

South West Regional Centre

Welcome to the new newsletter from the South West Regional Centre in Bristol.



We've been AWOL for a little while, but I hope our this newsletter from the South West Regional Centre will bring you up to speed on what we've been up to recently.

Hi, I'm Evita Gonzalez Lewis, Canine Assisted Services (CAS) Operations Manager for Bristol.

For those of you who don't know me, I've been with Guide Dogs for many years, previously as a Technical Learning Specialist, Training and Behaviour Advisor and Guide Dog Mobility Specialist. All these roles support our dogs' journeys to become future guide dogs.

Right now, I manage a technical team, which includes Guide Dog Trainers and Guide Dog Mobility Specialists who train our dogs and create partnerships with support from our volunteer fosterers who pick up the baton from puppy raisers. But it's not all about training dogs. We have a community of volunteers who support us in a variety of ways; by looking after the health and wellbeing of our dogs, giving much-needed independence to service users, fundraising, or helping us out behind the scenes.

I hope future issues of our newsletter will give you an interesting round-up of what's happening within your local team. So, no matter your volunteering role, this newsletter is for you. If you have any [feedback about this newsletter](#), please let us know. We hope to improve with every issue.

Thanks,

Evita
CAS Operations Manager

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Dalton

Dalton is a 19-month-old black and tan German Shepherd who has been in training for four months in Bristol. Dalton has a habit of avoiding or jumping over puddles on the footpath. This is a potential safety issue for a future guide dog owner as Dalton could veer off course or take his handler into a more dangerous position on a road crossing.

To make a positive association, we have been doing lots of off-lead exercise with Dalton in the rain, luring him through puddles, and rewarding him with play and food for making any attempts to put his paws into small puddles, making sure he is comfortable doing so. We have seen an improvement in his willingness to walk through puddles and he is now managing to walk through small puddles on his harness walks. Well done, Dalton!

Amory

Amory is a 17-month-old black Labrador who has just come into training at Bristol. She is in her third week and is settling in well in the office and with her **fosterers, Kay and Andrew**. Amory has been working with Dog Wellbeing Technician, Aimee, to practice the chin rest as part of her cooperative care training. Her **puppy raiser, Sylvia**, has done a great job in getting her ready to start big school. This week, her trainer, Lindsey, has been introducing her to the local area and started on her basic training with behaviours such as loose lead walking and introducing platforms.



Dogs in training



Jowett

Since coming into training, Jowett has settled in really well at the Bristol office. His **fosterers, Helen and Simon**, have said he's brilliant at home too. His trainer, Lindsey, has been working on all the basics but his **puppy raiser, Maggi**, has already taught him a huge amount, so he is progressing quickly through the programme.

Jowett recently wore his 'big boy' harness for the first time and has been practising with his trainer how to locate a chair (see picture). Lindsey has also worked to familiarise Jowett on some of the local routes from the office in preparation for his future harness walks and has even behaved impeccably in the local superstore. His Dog Wellbeing Technician, Katie, has been working on his cooperative care to prepare him for all his future health and wellbeing care, including any vet visits he might need.

Alissa

Golden Retriever x Labrador, Alissa, is now in week three at our South West Regional Centre in Bristol. She's an excitable young girl with a great deal of energy. Alissa is always happy to see everyone and everything but despite this, she has done well to be calm and settle into the busy office environment. She's happy to sit in her pen and chew on a stuffed bone in between training sessions with her trainer, Lindsey.

Alissa's **puppy raisers, Caroline and Huw**, have done a fantastic job with raising a confident and very smart dog and she is picking up all her training well. She now has a brilliant home with her new **fosterers, Adam and El**, and has been enjoying exploring while off-lead exercising at the weekends with them.



Getting to know Emma Yard

Emma Yard

Hi, I'm Emma Yard. I'm a Training and Behaviour Advisor based in Bristol. This is my 20th year with Guide Dogs starting as a Guide Dog Trainer before moving on to become a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist for the majority of my career. I've been in my current role for just over three years, and I just love it! It gives me the opportunity to engage and interact across so many different departments, staff, service users and volunteers.

My role is to coach and upskill staff, as well as support with any behavioural problems that our dogs may have at any point of their guide dog journey. This includes working with a range of volunteers from fosterers to puppy raisers.

I'm always in awe of their time and dedication in helping support with training plans and adding such value to helping our dogs succeed. Anyone who joins me on Teams calls will regularly meet my two Devon Rex cats, Mabel and Maverick, who love getting some screen time!



Liz Orme



Liz Orme here, the Canine Assistance Services (CAS) Operations Manager for puppy raising in the South West and Wales.

I've been working in puppy raising for many years now, and I can't think of anything else that I would rather do. I love supporting my colleagues and puppy raisers in their roles in raising guide dog puppies - no two days or puppies are the same!

