

Edition 42 | July 2020

visionary

vi•sion•ar•y (vizh'n-eri || -erri) adj. 1. Characterised by vision or foresight

**Finding New Ways To Connect
During The Pandemic**
**Keep Connections Strong While
Keeping People Off Campus**



**How To Meet
Covid-19 Challenge**

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.



Cover Photo:

Front cover picture - Leonora Flower with Guide Dogs in training Violet and Shirley. Sitting amongst Autumn Leaves.

Flags displayed for this edition are:

USA, UK, France, Czech Republic, Israel, China, New Zealand & Australia

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Message from the Chair

Paul Metcalf - Guide Dog Manager
Guide Dogs Victoria, Australia

Hello Friends,

Welcome, once again to Visionary – the official newsletter of the IGDF.

This edition is something of a bitter-sweet occasion for me as it is the final one in which I write to you as IGDF Chair. My second term as elected IGDF Board Director will come to an end at the AGM which will be held in September.

It would have been my preference to have been able to present to you all in person at the Seminar but, as you are aware, so many things have had to be changed as a result of the current environment in which we live.

On that note, this edition does bring some very interesting stories of how we are coping with COVID-19 having such an impact on our lives and our work. Whilst it is a very difficult time for all, it is fair to say that there have been opportunities for learning, and a number of new ways of working have been developed.

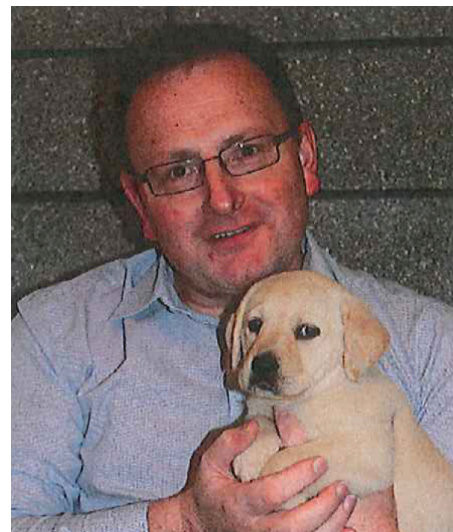
As we move forward, there are a number of issues that I would ask you to consider supporting as the new IGDF Board is created and takes our journey forward to the next stage:

- You will be aware that a full review of the current Articles of Association has taken place, with the recommendations for change to be presented to the membership for consideration. There are a number of areas in which the IGDF Board consider to be confusing and, at times, holding us back in taking the work forward quickly and effectively. In order to adopt the proposed changes into refreshed Articles of Association, it is important that you use your vote - changes cannot be adopted without the approval of at least 75% of the full membership. If your vote is not cast, we may not even reach 75% and so the proposed changes cannot be accepted

Disclaimer

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The IGDF, whilst welcoming feedback on content, will not enter into any dialogue relating to perceived inaccuracies in these areas.



Paul Metcalf with a nice golden Labrador pup in his arms.

– even if all votes cast are in favour of the new Articles of Association.

- Phase one of the work towards developing an ISO-level standard for Guide and Assistance Dogs is well under way and we will be presenting proposals in the coming weeks. Once again, to progress this positively, we will need your support. There will be a number of occasions and situations that are presented whereby you can actively support this work – including ‘leading the charge’ in your own country to ensure that the appropriate Standards agency adopt the proposals to create the ISO-level standards and we will need a number of ‘mirror-committees’ in different countries to support the efforts. Please do follow our progress closely and become involved at every opportunity to help us create greater understanding of the need for high standards within our work.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for enabling me to work within the realms of the IGDF Board on your behalf, and I would like to thank all of my Board colleagues – both current and previous – for their efforts, commitment and friendship; it has been a long and interesting journey – one which I have been extremely proud and privileged to have been a part of.

Kind regards to all and, please, STAY SAFE!

Paul Metcalf
IGDF Chair

IGDF Assessments

Congratulations to the newest member of IGDF:

- Yunnan Erxing Dog Guides (China)

Congratulations to the following organisations which passed their five year assessment:

- Les Chiens Guides d'Aveugles du Centre Ouest (France)
- Chiens Guides de L'Est (France)
- Fondation Frederic Gaillanne (France)

As a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on international travel, all member organisations due to be assessed during 2020-2024 have been granted a one-year extension.

