

Visionary

Edition **52**
November
2023

Access Refusals
Working with clients
to combat access
refusals

Puppy Raisers
Methods used to
recruit and retain
volunteers



International Guide Dog Federation
Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading
Berkshire RG7 3YG United Kingdom
www.igdf.org.uk



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 –
Australia, Israel, Japan. Russia, New Zeland Spain, South Africa, South Korea, UK, USA



Cover Photo
Erez Barkai from Israel Guide Dogs sits on a bench alongside his guide dog Venus.

Registered in England Company No 2376162
Registered Charity No 1062441

Contents

- 3 Message From the Chair
- 5 IGDF Assessments
- 5 Committee Updates
- 6 Accessibility Issues and Israel GDCB: Erez Barkai’s Work
Lisa Baron Haet
- 8 The Seeing Eye’s Advocacy Initiatives to Combat Access Refusals
Melissa Allman
- 10 Fundación ONCE del Perro Guía (FOPG) collaborates with Cabify to minimize Access Refusals in Spain
Maria Jesús Varela Méndez
- 12 Accessibility in South Africa
Tanya Schönwald
- 15 Accessibility Japanese Way
Mayu Oshino (JGDA)
- 18 Puppy Raising at Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, U.K.
Haley Andrews
- 20 Puppy Raisers: The Pillars of Our Success at BLVNZ Guide Dogs
Aditya Kundalkar
- 22 Flexing to Meet the Lifestyles of our Volunteers
Rachelle Kniffen (Leader Dogs)
- 23 How Guide Dogs caters for all walks of life
Guide Dogs Australia
- 24 Guide dogs Russia celebrates its 20th anniversary
Lina Pochueva
- 26 Samsung Guidedog School 30th Anniversary
Baron Jang
- 26 Knowledge Sharing Webinars

Message From The Chair

Bill Thornton | Chief Executive Officer
BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, Canada

On behalf of your Board, I welcome you to our November issue of The Visionary. We trust that through 2023 everyone has found more settled times and been able to return, as much as possible, to normal working conditions.

Your Board recently agreed to establish a new Standards Committee, removing this task from the Accreditation Committee. The Standards Committee will be chaired by Board Member Tim Stafford. As we move forward with more and more scrutiny from external bodies this is an important new step applying more resources to a corner stone of our organization. Many thanks to the committee members for taking on this important role.

Regarding our IGDF Standards, I would also like to remind our members that effective January 1st, 2024, we are all to adopt and work under our new revised standards, Standards 2024, a copy of which has been sent to all member organizations. You can find a copy of the workshop presented to the members regarding our new standards for 2024 on the [IGDF website](#).

Guide Dogs UK, our host organization for the 2025 IGDF Conference is already busy planning our conference to be held at Warwick University. Board member Christine Baroni-Pretsch has once again, kindly taken on the role of Chair of the Conference Programme Committee. More details to be announced later.

IGDF Assessments



In April 2024, the Board will undertake a new five-year Strategy Review. Prior to this, there will be a member survey sent out early next year to gather your

views and ideas to guide the Board through this process, securing a positive and creative plan for our future.

In keeping with our Memorandum of Cooperation with Assistance Dogs International, in the new year we will be working on further strengthening our relationship with ADI and we are currently exploring new areas of collaboration. We will keep you informed.

Lastly, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Samsung Guide Dog School on their 30th Anniversary. I was invited to attend the celebrations for the 30th Anniversary. As well as celebrating the wonderful milestone, they also opened an entire new building – the envy of all of us. For those of you looking at new builds, this complex would be a great model to visit for inspiration and ideas. From all of us congratulations to Samsung Guide Dogs. Truly a model guide dog school. Thank you for having me share in the excitement of the day.

As the year draws to a close, I wish, each and everyone of you, every success and remind you that with every team we graduate, we have planted seeds of opportunity for those we serve.

Bill Thornton, IGDF Chair

Congratulations to the following organisation which has become an EO:

- Stichting Fivel Hond en Assistentie, Netherlands

Congratulations to the following organisation which has become an AO:

- Fundacja Pies Przewodnik, Poland
- Escuela para Entrenamiento de perros Gui a para Ciegos, IAP, Mexico

Two Applicant Organisations in Poland, Fundacja Pies Przewodnik and Fundacja Vis Maior, have merged to form a new organisation called Fundacja Vis Maior Pies Przewodnik.

Congratulations to the following organisations which have passed their accreditation assessments:

- Näkövammaisten liitto Opaskoirakoulu, Finland
- Associacao Beira Aguieira de Apoio ao Deficiente Visual, Portugal
- Fundación ONCE del Perro-Guía, Spain
- Guiding Eyes for the Blind, USA
- Škola pro výcvik vodicích psů, s.r.o, Czech Republic
- Independence Dogs Austria

The following organisation has had its membership suspended:

- Hong Kong Guide Dog Association

Committee Updates

Education Committee



Lee Buckingham

We are pleased to announce that Lee Buckingham (Guide Dogs Queensland) has been appointed Chair of the Education Committee. You will all recall that Lee led the team that developed the Moodle project.

Many thanks to Lee for taking on this important role, a key component of our IGDF professional development plan and providing us with continuity through his stewardship.

A warm welcome also to new member, Ben Cawley, who joins us from Guiding Eyes for the Blind, USA.

Accreditation Committee



Susan Armstrong

Our thanks go to Susan Armstrong who recently stood down as Chair of the AC but has remained as a committee member. Susan very kindly took on the responsibilities of AC Chair just as the global COVID crisis began.

She immediately faced the mammoth task of re-inventing our entire accreditation process. Under her skilled leadership and collaborative work her colleagues on the AC, we prevailed, and

continued to serve our members requiring re-accreditation during this challenging time. On behalf of our entire membership, We would like to take this opportunity to thank Susan for her time as Chair of the Accreditation Committee. Tim Stafford is currently acting as the Committee's Chair until a replacement is recruited.

Standards Committee

Welcome to IGDF's three newest Committee Members from Australia, UK and USA. Each will lead a working group of their IGDF colleagues to review and revise the IGDF Standards to ensure these reflect the changing environment.

Our new members are:



Dr Nicola Cotton, from Vision Australia;

Barry O'Toole, from Guide Dogs, UK; and



Jim Kessler, from The Seeing Eye, USA.

Accessibility Issues and Israel GDCB: Erez Barkai's Work

Lisa Baron Haet
Israel Guide Dog
Centre, Israel

An area which we are currently emphasizing is the power and impact of the Israel Guide Dog Centre for the Blind, in Israeli society.

