

Guide Dogs National Centre

Welcome to the new newsletter from the National Centre.

I'm Kelly Newton, Breeding Operations Manager at the National Centre in Leamington. I manage our Breeding Dog Advisors, who look after our guide dog mums and dads, make sure they are in good health, and support our breeding dog holders through the early days of the puppies' lives.

Our volunteers play such an important role, taking care of guide dog mums and dads throughout their lives, supporting guide dog mums through their pregnancies, and of course helping us welcome the life-changers of the future.

In future, you can expect to hear from us around four times a year. We will do our best to keep you updated on what's going on here at the National Centre, local events, opportunities to get involved or to know each other better.

So, what can you expect to read about? Apart from our breeding programme, there will be updates covering puppy raising, community fundraising, volunteering and our work in the media. We hope to share the different ways in which our staff and volunteers support people with sight loss to live the life they choose.

Please [let us know what you think about our first newsletter](#) so we can improve future editions, and thank you for your ongoing support.

Thanks,

Kelly
Breeding Operations Manager

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Dogs in the breeding programme

Guide dog dad, Ray



Stud dog Ray, a golden retriever, has recently fathered his first litter of guide dog puppies, including son Thor. Thor will be puppy raised by Ray's breeding dog holder, so hopefully Ray can pass on some wisdom to his son!

Ray recently appeared on BBC East Midlands, who named Ray in honour of their late colleague, and they will continue to follow him and Thor as Thor grows up.

Guide dog mum, Sparky

Sparky is a golden retriever who lives in Oxfordshire with volunteer **breeding dog holders, Cliff and Louise**, and their three children - plus their pet dog, cats, tortoises and chickens! Sparky's first litter of puppies will be turning one in January, and we are hoping that she will have a second litter in 2024 - and maybe one of the pups will also join the breeding programme.

Sparky is a much-loved dog, and a wonderful guide dog mum. Louise says: "She is the perfect mum. Su from Guide Dogs kept saying to us 'you think you love her now, but just wait until you see her being a mum.' And she was so right, you just love her even more."



Breeding news and numbers

Litter payment name change

We are changing the name of the expense payments we make to volunteers who look after our puppies and breeding dogs. From now on we'll be referring to 'flat-rate expense reimbursements' rather than 'litter payments' or 'allowances' that we've used in the past. For those volunteers who choose to receive these, there is no change to the amount or the way you claim so you do not need to take any action based on the name change.

Breeding numbers (Jan-Nov 2023)

- **138** litters
- **1,038** puppies born
- **7** puppies is the average litter size
- **1,270** puppies placed with puppy raisers, including 232 outside/part outside-bred puppies
- **243** guide dog mums
- **77** guide dog dads
- **91** new dogs join the breeding programme (67 guide dog mums and 24 guide dog dads)
- **162** matings undertaken so far this year
- **95%** conception rate



Puppy raising

Anna Standing



Greetings from the Midlands and East region puppy raising team. I'm thrilled to be contributing to the new National Centre newsletter, and I couldn't be more excited to share a little bit about myself and regular updates about what we do within puppy raising.

I'm Anna Standing, and I oversee the operations of Canine Assistance Services (CAS) for puppy raising in the Midlands and East.

Previously, I worked with children, youth, and families in the local authority before joining Guide Dogs in 2021. I also volunteered for many charities, which stoked my love of helping others. The ability to work with such dedicated volunteers and my team to get the best results for our dogs and the community we are here for is what I appreciate most about my job.

So, if you've ever wondered what happens before one of our dogs begins their guide dog training, we're here to tell you. You'll get to find out about our Puppy Raising for Excellent Partnerships training programme for guide dog puppies, and the different ways in which our staff and volunteers support puppies to become future life-changers.

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.



Florence Shore

Hi! I am Florence Shore and I am the Regional Community Fundraising Manager for Midlands and the East. In community fundraising, we work with fundraising groups and local organisations across the region to help them raise funds in ways that work for them. Read on for some of the ways the fantastic fundraising volunteers in our region have supported recently, and some dates for your diaries to join us at upcoming fundraising events.

Volunteer thank you event

A thank you event at the Royal Porcelain Works in Worcester last month saw some of our amazing fundraisers, puppy raisers, fosterers, and breeding dog holders come together for tea and cake and to celebrate all the hard work they have put into their volunteering. Thank you to everyone who came.

Upcoming Tesco collections

We would love for you to join us at some Tesco collections over the coming weeks. Perhaps you can come and say hello to the Cirencester Fundraising Group at Tesco Extra in Cirencester on **Saturday 9 December**. For more collection dates, please get in touch with me at florence.shore@guidedogs.org.uk.

An 'ex-quiz-ite' night in Rugby

Rugby Fundraising Group raised a whopping £1,114 at their quiz night last month after teams tackled rounds of tough questions and enjoyed fish and chips and a raffle to help bring in the life-changing total. Well done to all involved.



Beaundesert School raise £10,000 at Autumn Fayre



The children at Beaundesert School welcomed Miles Northwood, Community Fundraising Relationship Manager and his guide dog, Nushka, along to an assembly to talk about their life-changing journey together. This was followed by a fundraiser at their School Fayre later in the month where they were able to raise the £10,000 needed to name a puppy that they are now very excited to meet!

Joining Miles and Nushka at the Fayre were fundraisers from the Cirencester Group, and puppy raisers and fosterers from the region whose pups soaked up all the attention from children on the day.

Volunteering

Christian Cornforth

I'm Christian Cornforth and I am the Regional Volunteering Partner (RVP) for the Midlands and the East. I manage four Volunteering Coordinators across the region based at various sites, who support in the recruitment of volunteers for a range of roles at Guide Dogs.

The Volunteering Coordinator for the National Centre is Verity O'Donnell, who I am sure will be introducing herself to you in future newsletters.

Our recruitment priority for the National Centre is currently for breeding dog holders to look after guide dog mums and help support bringing future guide dogs into the world. This is a fantastic role which is incredibly rewarding and vital to our charity. We have been advertising across the region and into the South East and North West regions to bring in potential volunteers. Local advertising and recruitment events and our Brood Information Day in October have helped bring in over 100 applications for new breeding dog volunteers but we cannot stop there. We are still looking for more volunteers so please do continue to support us by telling your friends and family about Guide Dogs.

We will be promoting local volunteer events in the future so please watch this space.

Media round-up



In the Midlands, the launch of the new Royal Leamington Spa Monopoly board - complete with Guide Dogs Community Chest square - was launched to great fanfare. The launch was covered by multiple local papers and was attended by local guide dog owner Nicola and her dog Helios. Read more with [Warwick News Nub](#).

Also in the Midlands, volunteer breeding dog holder Sarah featured in the [Solihull Observer](#), talking about how she has taken on not one but two guide dog mums, and how the dogs have enriched her and her family's lives - calling it the best thing she has ever done!



And finally, Midlands resident and guide dog owner Jeanette Stevens has been inundated with gifts and donations for guide dog Koko after Storm Babet flooded her bungalow, meaning all Koko's toys and bedding had to be thrown away - read more about this heartwarming story on [BBC News](#).