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, USA

Continuity is the key message for Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. We transitioned to remote operations in mid-March, placing 50 dogs in homes with puppy raisers, staff and volunteers. With our remarkable people, operations continue seamlessly. Puppies are arriving, young dogs are being trained, virtually, and when it's safe, we're ready to place fully trained guides. Our clients have 24/7 access, as always, and we were very grateful for the offer of support from other guide dog organizations should there be a need in a geographic area we couldn't reach due to the quarantine.

This has been a time for innovation and creativity and plain hard work. Technology is the foundation as our staff creates training materials and conducts training through online meetings. The reaction of the dogs can be hilarious in the midst of serious training, so there's always the joy of watching our German Shepherd dogs as they grow. We've been able to return to outdoor training in some areas, as well.

We are dedicated to creating pathways for success for dogs at every age and stage to reach their full potential to become the best possible partners for our clients. To that end, the questions

that drive our daily and long-term planning are:

- How do we continue to provide puppy raisers with the support for the early training future dogs require?
- How do dogs in formal training continue to build the necessary skills to become resilient and reliable guide dogs?
- How do we continue to offer our clients support to maximize their success from a distance?
- How do we ensure that even in these financially uncertain times, critical donor support continues?

On a recent staff call, a Fidelco trainer remarked that while training from home isn't always easy, she's discovered a huge unanticipated advantage: living with the dog allows her to see how it reacts and responds to scenarios more closely tied to "home life" than she would otherwise. This information, coupled with just being around her dog on a constant basis, has created an even more customized training approach. Feedback like this – the "silver lining" stories – echoes across the organization.

The challenges of the pandemic have pushed us to find greater efficiency in achieving our mission. Fidelco's 60th anniversary is this year and we're optimistic that the momentum we're building now will carry us forward for many years to come.



Ike and Gypsy - Adult German Shepherd and a young pup, laying on a porch

Some Sweetness In An Exceptional Period!

Virginie MARTINEAU

**Les chiens Guides d'Aveugles de l'Ouest,
France**

It was in full period on containment that Lohja, yellow labrador from our breeding center, gave birth to 10 puppies!

Thanks to one of our breeding center's

employees and her husband, who also works for the organisation, the mother and her puppies spent part of the containment at home well cared and surrounded.

It was for the couple's children a great opportunity to live for a month with a litter and probably better understand mam and dad's work.

In mid-April, Lohja and her puppies joined the breeding center to explore new places and different environments.

Now Ray, Rose, Rita, Ronnie, Red, Rivers, Romy, Ringo, Rika and Ruiz are with their foster family and we hope to meet them again next year at the organisation when beginning their guide dog education!



A cat looking through a window at a puppy laying on weigh scales



Puppy feeding from a bottle



Puppies playing in the sunshine



Puppies posing for a photo

How To Meet Covid-19 Challenge

Changyi Li
China Guide Dog Training Centre, China

According to data compiled by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused more than 7 million confirmed global cases since June 8. This is a disaster for all human beings. To fight against the coronavirus, solidarity and cooperation is necessary. During the months of COVID-19 battle, China has took swift and highly effective actions. Even today, we are still taking those sanitary measures.

In China, the first case of COVID-19 was found on December 8, 2019, in Wuhan. And then the whole city was closed on January 23, 2020. Dalian launched the epidemic prevention and control measures on January 28. Entertainment venues, malls, restaurants, as well as educational organizations had been suspended. The communities claimed that only one person per family is allowed to go out every 2 days, wearing a mask. Since it happened during Lunar New Year holiday, returning employees from other areas were required to home quarantine, with medical observation, for 14 days.

These actions had immediate effect. Beijing, Shanghai and 8 provinces were gradually getting back to production and work by February 10. Now the whole country is basically back on track.

We know some guide dog schools and organizations are still having a hard time because in some countries the cases are increasing every day. We would like to share the epidemic prevent and control measures of our center so that we can go through this together:

1. Our center is located in Dalian Medical University. The campus has limited people entering since January 28. People can only get into the campus by scanning a specific ID card, the QR code on which contains personal information of the holder. Each entrance should be approved and reported ahead of the day, so that the

security department will have people's name on the list and let them in.

2. Prepare protective items such as masks and gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectant fluid, 70% alcohol and other disinfectant products. Install hand sanitizer and mask recycling garbage cans in the working area. All the staff are required to wear masks for the whole day, and discard masks into designated trash cans.

3. Take temperature measurement and record daily before signing in, those whose body temperature exceeds 37.2 °C are not allowed to enter.