Erez Barkai, our new Director Community Relations since January 2023, has already made great inroads in the area of accessibility of all Service Dogs in the public sphere. Erez is a long-time client of the centre, partnered with his third guide dog, Venus. He is an educator, musician and father of three.

As part of Erez's new role, he is currently in the process of completing a month-long course regarding general accessibility issues under the auspices of "Negishut-Accessibility Israel." Erez is now our organisation's accredited Accessibility Advocate. This is in compliance with Israeli law which states that all places of work with more than 25 employees must have a trained Accessibility Advocate.

Erez's job includes outreach, not simply to raise awareness in a general manner, but more specifically to ensure that the rights of our guide dog and service dog graduates are protected in the public arena.

When he receives complaints from our graduates and puppy raisers of issues concerning accessibility in the public arena, not only does he deal with the specific issue, but uses this as an opportunity to make significant changes in policy and educate both the individuals and management concerned.



Erez Barkai with his guide dog, Venus.

Some of the initiatives and work undertaken by Erez, in coordination with our co-CEOs Carmel Reiss & Noach Braun are:

- Lectures to the management of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Mass Transit System regarding accessibility during construction periods.
- Meeting with the State Comptroller's Public Complaints Commission to coordinate a working relationship and cooperation.
- Successfully changing the Tel Aviv municipal bylaw regarding access to the Tel Aviv beaches for guide dog puppies in training and guide dogs.
- Advocacy and discussion with the 40 social workers at Meir Medical Center Hospital in Kfar Saba.

- Interface with the Israeli Knesset, (Israel's Parliament).
- Creating a working relationships and cooperation with the Commission for Equality of Rights for Persons with Disabilities in the Ministry of Justice.
- Working with the Israel Railways and meeting with station managers and inspectors, and working with rental car companies and a major pizza chain regarding education of staff after entry refusals. Another positive outcome with regard to the pizza chain is that they committed themselves to becoming our donors for the next three or more years!
- Cooperation with the Nature and Parks Authority and outreach to the organization's staff and the nature reserves.
- Meeting with the Ministry of Welfare regarding the implementation of the law for service dogs.

We are at the beginning stage of many of these initiatives and discussion. The point isn't the specifics, per se, but rather the outreach that the Centre is embarked upon to ensure the rights of guide dog users, service dog users and puppy raisers. We have standing and credibility, not only as the most significant guide dog centre in Israel, but also the only one as an accredited member of the International Guide Dog Federation.

We are proud of our advocacy work and consider it an exemplary example, making a significant impact in Israeli society.

We believe that the key to creating a more understanding and accepting society for people with disabilities is to increase visibility. Through our guide dogs

and puppies, the Center has been in the forefront of increasing visibility for people with blindness and vision impairment. Other ways include:

1. Student Puppy Raisers - The constant exposure of our 'guide dog puppies in training' on the campuses helps to create more understanding of people with blindness specifically and for people with disabilities by association. Our students are advocates and ambassadors in explaining what we do and why (this is a reason why we have 400-500 applicants a year for our puppies).
2. The Centre was one of the first in Israel to embark upon training Service Dogs for Israel Defence Force veterans, even before we became involved with the Ministry of Defence in January 2022, and the only organisation that is accredited by an international service dog organisation (ADI).
3. For over 25 years, the CanVelo Tandem Bike group brings together both sighted and blind for sports activities.
4. In 2022, we were very active in working with then MP Shirley Pinto as she legislated a bill to systemize and establish rules of what constitutes a service dog and the legal rights of service dog users.
5. For over 30 years, the Center has advocated for the rights of guide dog users and working to ensure that they have full accessibility in public places
6. In 2016 we worked with then MP Rabbi Dov Lipman to extend the legal rights of guide dog users to 'guide dog puppies in training' to allow full accessibility in the public sphere.

The Seeing Eye's Advocacy Initiatives to Combat Access Refusals

Melissa Allman
The Seeing Eye,
USA

One of the most important and concerning topics of discussion at the International Guide Dog Federation Conference in Vancouver last April was the persistence of access denials guide dog handlers are experiencing throughout the world. At The Seeing Eye, it has always been our practice to educate our students about their rights and responsibilities concerning access with their dogs, but we have had to become more creative and proactive with those efforts as the landscape has changed. In the spring of 2023, we launched several new initiatives directed at educating law enforcement, guide dog handlers, and the public.

Our law enforcement education campaign is an interactive online training course that is available to police officers and other first responders in New Jersey.



The Seeing Eye Advocacy poster

Service Animals & Public Access in the U.S.

Staff may ask two questions:

- (1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- (2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

-The Americans with Disabilities Act



The Seeing Eye Advocacy poster

The course covers the federal and state laws pertaining to the access rights of guide dog handlers as well as Dusty's Law, the New Jersey statute that makes it a crime to interfere with or harm a service animal and its handler. The New Jersey police education platform that houses our training has begun to provide us with statistics on the number of law enforcement personnel who have completed the training. We will learn as much as we can from law enforcement about how effective and helpful the course is and then begin working toward similar efforts in other states.

In April, we also launched a new Seeing Eye Advocacy App which is intended to be a useful resource for guide dog handlers; guide dog instructors who want to know the laws when they are traveling with dogs and working in the field with students and

graduates; business owners; dog owners who want to know how to manage their pet dogs around guide dogs; and anyone else who might need or want the information. It is a free app, currently for Apple/iOS and soon to be available for Android users. It provides information about the U.S. and Canadian laws that ensure guide dog handlers have access to public places and protect them from interference from people and other dogs. The app contains legal resources and educational materials that can be used for self-advocacy. The information is arranged topically where feasible for easy navigation and use.

