



South West and Wales region: puppy raising update April 2024

Hello,

Welcome to the latest South West and Wales regional update from the Puppy Development team. It's great to see the days lengthening through spring even though the recent wet weather does still create its own challenges when we have these energetic four-pawed creatures in our homes - endless dog towels and mopping muddy paw prints. Never mind, hopefully it can only be drier times to come.

Team News

We are delighted to welcome Jenny Hardy into our team as our newest Puppy Development Advisor (PDA). She has been with Guide Dogs for a good number of years, having worked in both Leamington and Exeter as a Guide Dog Trainer so I'm sure a good number of you will know her already! Jenny will be working alongside PDA Jo Arthur and will be gradually taking on a scheme of puppy raisers covering Plymouth and part of Cornwall.

Meet the team

Over the next few newsletters, I would like to introduce you to all the team, starting with our two fantastic Puppy Development Supervisors.

Mel Wharmby



My name is Mel and I have been at Guide Dogs since 1996. I started in Exeter, working in the kennels, then became a Kennel Supervisor. I moved to lovely Wales around 2002, where I managed the small kennels we had at the time in Cardiff, then around 2003 I applied for the role of Puppy Training Advisor. Around three years ago I was promoted to Puppy Development Supervisor working in the Southwest and Wales regional puppy department.

I will say this has to be the best job in Guide Dogs (sorry everyone else). I find it really interesting managing staff and volunteers, but there is nothing like placing a young pup and watch them develop into a young dog. And seeing all the hard work and dedication puppy raisers put into their puppies is just awesome!

I am also a Wellbeing Buddy, which is someone who can give staff support and someone to listen if they need to talk, and also signpost them to get the right support, which I find really rewarding.

I am a spiritual person and have studied to be a Reiki Master/Teacher in my own time over a number of years.

I am starting to develop this with dogs as well as people, but developing this slowly - my pet dog who is a big fluffy German Shepherd is my guinea pig so to speak, he is a well behaved client and accepts the reiki really well.

Leah Rogers



My name is Leah Rogers, I am a Puppy Development Supervisor based in Exeter in Devon.

I joined Guide Dogs 35 Years ago and have had several roles within Guide Dogs, including Kennel Staff, Guide Dog Trainer and over 23 years as a Puppy Development Advisor.

I moved into my current role three years ago and I now manage Puppy Development Advisors. I also still run my own puppy scheme within the Exeter area, which keeps me in touch with what this job is

all about.

What I like most about my job is that every day is different and that I get to work with our wonderful puppies and great volunteers on a daily basis, who give up a considerable amount of time to raise puppies for us.

I would not change my job for the world!

Events

Make Every Cuppa Count

Over the last couple of months, fundraising groups across the South West and Wales have been making 'every cuppa count' by hosting a tea party, coffee morning or bake sale and inviting service users, volunteers, and supporters to get together to celebrate our life-changing work. A big thank you all who helped organise, baked cakes, made coffee or came along with your puppy to support local events and make them such a success.

Radio Interview

Those of you on the south coast may have heard that Radio Solent chose to celebrate Mother's Day weekend with a lovely interview with our puppy raiser Geraldine Stone, all about being 'mum' to a growing guide dog puppy! Thank you very much Geraldine and PDA Elli for making the arrangements.



Upcoming BMW event

Guide Dogs is proud to be part of a collaboration event with Hearing Dogs and BMW being held at BMW corporate office in Farnborough coming up in May. CEO Andrew Lennox will also be attending the event. We are working closely with the South East puppy team as it's so close to the border of our regions. We have four puppy raisers from each team going along with their pups to hopefully impress and inform the BMW staff and for them to enjoy a few cuddles too.

Your suggestions

Please let me know if there is anything specific you would like me to include in these regional updates either by emailing liz.orme@guidedogs.org.uk or feel free to make a suggestion to your PDA who can pass on ideas or comments on your behalf.

Many thanks,

Liz Orme

Canine Assisted Services Operations Manager - South West and Wales

Document ends.