4. Every member of staff reports health status and tracks the activity of them and their dogs online every day.

5. All training takes place within the center. We resumed downtown training in April 20, 14 days after no COVID-19 case in Dalian.

6. Use online meetings to communicate with boarding family and clients. Suspend the client instruction course until May 5. Suspend volunteer activities.

7. Cancel all face-to-face activities including meetings and group trainings. The staff in office need to

keep a distance with each other.

8. Disinfect the office, toilet and other public areas 3 times a day. Pay special attention to the door handle, keyboard, mouse and other key parts. Disinfect the kennel once a day.

9. All staff should avoid using public transportation. If they really need to, they should wear a mask at all times and try to avoid touching anything on the bus. Employees who drive to work should also regularly disinfect the seats, door handle and other parts of the car.

10. All staff should bring lunch and eat separately as far as possible.

There were a total of 19 cases reported in Dalian, fortunately, all staff and dogs in our center remain uninfected. However, the training, client assessment and fundraising activities have been affected by the epidemic to some extent. There will be a lot of work for us later this year.

It seems that the battle with COVID-19 will last for a period of time. As long as the world's people cherish a common goal of living peacefully and joyfully on earth, we will be able to overcome all difficulties and challenges.



Lady in China training in the campus, wearing a face mask

Canine Health and Behaviour Survey, Capturing the Missing Piece

Jane Stephen & Penny Zipfel
Blind Low Vision Guide Dogs, New Zealand

High standards mean that not all dogs are suitable as guide dogs. It's these career change dogs, as well as retired guide dogs that Blind Low Vision Guide Dogs New Zealand (NZ) (formerly Blind Foundation Guide Dogs) rehome as lovable pets.

Up until recently, when a dog left the Guide Dogs programme, there was no way to capture new health and behaviour information systematically. This gap in knowledge meant that Guide Dogs missed out on valuable health and behaviour information post-Guide Dogs. In 2019 we undertook the inaugural Health and Behaviour Survey to capture this information.

The questionnaire was based on peer-reviewed surveys including the Adopter Health Survey, developed by Guiding Eyes for the Blind USA; the Itchy Dog Project Survey, developed by Naomi Harvey and colleagues at the University of Nottingham; and Massey University's, Dermatology and Gastrointestinal Healthy Study Survey for New Zealand Service Dogs. Abridged versions of the Canine Behavioural Assessment and Research Questionnaire (CBARQ) by James Serpell and the Canine Cognitive Dysfunction Rating (CCDR) Scale by researchers at the University of Sydney were also incorporated. The survey covered 13 sections: hereditary conditions or diseases, cancer and tumours, heart health, ear and skin health, seizures, eye health, diet, toileting, exercise, fear and anxiety, cognitive dysfunction, canine companion (dogs adopted as canine companions) and cause of death.

Our particular thanks go to Jane Russenberger, Dr Naomi Harvey and Assoc. Prof. Naomi Cogger for allowing us to base our survey on theirs; to Dr Robyn Gear for her expert input on the questionnaire design; and to all our

survey respondents for completing the survey, and providing such wonderful forever homes to our change of career guide dogs.

The survey was conducted online, with adopters emailed an invitation to participate. In total, 70% responded, and 404 completed the survey. Many of the respondents commented that it was really positive to see Guide Dogs reaching out to gather this information and were more than happy to provide their feedback.

We are very thankful to our adopters for passing on important health information, including sometimes sad news - ten per cent of owners reported their dog had passed away. Knowing the cause and age at death will give us a better idea of what diseases are common in our colony, and provide us with a more accurate average lifespan.

We learnt that while the vast majority of the dog owners surveyed have happy and healthy dogs, a small number of dogs are showing signs of heart disease, have been diagnosed with cancer, and have or were treated for, eye conditions. This result is not unexpected, as all are common in even the healthiest of elderly dogs. A smaller number, less than 6%, have been diagnosed with a genetic disease. The hereditary diseases picked up in the survey are ones which large breed dogs are prone to, and our prevalence rates are still lower than the general Labrador population, which is reassuring. Unsurprisingly, atopic dermatitis was the most common skin complaint reported. Although these dogs have left our programme, their health information will continue to influence our breeding decisions for future guide dog generations.

With regards to behaviour, we were pleased to note that in all nine situations we asked about, less than 5% of dogs surveyed displayed extremely fearful behaviour. Of the dogs released from our programme, roughly 70%

were withdrawn due to temperamental issues, compared to 30% for health, so data on canine temperament is highly valuable.