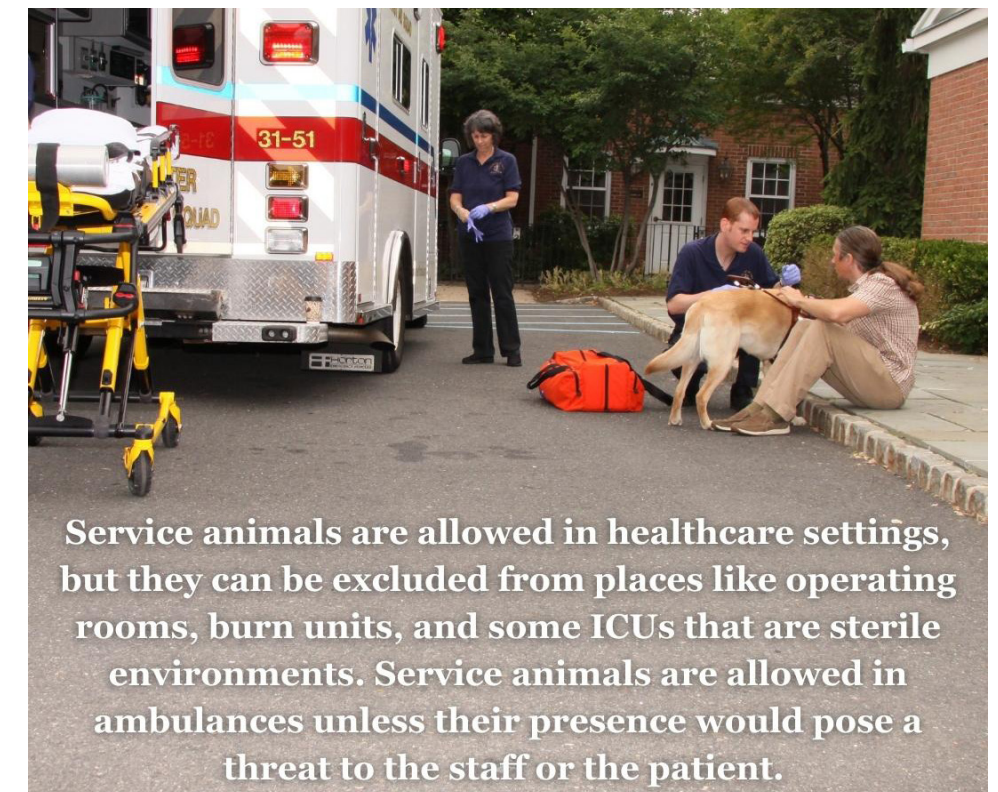
[The app can be downloaded from Apple's App Store here.](#)

Another strategy we have been using to broaden the reach of our advocacy message is to make better use of social media in this area. In the past few months, we have used our blog and other social media platforms to post about various service animal-related issues including what a service animal is and is not, what entities can ask for and cannot, rideshare issues, access to national parks, air travel, and grass roots legislative efforts of our graduates. These topics were chosen based on the most common access issues we hear about from our graduates as well as questions and concerns raised on social media.

We realize that our graduates cannot be effective self-advocates if they do not stay informed

about the laws and latest developments that impact their access rights. Each class of students receives a one-hour "Access Lecture," but this is not enough for students who are inundated with information in class and cannot possibly retain everything. Therefore, we hosted what will be only the first of periodic topical advocacy webinars for our graduates and other guide dog handlers in the U.S. and Canada. Our first webinar took place on September 22 and was focused specifically on current air travel issues guide dog handlers are facing and how to navigate them.

We look forward to keeping our IGDF and ADI community up to date on these projects as they evolve and progress. Access denials will continue to be an issue guide dog schools and handlers must grapple with, and we will be stronger if we share ideas for combatting them where possible.



The Seeing Eye Advocacy poster

Fundación ONCE del Perro Guía (FOPG) collaborates with Cabify to minimize Access Refusals in Spain

Maria Jesús Varela Méndez
ONCE Guide Dog Foundation, Spain

Despite the legal rights of guide dog users in Spain to access transport and other services, many guide dog users continue to be illegally denied access. Recently, there have been many illegal access refusals involving private hire or ride hailing services such as Uber or Cabify.

Due to the proliferation of these incidents, the ONCE Guide Dog Foundation (FOPG) contacted the three leading service providers of this type in Spain. We explained the problems that guide dog users face when drivers illegally refuse to let their dogs travel in the vehicle. Concerned about this situation, Cabify responded by asking for information and offering to work with FOPG to seek solutions.

As part of this work, FOPG is explaining to Cabify employees and collaborating drivers the needs of a guide dog user. This includes how they can facilitate the location and access to the vehicle, how to assist them, and how to make any journey with their dog safely.

Cabify is a company that tries to offer an accessible service for people with disabilities.



Demonstration of a guide dog in the back

Its app is fully accessible for people using assistive technology. However, the problem that the FOPG presented arose from the drivers of the cars that offer transfers through its app and with its brand.

Following the first meeting with Cabify Managers in Spain, actions were taken to improve the situation. These included:

- Improved communication with drivers and fleet managers on the importance and legal obligation of accepting guide dogs.
- Simplification of the app interface to reflect the individual transport preferences of people who are blind or have low vision.
- Improvement of the internal complaints process for guide dog access refusals and offer a more personalized treatment when these incidents occur.



Demonstration of a guide dog in the front

To identify areas of further improvement, Cabify developed a survey for guide dog users. FOPG distributed this to all guide dog users in the parts of Spain where Cabify operates. This gave guide dog users the chance to provide feedback on their experience of all aspects of the service, including the app and drivers.

In addition, a training session was held with drivers, employees and fleet managers, which showed how guide dogs are trained and how they travel in vehicles. Videos were also recorded showing how users travel with their guide dogs in cars. This is used to educate and raise awareness among drivers.

