to operate the first kennel-free training program in North America that we are calling, "Home to Harness." This model increases the success of our guide dog teams and helps us hold down costs, operate with a minimal physical footprint, and makes for much happier German Shepherd dogs. When it comes to placing guide dogs with their new handlers, we went outside the box with our "LIFE Training Program". LIFE Training is a highly personalized, individual instruction that is folded into our clients' day-to-day routine. No interruptions, no major transitions and no dorms. Our volunteers and donors have demonstrated appreciation for our innovative model – as have our guide dog pups and future clients.

You may be wondering about Zakai. Perhaps you noticed at the beginning of this article that I referred to the independence he brings to my life. Yes, I said brings! Because Zakai, like the rock star he is, made it through surgery smoothly and rebounded in a matter of days! Dr. Fidler said that he had never seen a dog bounce back so miraculously. Now, as I pat his head and kiss his cold wet nose, I'm proud to say that I will be a client of Independence Guide Dogs, but not just yet!

On a Quest,

Jody D. Willis 🐾



TOP DOGS

Recognizing those whose contributions have had a major impact on helping IGD achieve its mission to "increase independence for blind individuals".



Jody Potter with Nike von Sitz vd Hose, mom to IGD pups, Quincey and Quest

Jody Potter

Jody Potter became interested in the German Shepherd breed in 1984 when she began working for Charles and Roberta Kaman, founders of the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. For the next 16 years she was mentored by Roberta Kaman until her passing in 2010. Jody began breeding German Shepherds in 1992. Her kennel name, "Sitz von der Hose", loosely translated as "Seat of the Pants" reflects how she approached life at the time.

The first priority for Jody in her shepherds is nerve strength. She firmly believes that if a dog has solid nerves it can do most anything. Jody also notes that structure is key for working dogs. Without it they cannot excel at work or sports. All of the Sitz von der Hose breed dogs are breed surveyed, X-rayed, and have passed endurance, temperament and health tests.

Over the years Jody's dogs have had many jobs including Search and Rescue, Police K9, competitive obedience and tracking dogs, the sport of IPO (Schutzhund), family companions and guide dogs. In fact, IGD's first two guide dog puppies, Quincey and Quest, were donated by Jody Potter. They are two pups from the first litter from Nike von Sitz vd Hose, IPO 3, KKL1. A strong female with excellent nerves, Nike competed in her first National championship in 2012. Of the eight pups born to Nike in January 2012, two were donated to IGD, one is in wilderness SAR work, one is an agility dog, two are in IPO training and two are excellent family companions. Certainly an accomplished litter.

IGD is grateful to Jody for starting off our program with the precious gift of two beautiful, strong nerved German Shepherd pups.



Nike von Sitz vd Hose, IPO 3, KKL1

LIFE TRAINING

A distinguishing difference in IGD's placement program is our LIFE (Local Instruction Familiar Environment) Training Program (TM Pending). LIFE Training is the process that IGD uses when placing a guide dog with a client. Most guide dog organizations require that the client travel to the organization's campus where they live in a dorm setting for several weeks while learning how to handle and work with their new guide dog.

In LIFE Training, the client's new guide dog and trainer travel to the client's home. Training is conducted in his or her community – their own home, work and places of recreation. With this approach there is no need to leave home and family or take time off from work to train with their new guide dog, avoiding any disruption to the client's life.

IGD's LIFE Training Program provides a better experience for the client and offers cost savings to the organization. Perhaps even more important, the team learns to work effectively together in the client's everyday routine. When the trainer leaves the newly formed team after two to three weeks, client and guide dog are able to maneuver through daily activities with confidence.



IN MEMORY

Dedicated to donations made in memory of the 2 and 4-legged friends and family that have contributed so much to our lives.

In loving memory of Kassy von Fernheim, TD, HCT from Gillian Salling, Fernheim German Shepherds of Sherman, TX

Kassy's lineage included a great-great-great grandmother who was from the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. Kassy was just the sweetest girl with the best temperament and a great work ethic. She had two super litters of pups and had just been bred again, but had a massive pyometra which went undiagnosed. Unfortunately, several trips to the vet were not enough to save her. Kassy was just 5 days shy of her 7th birthday when I had to let her go on March 15, 2012. It was a terrible loss, and even more so because I had not kept one of her pups as I always thought she would have another litter.

Kassy von Fernheim



Stout



Remembering Stout, from Georgetown Brewing Co. of Seattle, WA

Stout was a special friend to IGD sponsor, Georgetown Brewing Company. His companionship, love and loyalty will be greatly missed.

In memory of Jackson from the family of Sookyng Shutoff of Seattle, WA

Jackson was a dog of unknown age. He was rescued from a high kill shelter by a family friend who rescues dogs, evaluates and trains them to be service dogs. He had an extremely sweet demeanor and a very calming presence. He was a loving, affectionate Belgian Shepherd mix (at least that was our best guess at his breed). Our friend soon began to notice some behavior that would make him an unlikely service dog candidate, exhibiting signs of past abuse. While he was loving and affectionate, he was timid and shy. It soon became clear that Jackson would not be happy as a service dog and he should be adopted out to a loving family - ours. He loved to cuddle and play outside and he LOVED playing with our dog, Sydney. We will always love and remember Jackson.

Jackson



PUPPY RAISERS

Our puppy raisers are a vital part of the IGD organization. They are key to the early development of our future guide dogs. If you are interested in becoming an IGD puppy raiser please visit www.igdogs.org/raise-a-pup and complete an application. An adorable IGD puppy is waiting for you.



Janis & Quincey

Janis Jerman is currently raising IGD puppy, Quincey who just turned one earlier this month. Quincey is Janis' sixth guide dog puppy. She raised five pups for the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation (four are out working and one is back home with her) and is now honored to be IGD's first puppy raiser with Quincey.

Quincey is a smart, sweet, energetic, and fun pup. She loves to run and play and to chew on a bone snuggled up with big sis, Sheila.

Linda & Dazzler

Linda Evangelisti is raising IGD pup, Dazzler. A people dog for sure, Dazzler is especially fond of children. As a very young pup she began attending Linda's granddaughter's sporting events. A very social pup, Dazzler loves to do whatever her puppy raiser is doing. Starbucks is amongst her favorite destinations, quite possibly because there's a good chance "mom" will share her bagel with her. She also likes to visit her "aunt" at a popular West Hartford pub where she recently had the opportunity to meet Rebecca Lobo, star of the first undefeated, national champion UCONN women's basketball team.



EVENTS

February

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|-----------|-----------|---|
| Feb. 11th | 6:00 p.m. | Mixer at <i>The Maple Leaf Bar & Grill</i>
Seattle, WA |
| Feb. 14th | 5:00 p.m. | Happy Hour at <i>The Royal Room</i>
Seattle, WA |

March

- | | | |
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| March 17th | | St. Pat's Dash, Seattle, WA
Join the IGD Team!
contact: toby@igdogs.org |
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