We were amused to learn that many of the adopted dogs enjoy "human" food, a luxury dogs still on the programme don't have. Less than 10 per cent of dogs are now on a grain-free and/or raw food diet. Given the emerging research linking such diets to increased risks of canine heart disease, obesity and food contamination, this is a trend we are interested in monitoring.

It heartened us to hear that despite not making it as guides, these dogs went on to impact the lives of their adopters in varied and wonderful ways. For example, Josie is now an ambassador dog for Noosa, Australia. When she's not doing modelling jobs for the Tourism Queensland Board, she's a busy pet influencer on Instagram. Greta, "is an absolute delight and is now a qualified Reading Buddy dog so is putting all her fantastic training to good use in the community". Some dogs went on to become a Companion or Emotional Support Dog including Ajax, who "helps with various issues around mobility and orientation". Then there's Whiz, who, in the words of her new adopted family "has healed our broken hearts."

Our next steps are to incorporate the information into the International Working Dog Registry (IWDR), knowing that the more quality information we gather, the more informed our breeding decisions will be. We plan to repeat the survey every other year, so we can continue to capture up-to-date information on our colony.

Jane Stephen and Penny Zipfel

For more information, or to get in contact with the Guide Dogs NZ Research & Development team, please email: gdsresearch@blindlowvision.org.nz

The Pandemic Didn't Stop Us!

Bracha Ben-Avraham
Israel Guide Dog Centre, Israel

The main challenges confronting the Israel Guide Dog Center during the quarantine were maintaining the well-being of our puppies and dogs and ensuring the welfare of our clients. During the crisis the center remained focused on continuing its work while taking precautions to safeguard the health of the staff.

This article describes how graduates, puppy raisers, and trainers at the Israel Guide Dog Center dealt with the pandemic and coped with the difficult days of the quarantine.

Guide Dogs Helped Graduates Cope with Isolation

The first instruction course of 2020 ended just before the quarantine began. The graduates became accustomed to their new dogs during this difficult period, and their dogs helped them cope with being confined at home. Ahmed Shihab and Nitzan Bar-El spoke about developing new relationships with their first guide dogs during the quarantine.

Ahmed, who received a black female Labrador named Tina, explained: "Things are difficult, but this is a great opportunity to familiarize Tina with routes in my neighborhood. I adhere to Tina's daily schedule and practice obedience lessons that we learned during the course. It's not easy to be alone at home, but when you have a guide dog it's like having a partner!"

Nitzan reported that her female yellow

Labrador Tara is an easy dog to be with at home. "Tara is calm and sleeps a lot, but I make sure to take her out several times each day, and she has already learned the routes around my neighborhood."

Other graduates noted how much their dogs helped them get through the difficult period of isolation. Dror Carmeli, a computer consultant and massage therapist, is an experienced guide dog handler who lives in southern Israel. He was able to shop at his neighborhood grocery store accompanied by his guide dog Nemo. "No one needs to bring me anything, I go out with Nemo and get groceries. The streets here are usually busy and dangerous, and it is more quiet."

Gidi Cohn, a graduate from Jerusalem, and his wife returned from abroad when the crisis hit. They remained in isolation as required by the health authorities, and family and friends helped by delivering groceries. Gidi noted: "Playing and caring for my dog Scott kept me positive, calm, and sane!"

Puppy Raisers Had Time for their Puppies

Naama Rolnik and the other staff members in the Puppy Raising Department visit puppy raisers throughout Israel, but visits had to stop when the quarantine was imposed in mid-March.

Many puppy raisers were unable to work or study during the quarantine and had more free time to focus on walking, playing, and disciplining their puppies. The Puppy Raising department staff used Zoom to conduct meetings with the families and offer puppy raisers guidance and support. If puppy raisers were quarantined their puppies were housed in the kennels at the center.

Trainers Ensured that Training Continued



Guide Dog in a harness, training at the crosswalk

The center was extremely concerned about the repercussions of the pandemic upon clients on the waiting list who are waiting to receive guide dogs. We were therefore determined to ensure that guide dogs in training could continue to make progress so that they would be ready to be paired with clients as soon as the crisis ended.

The training staff was divided into morning and afternoon shifts to decrease personal contact between workers and to ensure that the dogs were cared for throughout the day. The trainers were unable to walk in town and sufficed with working on campus. Hilla Ben-Meir, a trainer and instructor, explained: "We had to be creative, but the facilities at the center offered us a lot of options for training such as obstacle courses, exercise yards, and the simulated traffic junction." The trainers ensured that the dogs were kept active all day long despite the restrictions and their training was not interrupted.