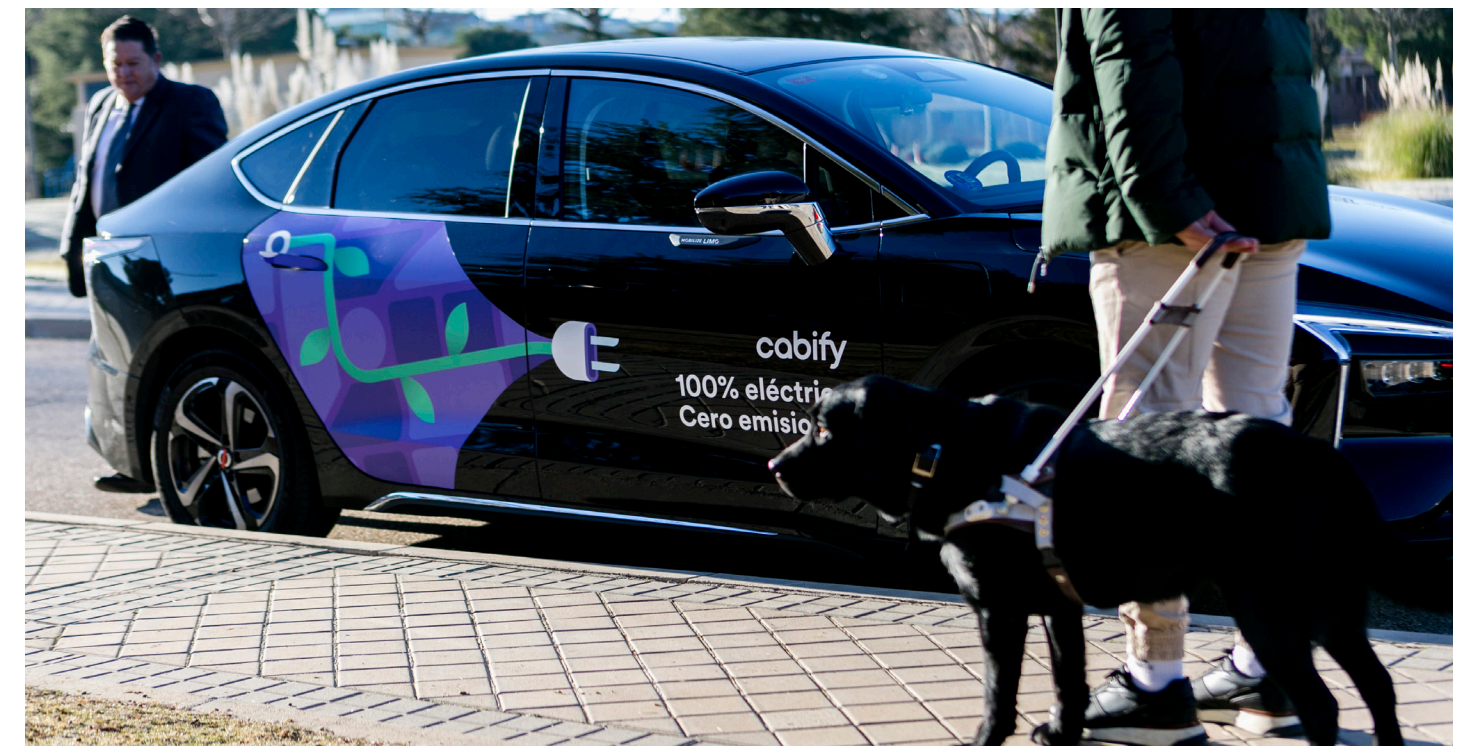
To facilitate the use of taxi and private hire vehicles through its platform, Cabify has an accessibility menu specially designed so that people with specific needs can notify the driver of the assistance they will need. Today, about 100,000 people have this menu activated in the app in the countries

where Cabify operates. Options include the possibility of requesting assistance from the driver to get on / off the vehicle, or to request communication in a particular medium – e.g. voice messages or text messages.

Both entities have signed a collaboration agreement by which the Spanish multi mobility platform has sponsored a litter of future guide dog puppies. This is a sign that those responsible for Cabify are satisfied with the collaboration and open to continue improving the service for people who are blind or have low vision. While access refusals do still occur and more work is needed, this collaboration has greatly reduced the number of illegal access refusals faced by users of this service.

[You can view the video Cabify uses to show drivers how guide dogs travel in cars here.](#)

A Spanish translation of this article is available on request..



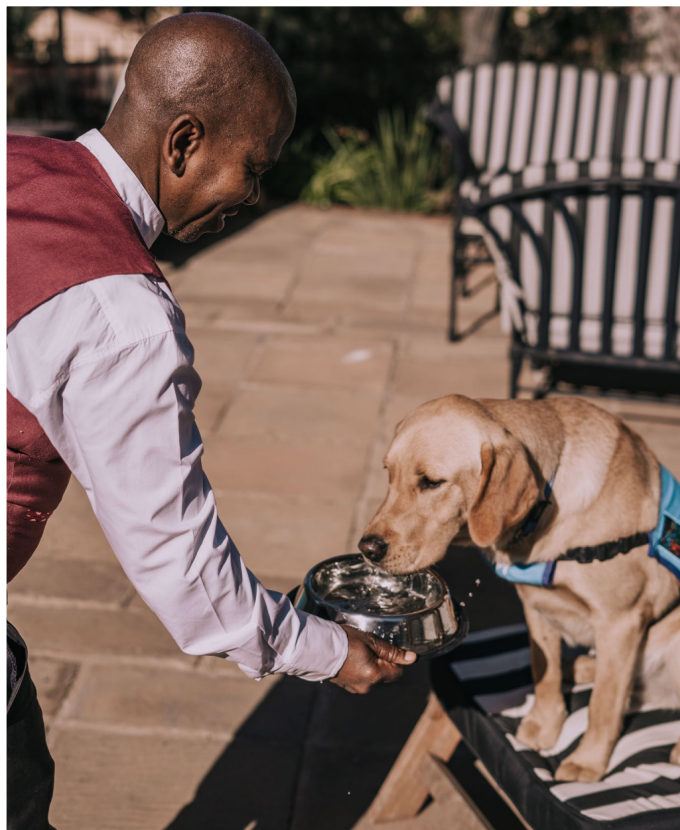
ONCE Guide Dog Foundation working with Cabify to minimise access refusals in Spain

Accessibility in South Africa

Tanya Schönwald
**South African Guide-Dogs
Association for the Blind**

It is a beautiful Summer day in Johannesburg, South Africa, and frankly across the country the weather is wonderful. It is an invitation for all and sundry to spend time outdoors visiting sidewalk cafés, bistros and strolling through shopping boulevards. It is also the time that the South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind experiences a marked increase in access-denial complaints.

South Africa's Constitution is considered among the most progressive in the world. While South Africa's Constitution has been heralded for containing rights not found in many other constitutions globally, we are still often faced with instances where theory is not translated into practice.



GDA's Hilton Hotel Access campaign

Case in point is Access Rights for the differently-abled making use of Assistance Dogs. According to South African Law, Assistance Dogs are allowed in all public spaces except for Intensive Care Units. The South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind (GDA) specialises in three types of Assistance Dogs; Guide Dogs for the Blind, Service Dogs for Wheelchair users and Autism Support Dogs for children with Autism and in all three of these elements, we have come across access obstacles. We do also need to provide a caveat when saying so and that is that in the majority of cases, there is no malice in access denial, often only a lack of knowledge. In a country with vastly different religions, cultures and as many as twelve official languages, including Sign Language, it is to be expected that we will experience misunderstandings and misconceptions about Assistance Dogs.

As is practice, we include training on Access Rights with our clients but it became apparent that the South African business and public environments needed awareness and training too and hence the GDA Assistance Dog Access Programme was born. This Programme is our flagship Social Justice Programme (justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.) and has two main objectives:

- To lobby for the rights of disabled persons to be accompanied by their Assistance Dogs in all public spaces and to be granted entry without question as is instructed by our South African Law and Constitution;

- To train the hospitality industry, the security industry, ride-share companies, the retail industry and any other industry that offers any obstruction to total freedom of movement for our clients and their Assistance Dogs, on Access Rights and the empathetic treatment of those with Assistance Dogs.

