



**Guide
Dogs**

Sponsor
a Puppy



Sage

Advanced training

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Welcome to your June Pupdate

We hope you've been enjoying the longer days and warmer weather that June brings. We're so excited to share what your sponsored pup has been getting up to!

Did you know that we breed and train more dogs than any other organisation internationally? We have a world-class breeding and training programme which focuses on dog health, behaviour and genetic merit. This helps us set our pups up for careers as future life changers. But none of this would be possible without kind people like you! By sponsoring one of our special puppies, you're helping us support the 1 in 5 people affected by sight loss in their lifetime.

Beyond our wonderful dogs, we also provide a range of services for people of all ages. From mobility skills to children's large print books, we're here for anyone who needs us. Your donations make this possible!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steph".

Steph Potter
Puppy Sponsorship Manager



Thank you

for sponsoring Sage



“
**Hello, it's
Nicola here.
I'm training
Sage alongside
trainer
Victoria.**

”

Victoria has done a fantastic job with Sage, who's now begun advanced training with me. I'm a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist (GDMS), and I match dogs to someone with a visual impairment. I've been a GDMS for 32 years, and the best part of my job is witnessing the life-changing difference a guide dog makes. It's incredibly rewarding.

Traffic training

Advanced training is the latter stage of the training programme. Sage now knows almost all of the skills she needs, and it's my job to teach her the final few, consolidate everything she's learnt, and encourage her to apply these skills to real-life settings. It's important Sage is confident in different environments and unusual situations so that when she encounters these in the future, she can confidently guide her owner and keep them safe.

I started working with Sage a couple of weeks ago, so I've been focusing on building a bond with her through play and practising skills she's already confident with. This also helps me to understand the kind of person Sage would be best suited to, and where I need to focus my attention. She's such a lovable girl and really enjoys her training, which is great to see.

Sage also has a cheeky side, sometimes pushing the boundaries and pretending that she doesn't know what I'm asking her, but all she really wants is that extra treat!

One skill I've started with Sage is traffic training, which teaches her what to do when she starts crossing a road and a car pulls out or turns into a driveway in front of her. In a safe environment, Victoria slowly drives a Guide Dogs car towards Sage and me while we're crossing the road at a T-junction. I'm teaching Sage to notice the car, slow down, stop and look at me rather than continuing to guide. When the vehicle has passed, Sage is learning to continue guiding to the other kerb. It's a difficult skill to teach, and we've only begun this recently, but she's doing well so far.

Cats

The biggest obstacle I'm working alongside Victoria to overcome is cats. Sage is highly distracted when she sees a cat whilst training; she loses all focus and begins to pull. At training school, a local cat often visits and isn't bothered by our dogs in training, so he's perfect for helping us with this. If we see him sleeping or watching us, I reward Sage when she breaks her focus from him and looks at me, teaching her that I'm better to focus on than a cat.



Check out how brilliantly Sage is doing with Victoria and Nicola by going to:

guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-sage

When she's mastered this, I'll teach her to continue to guide past the cat without getting distracted. With lots of practice and time, I'm hoping she can achieve this.

Looking ahead

It's an exciting few months ahead for Victoria, Sage, and me. We'll be finishing the final stages of training, working on Sage's distractions, and beginning to look for potential partners. Hopefully, we'll also start the matching process, which focuses on training specific to her potential new owner.

Thank you for sponsoring Sage. I'm enjoying training her alongside Victoria. Find out how she's progressing in her final Pupdate in October.





Key skills

Did you know our dogs need to learn 37 key skills to qualify as a guide dog? These range from those designed to help with health checks to those more specific to guiding. Chin rest (where we ask the dog to rest their head on a surface so that their ears or eyes can be checked) is an essential welfare skill, while learning to walk with the correct guiding tension is important to ensure they can guide their owner around obstacles safely, without pulling.



/SponsorAPuppy



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