Flory, a dog trainer, felt that the relative quiet on campus helped her focus on her work. "The pandemic actually has been good professionally. The campus was quiet and I felt I had more autonomy. I was able to do even more than usual because there were fewer distractions."

Returning to Normal - Hitting the Ground Running

The staff at the Israel Guide Dog Center is now returning to normalcy. In June three clients attended the first instruction course since the quarantine ended, and more potential clients will receive instruction courses at home during the summer. We are back at work and have hit the ground running!



Trainer and Puppy Raisers wearing face masks.

Finding New Ways to Connect During the Pandemic

Leader Dogs for the Blind, USA

Through the years, it has become apparent that getting people onto our campus was the best way to draw them into our organization and our mission. However, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we were forced to . Our staff rose to the challenge and developed new ways to engage our constituents through instruction, meaningful communication and fun.

Keeping Staff Involved

Many staff members enthusiastically volunteered to rehome dogs in training to reduce the population in our canine center. To ensure that the rehomed dogs didn't regress in their training, two of our guide dog mobility instructors (GDMIs), who themselves were quarantined, created training videos using their smartphones, which were emailed to everyone rehoming.

In America, many companies host a "Bring Your Child to Work Day" so children can experience where their parent/grandparent works. This year, Leader Dog hosted "Bring Your Family to Work Week." Daily activities related to blindness and dogs were shared so families could participate from home. The week included video instructions on how to make a sandwich while blindfolded, how to draw a dog, practicing giving clear instruction, a video conference with a LDB client and more.

To maintain camaraderie between employees, two staff members have been hosting weekly video conferencing get-togethers where staff can team up to play games including trivia and in-home scavenger hunt.

Preserving Client Connections

We kept our communications flowing with clients through the use of emails and posting information on the LDB Alumni Facebook group. Our extended services department quickly pivoted our Summer Experience Camp into a

virtual event. Benefits of going virtual included being able to include a wider age of clients (14–17 years old versus 16–17 years old) and allowing more campers to participate.

Retaining Donor Engagement

Usually, our goal to increase donor engagement is to get donors onto our campus to experience Leader Dog firsthand. As that became prohibited, our philanthropy department moved their focus to online engagement. One method was inviting major donors to participate in a wide variety of video conference sessions. Some sessions were for pure fun, such as trivia games, while others provided access to employees from various departments who could answer in-depth questions posed by the donors. We also sent personalized thank-you videos from our GDMIs to a variety of donors.