We provide on-site training and we are proud of our partners in this programme that are taking the lead such as Massmart, Spur Co. (one of the largest steak house chains in the country); GAUtrain (our speed train services) and G4S to name a few. Security providers are probably the most important training recipients, as they are the first-contact points at airports, shopping malls, banks, hotels etc.

Even more exciting however, is the further step taken through our Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Pretoria (UP), based in the country's capital and one of the largest in the country, confirming a faculty-wide collaboration, trans-disciplinary agreement on research and innovation. This allows GDA to work with academia on the creation and absorption of Access Rights and issues into the curricula in faculties such as Law, Veterinary Sciences and Occupational Therapy.



MoU Signing at the University of Pretoria

For example, GDA and UP are exploring within Public Law, how the human/animal nexus and the interdependency within this nexus can be incorporated into the two modules, 'Disability Rights' (DRL 420) in the LLB undergraduate programme, and 'Protection of Person with Disabilities at a Global Level' (DRL 803) in the LLM / MPhil postgraduate programme. More specifically they are exploring the nexus and interdependency within human rights of persons with disabilities and Assistance Dogs (and the substantive provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol.

In both the undergraduate and postgraduate modules, the students are introduced to the CRPD and its Optional Protocol and the fact that South Africa is currently in the process of domesticating the Convention into South African Law.



GDA's Hilton Hotel Access campaign

This will inevitably change the landscape (and legislation) of persons with disabilities within the South African context.

Core aspects of the CRPD which will be highlighted during the lecturing of both the modules during the second semester, will be awareness-raising (including attitudinal and physical barriers), accessibility, living independently and being included in the community, personal mobility, work and employment, amongst other, which all

have an interrelated nexus with persons with disabilities and Assistance Dogs.

GDA provides interactive sessions with both our Assistance Dogs and clients, exposing students to the practicalities of being differently-abled. Apart from awareness-raising of Assistance Dogs and their importance for personal mobility of persons with disabilities, this activity must be translated into a research paper (assessment) regarding barriers, awareness-raising etc. and their experience with their Assistance Dog.

2023 is the year of our 70th birthday, and GDA is proud to lead the way on Access Rights in our country through not only schooling our clients on their rights as Assistance Dog Owners, or the training of industries across the board on inclusion, but also progressively working on the inclusion of access rights in broad-based academic platforms for generations to come, literally transforming theory into practice.



GAUtrain, Bombela and Mega Xpress with GDA on the Sandton Campus

Accessibility Japanese Way

Mayu Oshino
Japan Guide Dog Association

I belong to the Public Relations and Communication Department and am in charge of educational activities to promote understanding of guide dogs and visual impairment. I participate in guide dog seminars with my guide dog Baron to give lectures and demonstrate how to accept guide dog users. As a guide dog user, I stand in a neutral standpoint as both a guide dog user and JGDA staff to have an open discussion.

Obligation to accept guide dogs in society

In Japan, the Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons was enacted in 2002 to promote the independence and social participation of persons with physical disabilities living with assistance dogs (guide dogs, hearing dogs and service dogs).

The law defines the obligations to be fulfilled by the 'user', 'society' and 'assistance dog organisations' in their respective capacities to enable assistance dog users to participate in society in their way and makes the acceptance of assistance dogs in facilities and shops used by an unspecified number of people an obligation.

The user must "indicate that the dog is an assistance dog", "manage its behaviour", and "manage its health and public hygiene" so that society can accept assistance dogs with confidence. However, there are no fines or penalties for those who refuse to accept guide dog users to their business/facility.

In addition, in 2016, the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities came into force, and access refusals of assistance dogs are set to be 'unfair discriminatory treatment on the basis of disability'.



Mayu demonstrating how guide dog user walk with her partner Baron, at a seminar for a train company

The current situation of access refusal

According to a survey conducted in 2020 by the The National Federation of All Japan Guide Dog Institutions (consisting 8 out of 11 guide dog schools in Japan), 336 out of 673 guide dog users (643 respondents) belonging to member organisations (52.3% of the total) said that they had experienced access refusals. This suggests that understanding and acceptance of guide dog users still needs to be widespread.



Mayu and her guide dog, Baron, in a taxi

The 336 respondents who said they had experienced access refusals had experienced a total of more than 844 incidents, equating to an average of 2.5 refusals per person over a year.

The most common places where refusals occur are restaurants, out of other places such as medical facilities, public transportation and accommodations.

JGDA has conducted an annual survey on access refusals by interviewing its users every year since 2016 on the occasion of the implementation of the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and has published the results of the survey.

If a user is rejected and cannot convince the other party through their explanation alone, and they request us to take action, our staff takes the initiative to facilitate a solution through explanation and discussion.

Case study of response to access refusal

‘Dogs cannot enter a tatami floor room.’ Restaurant staff worry whether guide dogs can be in a tatami room without damaging the mat.

Traditionally, the Japanese ate meals sitting on tatami or weaved straw mats, and they rolled out the futon mattress to sleep on tatami floors. As the Japanese are very close to the floor, removing shoes when entering houses and keeping the floor clean is natural. Made with straw, tatami is delicate, easy to vacuum or dust, but extremely hard to wash, so only barefoot or with socks are allowed.

A guide dog user was refused by a major Japanese franchise restaurant with staff saying, “**Dogs cannot enter a tatami floor room**” because the seats in the restaurant were all tatami floors. The user asked to speak directly with the manager but was refused, with the staff saying it was the manager’s instruction. The guide dog user gave up eating at the restaurant.

JGDA staff contacted the restaurant manager directly by telephone and discovered that the restaurant had a policy to accept guide dogs. The manager told us that the access refusal had occurred because of resistance to having dogs in a tatami room and because there had been no previous cases of guide dog users visiting the restaurant in the past, and he had yet to be able to train his employees.

Even if the restaurant had a policy to accept guide dogs, if the employees didn’t know, there would be another refusal. We told them that guide dogs can wait on a rug without walking around in tatami rooms and also sent a guide dog access manual for all the employees in the restaurant to educate how to treat guide dogs and vision impaired people.

In the above case, there were two issues: concern that the dog might damage the tatami mats and lack of awareness of the obligation to accept guide dogs. Both could have been solved by ensuring that people have a proper understanding of the Act on Assistance Dogs for Physically Disabled Persons and the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities.

JGDA has a three-minute YouTube video showing how a guide dog user would enter a tatami floor facility. It shows the facility doesn’t need to prepare anything for a guide dog user.

[You tube: Is it okay for a guide dog to enter the tatami room?](#)



Mayu and her guide dog Baron at a tatami mat floored Sushi restaurant. Mayu wiped Baron’s paws before entering the room and prepared a blanket for him to stay.