I'm looking forward to the regional puppy raising team contributing to the newsletter for the South West Regional Centre. So, if you're interested in finding out about the magic (and the hard but rewarding work) that is puppy raising and how we prepare guide dog puppies for their training with trainers and fosterers, please stick around.

In the meantime, you can watch the [puppy raising episode](#) of 'The Journey of a Guide Dog' to find out how we raise and train guide dog puppies and set them up for success.



Law of attraction



The Central Bristol Fundraising Group recently attended a corporate event at Burges Salmon LLP, which hosted a celebration lunch for all their employees and community partners. Many hours were spent chatting to employees about Guide Dogs, whilst also giving them the opportunity to meet and greet some of our wonderful dogs. A fantastic sum of £501.69 was raised.

As well as being committed fundraisers, many of the volunteers who attended the event hold other volunteering roles, including fosterers, puppy raisers, sighted guides, and retired dog rehomingers. This not only makes them extremely knowledgeable about a range of volunteering roles which they can talk to the public about but it's a great way to connect to different people from our volunteering community.

If you would like to meet up with other likeminded volunteers, then why not come along to a local fundraising event. To find out about upcoming events, please email Regional Community Fundraising Manager, Natalie DeMaid:

- natalie.demaid@guidedogs.org.uk.

There's something about Mary

One incredible guide dog owner in Bristol has almost reached the 'Train' Name a Puppy level of £10,000 by regularly collecting outside her local pet shop. Sally Waters, a guide dog owner since 1996 has already raised enough to name two pups, the last of which was called Mary - named after her mum. We're looking forward to hearing what name Sally comes up with for her third dog.



Popular Christmas pop-up returns

The Taunton Fundraising Group are running their ever-popular pop-up charity shop in the run up to Christmas. The shop is based in Orchard Shopping Centre and will be open until Thursday 21 December. The first three days of trade alone raised £2,000, which is an incredible start to the festive season!



Volunteering

Community outreach

Here in Bristol, we have been focusing on building our connections with local community centres and groups (both in-person and online) to help support recruitment for the volunteer vacancies we have. This has seen some fantastic relationships develop all over Bristol, Bath, Taunton and beyond, with lots of exciting new opportunities for 2024.

Volunteering with dogs

We have been shouting our message near and far about the need for dog-based volunteer roles. You may have seen the new banner at Clifton Downs shopping centre in Bristol or the feature in the Pigeon Magazine. However, word of mouth continues to be the best tool we have.

It's great to constantly hear from new volunteers that our current puppy raisers and dog fosterers have recommended getting involved, we really couldn't do this without you and your passion for supporting us. All this combined has seen a real increase in applications for our fostering and puppy raising roles. Thank you.

My Sighted Guide

We have a real need for sighted guide partnerships all over the region. To help support people waiting for this service, we have been reaching out to various local clubs to see if anyone with interests matching those waiting to use the service would like to get involved. We are hoping this more targeted approach will form some beautiful partnerships soon.



Fundraising group coordinators



Finally, we have heard your cries for new fundraising group coordinators and are putting a lot of effort behind the scenes to think of new and imaginative ways to fill these roles. If you have any ideas, please let us know:

- VolunteerSouthwestWales@guidedogs.org.uk

Goodbye to Volunteering Coordinator, Zoe

Many of you will have either met or heard from Zoe, our Volunteering Coordinator for Bristol, since she joined us in July. We wanted to share that Zoe now has a new role within Guide Dogs as Community Fundraising Business Development Manager and has now left the volunteering team. Upon leaving, Zoe said: “Thank you so much to every volunteer I have communicated with since joining, whether about becoming a volunteer, at events, at our social, or via email it really has been a pleasure. You’ll know if you talked to me for longer than five minutes, I really care about volunteering being a positive space and supporting our fantastic cause. I feel very proud to be moving into a role that continues to be very impactful and sees me developing a career here at Guide Dogs.”



While this is sad news for us, it’s a great opportunity for Zoe, so we hope you’ll join us in wishing her luck in her new role. Until we recruit for this vacant position, if you need any help or have any enquiries, please get in touch:

- VolunteerSouthwestWales@guidedogs.org.uk

Media round-up



We've had a couple of big stories featured on the BBC recently which you may have seen, but if not, we've included them here for you as well. Our campaign on pavement parking continues, and the BBC spoke to Alan Fletcher and Mandy Palmer about their experiences as people living with sight loss. Mandy said: "It's a bit worrying because you don't know what you're going to bump into."

BBC West also shared the heart-warming video story of buddy dog Rudi and the family he helps in Gloucestershire. Brothers Ollie and Theo, who both have a visual impairment, said Rudi was "like a best friend" and always there to help them feel better. Rudi was also reunited with his puppy raiser, Janice.



Finally, back in October new guide dog owner Hester from Bath also talked about how guide dog Pickle has changed her life as she prepares for her A-Levels.