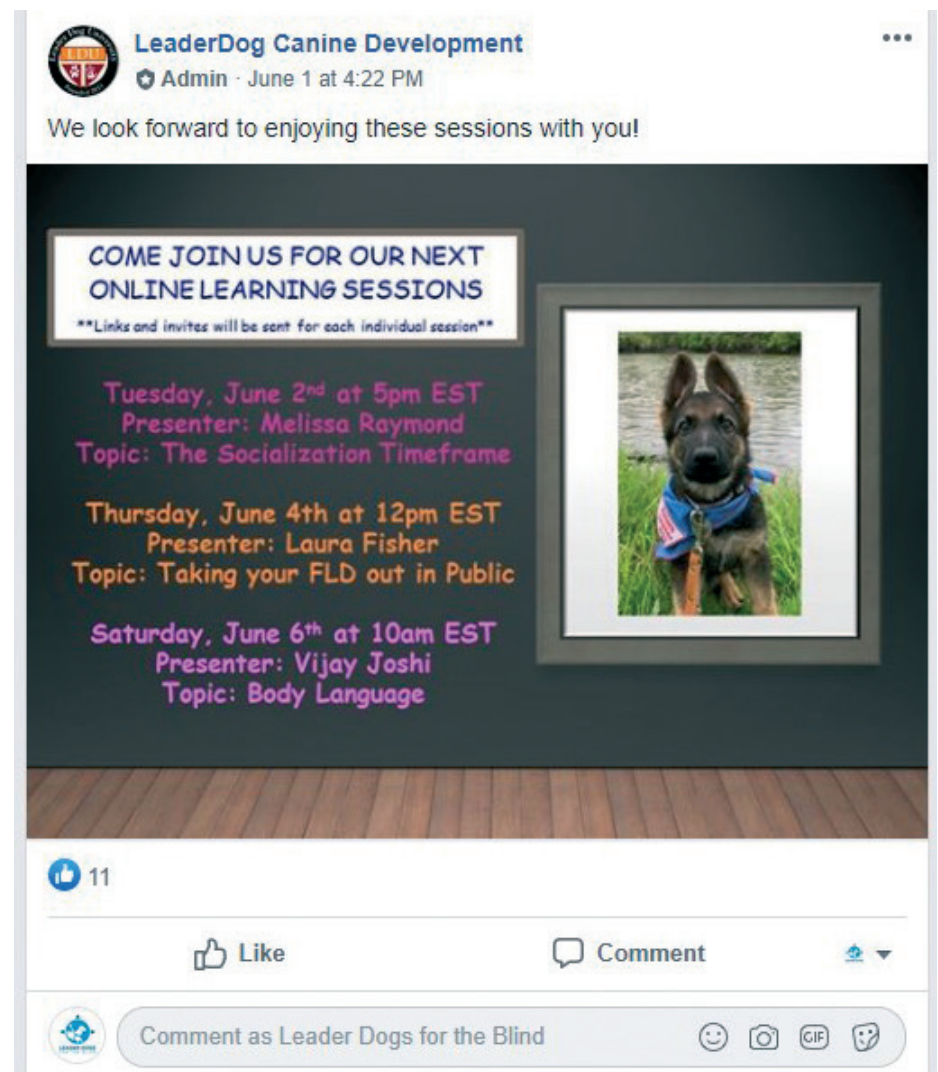
Maintaining Volunteer Commitments

Numbering around 700, our volunteers are essential to achieving our mission. We quickly realized that we needed

to provide an alternative to in-person training classes for our 300+ puppy raisers. Our puppy development department began holding virtual training sessions three times a week. To reach as many people as possible, the sessions were scheduled at different times of the day and were recorded and posted online. Prior to the pandemic, we were holding in-person sessions one weekend every other month; we now plan to move forward with one in-person event a year and continuing with online training.

Our breeding department developed a series of trainings for our volunteer breeding hosts that included how to keep your breeding stock dog in condition, exercises you can do with them and caring for young puppies.

If you have any questions about these ways to engage our constituents, please feel free to contact Rachelle Kniffen, director of communications and marketing, at rkniffen@leaderdog.org.



SONS, Czech Guide Dog School In Prague In Coronavirus Period Spring Plans Disappeared As Spring Snow

Lenka Kreidlova
The Czech Guide Dogs School

"If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans."

SONS, Czech Guide Dog School was looking forward to the spring full of events ... and then had to say goodbye to one event after another. Whether it was a trade fair For Pets, a popular Day with Police, lectures in schools or participation in the Prague International Marathon.

However, a difficult decision awaited us in mid-March, when the corona virus situation became more and more urgent and we had to start thinking about possible risks not only for us, but also for our clients, puppy walkers, as well as for our dogs. We asked ourselves whether a dog can get sick and whether the infection can be transmitted between a dog and a human. Fortunately, it gradually became clear that such transmission was unlikely. However, it did not solve the situation if someone from our team of nine employees became infected. We would all have to isolate ourselves. Who would then take care of the dogs? We found an unusual solution. Colleagues came up creatively with an idea combining their dedication, love for animals and their work. They took the dogs home and continued the training individually. Our main trainer monitored the training remotely, also with the help of video recording.

We were also thinking about how all

restrictions could affect our clients, whether they did not need some help, for example whether they had mouth covers. Mouth covers were mandatory to wear in the Czech Republic everywhere, but in short supply initially. After we managed to get the masks from a volunteer organization for free, my colleague and I spent two days calling our clients, listening to their stories and needs and, if someone was interested, we sent him/her a mask. All other administrative support was provided from home-office.

The community of the visually impaired is well connected and our activity quickly became well known. Even during the crisis, not only clients but also new people interested in a guide dog contacted us. We were surprised by the response. From the beginning of the crisis to the present day, we have handed over two guide dogs and additional three dogs are in process of handing over.

We have also informed our sponsors and the public about how we managed the Covid situation through several magazines. The feedback was very positive. As a result, we managed to collect almost 50% more sponsor contributions compared to a normal situation.