Efforts to eliminate access refusals

JGDA is taking various initiatives to eliminate access refusals. When facilities and shops are consulted on how to accept guide dogs, we would go out and conduct ‘seminars to accept guide dog users’ for their employees; since 2021, seminars specific to each type of business, such as restaurants and medical institutions, have been held online, with participation from all parts of the country. In addition, we are working with the government and industry associations, for example, by creating opportunities to explain and distribute materials on the acceptance of guide dogs at hygiene managers’ training sessions.

We will continue to work towards a society where everyone can get out and about safely.

JGDA has posted videos on YouTube to promote understanding of guide dogs. [You can watch the videos from this link.](#)

Puppy Raising at Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, U.K.

Haley Andrews
Guide Dogs for the Blind, U.K.



Guide Dogs UK puppy and guide dog

In 2022 Guide Dogs UK saw a large decline in our Puppy Raiser population losing nearly 50% more volunteers than those becoming active, heavily impacted by Covid and the cost-of-living crisis. As an organisation we now aim to place on average 1400-1500 puppies a year, so this created a serious issue.

In response we pulled together a focused taskforce to do a root and branch review into opportunities and barriers to recruiting and retaining Puppy Raisers. This resulted in several improvements in processes and marketing.

The single largest success was significantly broadening the geographical area from which we'd accept puppy raising applications. Previously, approximately 20% of the country was open to potential puppy raising applications. We now accept applications from nearly 75% of the country. Only central London and remote areas are now ineligible for potential puppy raisers. We took a bold approach in inviting applications nationwide, using this information to inform where we bolster

puppy development staff. We also informed applicants that some of them may have to wait up to a year for a puppy until we recruit and train new staff. Importantly, this has also been supported by great collaborative working from our puppy operations team. This team manages the puppy raising volunteers and helps them grow their skills and knowledge before their puppy arrives. We were then able to target staff recruitment at geographic areas with high levels of volunteer applications, growing our Puppy Development Advisor team by 20%.

We also worked with Communications colleagues to secure some great national and regional public relations activity. The highest spikes in applications were driven by large amounts of 'sofa time' on the BBC Breakfast show – a national institution in the UK. One well-known BBC reporter is a Guide Dog Owner, whose dog had just retired. His long wait for a replacement was turned into an opportunity for him to tell the story of the puppy raiser shortage and encourage the public to consider volunteering.

Alongside these public relations opportunities, we increased promotional activity, both nationally and locally. We tested channels usually reserved for fundraising, such as door drop, press inserts, radio, and paid digital – primarily paid targeted Facebook advertising – to drive awareness and applications. These had varying levels of success, but delivered a large increase in applications overall. Paid Facebook advertising was the most successful.

We looked closely at the volunteer applicant experience and improved the email touchpoints. This included personalising email contact to applicants and reducing automated email correspondence.

We created a "what to expect" document to educate potential volunteers before interview. This helped potential volunteers decide if the opportunity was right for them earlier in the process, and received positive feedback.

The significant increase in applications created the challenge of ensuring these were processed promptly. We increased senior oversight of application processing. We also simplified the application form, removed some barriers from our acceptance criteria. For example, raw feeding in the home would previously have excluded a family from puppy raising. We also introduced a dedicated centralised interview team. These additions helped us to increase approvals and ensure a more standardised process and experience for our volunteers. By moving from locally managed to a centralised processing structure, we gained a closer national oversight of the puppy raising pipeline. This enabled us to prioritise processing of applicants for interview in the geographic areas they are most needed.

Volunteer supply is now in a much better position, but we know that the summer and festive months always remain challenging. Therefore, we continue to recruit for a surplus to cover these times. We are also analysing our learning so we can continue to support our technical teams in the future. The puppy raiser population continues to grow and recover. We currently have over 2,500 puppy raiser households approved, with 50-100 new households being added each month. We are now successfully placing over 100 puppies a month and plan to grow this further in the future.

Increasing puppy raising capacity is a key enabler to reduce our waiting list for guide dog partnerships. At the end of 2021, we had 908 puppies out with puppy raisers. As of October 2023, we currently have over 1300; an increase of 43%. In the last 18 months, we have not only mitigated the loss of a large proportion of our volunteer base, we have improved our ability to support our volunteers and provided space for even more puppy placements. Our next area of focus is the reward and recognition of our volunteers, so more to come!



Haley Andrews being interviewed on Sky News by Kay Burley

Puppy Raisers: The Pillars of Our Success at BLVNZ Guide Dogs

Aditya Kundalkar
Blind Low Vision
New Zealand



Blind Low Vision NZ Guide Dog Trainers with their training dogs

At Blind Low Vision NZ Guide Dogs, Puppy Raisers form the foundation of our success. Their on-going commitment is essential in providing Kiwi's that are blind or have low vision with Guide Dogs.

Like many guide dog schools, our puppy raiser recruitment revolves around social media promotions, annual appeals, word of mouth, and the visibility of our pups within the community. Therefore, in addition to recruitment, BLVNZ Guide Dogs maintains a strong focus on retaining our dedicated puppy raisers, many of whom have been with us for several years and some that have been volunteering for over 15 or 20 years.

Let us explore the elements that have made our puppy raiser retention strategies so effective.

A Strong Start

Every journey begins with a first step, and ours aims to set our puppy raisers up for success. Through initiatives such as the Puppy Raiser and Pre-Placement Seminars, combined with up-to-date training manuals, we ensure our raisers are well-prepared from the outset.

Unwavering Support

Blind Low Vision NZ Guide Dogs cover all costs, from food to veterinary care. We also provide all required training equipment and toys that we update as our puppies grow and their developmental needs change. This ensures that our raisers can focus on the puppy's growth and temperamental development.

Building Personal Rapport

Our dedicated Puppy Program Development Advisors work closely with each puppy raiser, gaining insights into their home, work, and family dynamics; this personal approach strengthens the bond between our organisation and our volunteers. Knowing our puppy raisers, their strengths, and the temperament of previous puppies assists when allocating pups to raisers, in the hopes of increasing the success of each volunteer as well as BLVNZ Guide Dogs.

Providing Boarding Solutions

Acknowledging the changing needs of our puppy raisers, we offer puppy boarding, ensuring that our volunteers can have time out when needed or when plans are not suitable for a young pup. This service is always in high demand, adding immense value to our puppy raisers' experience.

Fostering Community Ties

At Blind Low Vision NZ Guide Dogs, we believe in the power of community. Through monthly morning teas, sharing contact details (with puppy raisers' consent), and fostering online groups like litter-specific Facebook pages, we cultivate a network where our puppy raisers can share, learn, and celebrate together.

