

SPEAKER NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2020

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“Good stories surprise us. They make us think and feel. They stick in our minds and help us remember ideas and concepts in a way that a PowerPoint crammed with bar graphs never can.” - Joe Lazauskas and Shane Snow, The Storytelling Edge

SPEAKER SERVICE UPDATE

Over the last couple of months Julie Wood and Jane Shelley have joined the speaker team to help shape the service and look after the Speaker Facebook page.

It has been great for Julie and Jane to get to know you and we’ve loved how you’ve embraced doing your talks on Zoom during lockdown and how much you’re there to support each other. We’ve been developing a virtual toolkit for talks, which is on the Volunteer Information Point. During lockdown we have been doing training online and over the phone. For anyone who is new to the speaker role, if you would like to still do the one-day face to face session in the future, email speakervols@guidedogs.org.uk and we’ll make sure to invite you when we can safely run the courses again.

It is important that we keep you up to date with information about our services and all things Guide Dogs. We intend to run a Zoom webinar in the Autumn to update you on Guide Dogs operations and key information about the charity. We would like to hold a minimum of 2 of these each year. If any of you are new to Zoom, we’ll happily run practice sessions for anyone wanting to join for the first time, either via the app or by their landline.

We have been working with the Business team on some proactive marketing of our speaker service to community groups, including Guides, Women’s Institute and U3A to name a few. We’ve had some good success from the work we’ve done so far, including having our speaker service included in their directories for future talks.

As we're just starting to come out of lockdown some of the volunteer services are resuming for Guide Dogs. At present we are only accepting virtual requests, however as government guidance on group meetings change, we will review this. If you are given a request directly please contact Supporter Care on phone number 0345 1430192 or email speakervols@guidedogs.org.uk, so we can discuss it further. Useful information to gather would include, when they want the talk, what's the proposed venue and potential size of audience.

THE GUIDE DOGS APPEAL – OCTOBER 2020

As you know, October is a special month for Guide Dogs. It marks the anniversary of the first working Guide Dog partnership, way back in 1931 and is the month when we run our Guide Dog Appeal. Every year we like to shine a light on a specific service, and this October we will be focussing on our Children and Young People's services. We will be asking people to raise money by taking part in a "How I See Challenge". Full information will be out at the beginning of next month and we have no doubt that speakers will play a big part in supporting events throughout the appeal.

COVID-19 ADVICE LINE – SOPHIE'S STORY

Sophie just wants to complete her schoolwork at home like all the other children in her class. And her mum, Georgina, just wants to help her. But home-schooling during lockdown has been full of challenges for the family.

Sophie, age seven, was born with a sight condition called Aniridia, which affects her iris, and Nystagmus, which causes involuntary movement in her eyes. To access her schoolwork, Sophie uses size 64+ font, an electronic magnifier and she's also learning braille.

Sophie's mum, who has the same condition and is registered blind, has found it extremely difficult to support her daughter's learning at home. Unable to see large print, Sophie's mum has found all the school's documents inaccessible, and was spending hours online everyday trying to find learning resources that she could read with JAWS, her screen-reading software. She was feeling exhausted and stressed.

Sophie was receiving daily reading lessons with her teaching assistant via video call, and twice-weekly braille lessons with her QVTI (Qualified Teacher of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment), which the family say have been brilliant. But the rest of the school day was a constant struggle. The worksheets provided by the school weren't accessible with JAWS software, and the staff didn't seem to understand the family's unique requirements.

After Sophie's mum called the Guide Dogs Advice Line, our Education Support Officer was able to speak directly with the school.

We firstly suggested that worksheets are provided in a more accessible word format. Then, after speaking with the school's SENCo and explaining the challenges, they suggested increasing Sophie's daily video link teaching to include an additional hour for maths. The school also agreed to arrange a loan of tactile equipment, such as plastic numbers and symbols to help with the maths lessons.

We were also able to advise Sophie's mum on other helpful resources and provided information on specific SATS requirements for children with a vision impairment, such as the standards required around cursive handwriting.

The school also later arranged for Sophie to come into the school each day for a morning of one-to-one lessons with her teaching assistant and twice weekly visits from her QTVI, which has made Sophie happy.

Sophie's mum said of the support from Guide Dogs: "I'm so grateful for the help from Guide Dogs. I feel like the school listen more when someone else rings on my behalf. I'm feeling much less stressed."

Our COVID-19 sight loss information phone number is 0800 781 1444. Whether you're asking for yourself, a member of your family, or your child, give us a call (between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday) and speak to someone from Guide Dogs who understands what you're going through.

BECKY'S TALK AT CALDERSTONE SCHOOL RESULTS IN NAME A PUPPY

Pupils at Calderstone School in Liverpool recently fundraised towards our Name a Puppy scheme and have since received the exciting news that puppy Caldie has been born! The school decided to raise the £1500 needed to name a puppy, after they had a talk from volunteer speaker Becky Clarke, and her guide dog Rishton.

To raise the funds, students held cake and craft sales, installed a life size dog donation box in the school, and held a 1950's style gala. The fundraising was led by Student Leaders, who are pupils at the school who volunteer to raise money for local charities.

Juliet Lancaster, Head of Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) at Calderstones School, said: "We've been really impressed with the Student Leaders and how passionate they've been about fundraising for Guide Dogs.

"The gala in particular was brilliant. Over 80 students volunteered to help on the night, and we invited ex and current serving veterans to enjoy an afternoon tea with us, which was prepared by the students".

Thank you to staff and pupils at Calderstone School for their support and a huge well done to Becky and Rishton on their very successful talk! Below is a photo of 6 week old yellow Labrador puppy Caldie, who they named.



FABULOUS FEEDBACK

Thank you all for sharing your stories. The impact that you have is huge and widespread. Your stories will stay with people for years to come, as will their understanding and support of Guide Dogs. Here are just a couple of the lovely comments we've had over in the last month.

"On behalf of Thompson WI thank you so much for organising Chris to speak to us via Zoom. It was also good to be able to see his dog – Jaeger, who obviously took it all in his stride. We had a fabulous evening, the technology worked very well. Chris was an excellent speaker and we would recommend him to anyone. The story he told was amusing, interesting and informative about Guide Dogs. Our members thoroughly enjoyed the talk and Guide Dogs are very fortunate to have him as an ambassador."

"On behalf of everyone at 2nd Wide-open, can I just say a massive thank you for your time this evening! It was brilliant to see both yourself and Wilber for such a great session. I have had great feedback already from the Cubs and it sounds like lots of facts were shared over dinner with parents! It was very informative, relatable and funny so thank you for that too. I know the kids really appreciate you taking all of their questions (I know there were loads!) and hopefully we can take your fantastic messages away and they can play their own little role in raising awareness for the fantastic work which Guide Dogs UK does."

SPEAKERS FACEBOOK PAGE

Have you joined our Speaker Facebook page yet? You can find it via www.facebook.com/groups/1771399256442294 or by simply searching 'Guide Dogs Speakers' in the search box on Facebook itself.

Just a reminder that if you want to join the group, share your experiences, see pictures of all the newly trained speakers and get to network with likeminded Guide Dogs' volunteer speakers, please e-mail speakervols@guidedogs.org.uk.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

Community Fundraising Support Office phone number: 0345 143 0234

Email: Speakervols@guidedogs.org.uk

Guide Dogs Website www.guidedogs.org.uk

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