I would like to say that we can also see some positives in the crisis. It demonstrated how dedicated and reliable our employees are, the trainers had the opportunity to see the behavior of dogs in the household and pay



Young girl with Black Labrador in Prague

attention to activities for which there is not so much opportunity on the premises of the school. The crisis also helped us get into closer contact with our clients and the public.

Our dogs and trainers performed great, but still personal meetings and work directly with clients are irreplaceable despite all the modern technology. In these days, our team is back at school and continues working.

Lenka Kreidlova, Head of SONS, Czech Guide Dog School

A few words about SONS, Czech Guide Dog School

SONS, Guide Dog School is part of the United Organization of the Visually Impaired (SONS). The mission of this organization is, among other things, to help visually impaired people to become more independent, confident and find a way to participate in society.

The guide dog school became part of SONS already in 1991. At that time, the trainers worked as self-employed and trained dogs where the conditions allowed. Interest in guide dogs grew, so did the level of training, but professional premises were still missing. Finally, in 1997, the training center of the school was opened and remains unchanged to these days.

On average, last three years, 12-14 dogs have been trained at the school under the guidance of four trainers and two supporting staff. The school has handed over more than 400 guide dogs to its clients in total.

On April 15, 1994, the school was accepted as a member of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF).



Zorro laying down, wearing a harness

Puppacino Club

The Guide Dogs WA Puppacino Club

The Guide Dogs WA Puppacino Club was born in late 2019. It was created out of a need to give Volunteer Puppy Raisers a forum to discuss the milestones, challenges and successes of the role, and the opportunity to learn more about puppy raising and about one another.

The brief for the club was simple – leave your puppy in training at home, grab a coffee and meet monthly. Initially some thought the idea of a dog-free meeting to be a little odd but its advantages are explained by Leonora Flower, Guide Dogs WA Puppy Raising Coordinator, “Why dog-free? It’s good for Puppy Raisers to take a break from their 24-hours-a-day, 7-day-a-week commitment to raising the puppies in training. It is good for their mental health and the dog-free environment encourages great discussions that we don’t have when we are busy caring for pups. For the puppies in the Guide Dogs WA training program it is important that they get used to having short periods away from their Puppy Raisers.”

Leonora said “there is great value in learning from each other and developing a supportive group dynamic. With support and friendship comes trust, loyalty, satisfaction and success which greatly contributes to the organisation’s mission of providing life-changing Guide and Assistance Dogs to Western Australians.”

“Although members of the group had previously liaised with each other on organised Group Training Walks, there were not many opportunities



Leonora Flower with Guide Dogs in training Violet and Shirley. Sitting amongst Autumn Leaves.

for the puppy raisers to engage in conversations as everyone is spaced apart and the focus is on the pups and following the training instructions”.

Coronavirus hit Australia in February and the situation escalated rapidly into March. Guide Dogs WA acted quickly and put in place plans to ensure the safety of staff, clients, dogs and visitors. By late March staff were working from home, the office and training building was closed and the pups and dogs confined to home situations that would likely remain unchanged for some time. Face-to-face training sessions, puppy classes, group walks and handling sessions were all placed on pause.

The Guide Dogs WA Puppacino Club went online and the monthly face-to-face meetings became weekly Zoom video conferences. Out of a difficult and challenging situation, the Puppacino Club grew and flourished during the pandemic and isolation.

Leonora said, “attendance skyrocketed, the conversations developed, friendships were formed, support was given to new Puppy Raisers and the online medium allowed time for guest trainers and instructors to attend and share their know-how

with the volunteer Puppy Raisers. It was definitely a text book example of adversity fostering greatness within the group.”

During the pandemic the Puppacino Club was supported by one-on-one telephone calls, video sharing, and live Zoom feeds to ensure Puppy Raisers were supported and all the pups in the program maintained steady progress.

To date, in Western Australia we have fared reasonably well during the pandemic. Widespread adoption of social distancing, a work from home approach, where possible, and closed regional and interstate borders resulted in very low community transmission rates of the virus. By June the restrictions had started easing. Many in Perth breathed a sigh of relief when the realisation that our city and state was doing ‘ok’ and we, for once, were glad to be living in one of the most isolated capital cities in the world. During this challenging time, our isolation, combined with sound Government directives has definitely been to our advantage.

When the Puppacino Club had their first post-Coronavirus face-to-face meeting on a sunny winter’s day in Perth’s Hyde Park, the question was posed, “shall we keep meeting on Zoom or return to face to face meetings in a café?” Without hesitation it was agreed that the Zoom video conferences had many advantages and they would be held fortnightly with a monthly face-to-face meeting in a café.