Volunteer Appreciation

Our Annual Volunteer Thank You Event stands as a testament to our gratitude. At this event we present continuous service awards to our volunteers, spanning from three to an astonishing 30 years of support and caring for our puppies. Furthermore, we also celebrate the successful graduation of each Guide Dog by acknowledging the dog, and their puppy raiser with the presentation of a commemorative photo.

Keeping Raisers in the Loop

Puppy Raisers form a unique bond with every puppy in their care. Therefore, we make it a priority to update them monthly on the dog's progress throughout the training program, from intake to training's end.

End of Training Ceremony

Held when a group of dogs complete their formal training, this event acknowledges and highlights our volunteer puppy raisers and training boarders, cementing their importance in the success of Blind Low Vision NZ Guide Dogs.

Bi-monthly Newsletters

Our volunteer community stays connected and informed through our newsletter, which provides updates on puppy raising, new puppies being born, health tips, and more.

The success of Blind Low Vision's Puppy Raising Program lies not just in recruiting new puppy raisers, but in valuing and retaining our existing community. By providing unwavering support, fostering a sense of belonging, and continually recognising their contributions, we've built a robust and dedicated community of puppy raisers, boarders, and breeding stock guardians whose passion and commitment propel us forward, in our aim to provide guide dogs for our clients. We are endlessly grateful for their partnership.



Flexing to Meet the Lifestyles of our Volunteers

Rachelle Kniffen
Leader Dogs for the
Blind, U.S.A.



Leader Dog Puppy Development Team

Leader Dogs for the Blind began relying on volunteers to raise puppies for training in 1958. In the beginning, donated puppies were raised by 4-H members. When we began our breeding program in the 1980s, we expanded puppy raising opportunities to the general public.

Our puppy raiser model stayed consistent until 2002 when we partnered with several prisons to have inmates raise puppies. Currently about 30% of our puppies are raised in a prison setting.

The need to attract new volunteers has been ongoing but over the past several years it has become more difficult. To better meet the varied lifestyles of current and potential volunteers, our puppy development team developed new options to raise a future Leader Dog. In all options, the puppy is with the raiser/raisers from eight weeks of age for 12-15 months.

Our options are:

- One Household: Our traditional option of a puppy raised in a single home.
- Prison Puppies: Puppies are raised by inmates in a correctional facility.

- Pass-Along: One person raises the puppy for the first six months, then a second raises the puppy for the remaining months.
- Co-Raising: Two people from different households raise the puppy together with one person as the primary raiser and the other as the secondary raiser.
- Campus Puppies: College students raise puppies on campus with the support of a campus puppy club. Leader Dog provides all supplies, food and veterinary care.
- Corporate: Up to three people at one organization share puppy raising responsibilities.

These new options have been well received by both experienced and new puppy raisers. The Pass-Along option attracts people who physically cannot handle stronger puppies, and Co-Raising draws people who travel or work longer hours. The Corporate option appeals to organizations that want to promote employee engagement and social responsibility.

If you would like to know more about these options, please contact Beverly Ferguson at Beverly.Ferguson@leaderdog.org.

How Guide Dogs caters for all walks of life

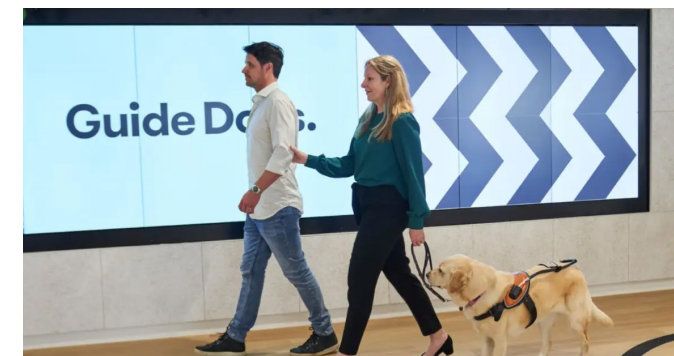
Guide Dogs
Australia

Specifically designed for people who are blind or have low vision and others with different disabilities, the new Sydney flagship office of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is a template for the disability-inclusive future workplace.

It features benches and furniture with rounded corners, textured strips of flooring to guide those who use canes and large-text notices in contrasting colours along with other carefully considered design elements. Guide dogs are also catered for, with resting places, refreshment stations and desk tether points, to the dogs can be secured.

The design has seen Guide Dogs NSW/ACT win the Government, Education and Not-For-Profit category of the AFR BOSS Most Innovative Companies awards.

The office design was informed by extensive consultation with staff and clients which continued through the design and construction phase. Hallways are wide enough to accommodate two dogs with two handlers walking past one another, or two wheelchairs abreast, and there is a hearing loop for those who have hearing difficulties. Flexible workstations can be adjusted to best suit employees' needs.



GDMI Ryan Jones with Liz Wheeler & Poppi

The office can accommodate about 100 employees and about ten per cent of the current workforce has a disability of some kind, says Guide Dogs NSW/ACT chief people officer Gemma Farquhar. **"We really want a diverse employment base,"** she says. **"It's important for us to have diversity on the agenda."**

The organisation is keen to hire more people with disability and the premises launched last year provides a world-class facility for potential employees, she adds, noting the organisation can work with new hires to specifically meet their needs.

Current employees who are blind or have low vision are enthusiastic about the new office, she says. **"They say it has absolutely transformed their working environment,"** she adds, **"they say there are no barriers to overcome and the office is a really safe nurturing environment."**

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT caters for about 4,000 clients and guide dogs account for about 20 per cent of the organisation's capacity – other services include technical assistance, such as helping clients become accustomed to using a mobile phone or a computer and occupational therapy – helping clients with the tasks of daily life.

The Sydney office serves as a template for other organisations interested in providing a welcoming working environment for employees with disabilities. **"A lot of people come in and look at the building,"** Farquhar says. **"We have a lot of donor functions in the building and occasional puppy training in the building – it's a really diverse space."**

Guide dogs Russia celebrates its 20th anniversary

Lina Pochueva
Guide dogs
Russia

The history of guide dog training in Russia begun after World War II. In 1960 the first guide dog school in the USSR was created. The officers who used to train dogs for war veterans became guide dog trainers in this school.

For many years it was the only organization in Russia where blind people could get a guide dog. Elena Orochko (the current Director of Guide dogs Russia) started working at the school back in the 1980s, when she was 18 years old. At the end of the 1990s Russia faced a strong economic crisis and the guide dog school was almost closed because of the lack of funding. As a result, they were forced to cut the staff to survive. Elena and some of her colleagues had to quit.



Elena Orochko and a shepherd dog giving her a paw



Staff members of the first guide dog school in USSR: Orekhov Nickolay (the first director) and Kupriyanov Afanasiy (head of training department)

Many of them began their careers at that school in the 1970s and 1980s. They couldn't just stop their work and do something else, because working with blind people and with dogs had become a huge part of their lives, not just a job. Therefore, in 2003, they registered a non-profit organization and Elena became its Director. Since that moment, a second school for training guide dogs in Russia was opened. These days in Russia there are two organizations which train guide dogs: that first school (which successfully overcame the crisis in 1990s) and the second one, which is our organization, Guide dogs Russia.

2023 is a special year for our organization, as it is our 20th anniversary. During these 20 years we have trained more than 300 guide dogs and therapy dogs for people from all over Russia.



Staff and alumni of Guide dogs Russia celebrating their 20th anniversary

This year we have launched the program for training PTSD Service Dogs, inspired by Israel Guide Dog Center's experience, which we visited last year. We have a lot of plans and perspectives for our programs to provide help to more people.

We spent this anniversary in the warm company of our Center's alumni, and we received an unforgettable present: Our guide dog users from all over the country made a donation for purchasing two Labrador puppies who will become guide dogs for the next generation of blind applicants.

Joining the IGDF in 2014 became a huge step for our development. We want to thank the IGDF community for the support and assistance they provide us!



Above: Birthday cake with a logo of a dog in a red cape. Below: Elena Orochko accepting a gift from their alumni



Samsung Guidedog School's 30th Anniversary

Baron Jang
Samsung Guide dog school, Korea



Samsung marks the 30th anniversary of its Samsung Guide Dog School with puppy raisers; guide dog owners; T J Park; Congressperson Yeji Kim; Samsung Group Chairman Jeayong Lee; Former director Rium artcenter and Mother of Mr Lee, Rahee Hong; IGDF Chair Bill Thornton; and CEO of Samsung Fire Insurance, Wonhak Hong.

On September 19th this year, Samsung Guide dog School in South Korea held a ceremony to celebrate its 30th anniversary.

A total of 150 people attended the ceremony, including Puppy Raisers, retired dog home-caring volunteers, guide dog partners, government officials and lawmakers. In particular, Samsung Group Chairman Lee Jae-young and CEOs also attended to celebrate the guide dog business, which has established itself as a representative social contribution business for Samsung.

William Thornton, chairman of the International Guide Dog Federation, who visited Samsung Guide Dog School for the 30th anniversary, said,

“We are grateful that we have been able to help many blind people by cultivating guide dogs and training them professionally to meet international standards through sincere efforts over the past 30 years. Congratulations on the growth of the Samsung Guide Dog School into a world-class guide dog school through continuous efforts in Korea, where there was no awareness of guide dogs.”

At the event, 11 guide dogs met their new families. Graduation and retirement ceremonies were held as part of the event. Eight guide dogs met their partners and three retiring guide dogs met their adopting families.

In addition, there was a celebratory performance by the guide dog



Left: Samsung Guidedog School's new Education Center.



Below: Disinfection entrance and grooming in the Breeding Center

partner ensemble. The ensemble included Kim Ye-ji, a member of the National Assembly who played the piano along with guitar and trumpet. Players performed two songs, including “You Raise Me Up,” marking the finale of the ceremony.

On the same day, the Samsung Guide Dog School opened a 1,300 square metre Guide dog Education Center, consisting of 29 kennels, two indoor training venues, and a lecture hall for volunteer education. They also unveiled a new, specially designed breeding building.

As has been the case for 30 years, Samsung will continue to train guide dogs that will serve as families, partners, and “eyes” for the visually impaired as well as make concerted efforts to improve social awareness.



Knowledge Sharing Webinars

Stay in touch with news, research, and best practice from around the world by attending our regular webinars. Webinars are open to all IGDF Members, Affiliates, Applicant Organisations and Enquiring Organisations. Registration details are circulated by the IGDF Office and are available on the IGDF website.

2023 Webinars

Meeting the emotional and psychological needs of guide dog handlers

Description: This webinar will discuss emotional and psychological challenges that guide dog handlers commonly encounter as well as strategies for supporting clients throughout the lifespan of their guide dog partnership.

Date: Monday 4th December

Time: 17.00 GMT

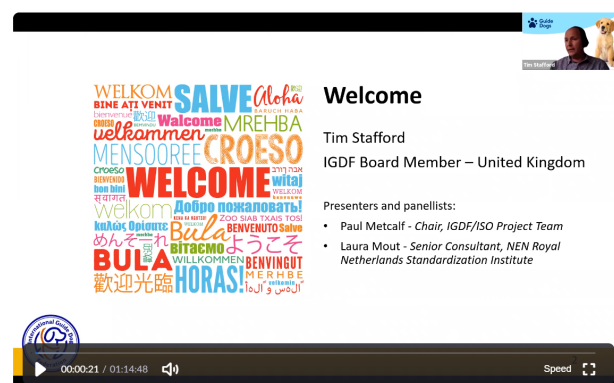
Register for this webinar on the [Upcoming webinars page](#)

2024 Webinars

Partner, Companion, Servant or Tool

Description: This webinar will look at research undertaken by Tim Stafford exploring the interrelationships between people with a vision impairment and their guide dogs.

Date and Time: To be confirmed



KNGF Virtual Tour

Date and Time: To be confirmed

Webinar Recordings:

Recordings of these past 2023 webinars are available to IGDF members through the [IGDF webinars page](#)

- Introducing the new IGDF Standards
- Traffic Training panel discussion
- IGDF – ADI Joint Position Statement on Dog Welfare

Webinar Volunteers

We are looking for volunteers interested in sharing their knowledge with the IGDF community. This could include a tour of your facilities, an introduction to a new programme or project your organisation has been working on, or an in-house presentation you think the wider IGDF community would be interested in.

We welcome pre-recorded presentations, including presentations not in English – although adding English subtitles would be desirable.

Please email enquiries@igdf.org.uk

Visionary

Next Issue

The deadline for articles for the next issue of Visionary is: **1st February 2024.**

Special Feature:

The social benefits of guide dog ownership.

Please send articles to the IGDF Office by the above deadline.

Please supply your articles as a Word file with original images attached as separate

jpeg images along with their captions.

Further information can be found on our website at <https://www.igdf.org.uk/visionary/> or by emailing enquiries@igdf.org.uk



Disclaimer | Whilst the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) retains editorial right to all articles presented within the Visionary, accuracy of specific detail and figures quoted are as provided by the author and their supporting organisation. The IGDF, whilst welcoming feedback on content, will not enter into any dialogue relating to perceived inaccuracies in these areas.