However the Puppacino club meets, the brief continues to be, don’t forget to bring your flat-white, long black or latte and be ready to share the challenges and immense satisfactions of Puppy Raising!



Leonora Flower from Guide Dogs WA on a Training Walk in Hyde Park, Perth

the future of the visionary

The next deadline
for Visionary
submissions is

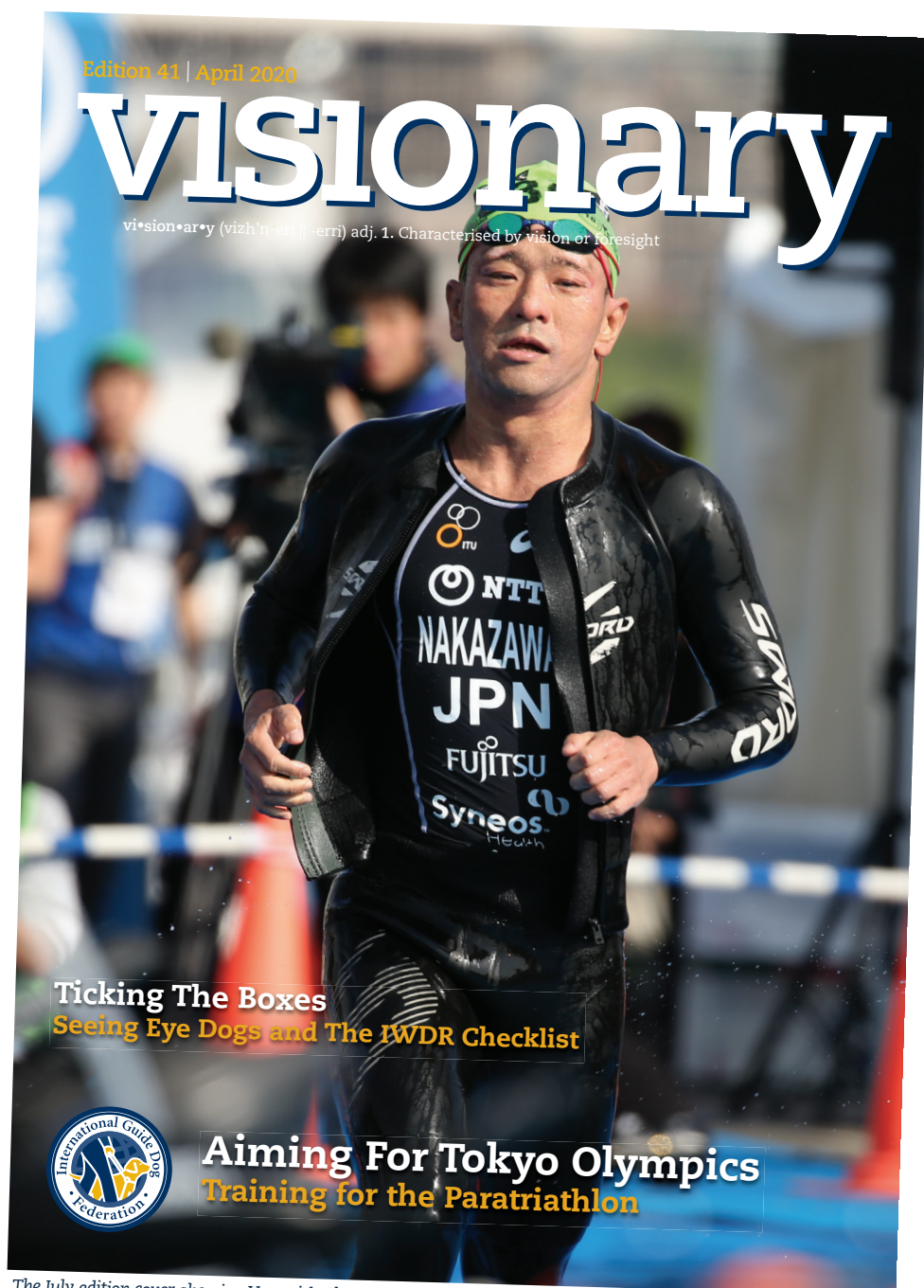
1st October 2020

Special Feature: 'More than Dogs'

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

Remember to include the
completed submission form,
along with your article and
any pictures you would like
to include

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



The July edition cover showing Yvonnick Chapon nose to nose with his Guide Dog JO

