



Cardiff Community Team

Welcome to the Cardiff newsletter.

Hi, I'm Marcus Roberts, the Canine Assisted Services (CAS) Operations Manager here in Cardiff. I have been with Guide Dogs for 20 years. Before that I was a State Registered Nurse working in a London teaching hospital and a paramedic working out of Swansea Central Ambulance Station.

I work with a wonderful team of people including the Guide Dog Trainers (GDTs) and Guide Dog Mobility Specialists (GDMSs) who train our dogs and create partnerships, supported by our volunteer fosterers who pick up the baton from puppy raisers. Together, we create our iconic, life-changing partnerships. We also provide learning opportunities to our Academy Trainees who go on to qualify as GDTs or GDMS. We have a whole community of volunteers who support us in a variety of ways, from looking after the health and wellbeing of our dogs, to giving much-needed independence to service users, fundraising, or helping us out behind the scenes.

I hope future issues of this newsletter will give you an interesting round-up of what's happening within the Cardiff Community Team. We will keep you updated on activities from other departments, events, volunteer and service user stories, as well as how staff and volunteers support our dogs, from puppies to partnerships and beyond.

So, no matter what your volunteering role, this newsletter is for you.

Thank you so much for your dedication and ongoing support.

Marcus

CAS Operations Manager

Dogs in training

Ava



Ava is a year and 9 months old. She came to us in December last year and has made great progress. Once Ava has demonstrated that she has the skills and temperament to guide, we can start comparing her capabilities against the needs of people waiting for a guide dog.

Initially Ava was a little put off by car travel and jumping in and out of vehicles. When dogs move home it is not unusual for them to exhibit a behaviour they have not previously shown, rather like a student who might feel less confident in the first few weeks after they move out to go to university! Careful support at this time makes the difference between an inhibited Ava or the best version of Ava. Consistency is key, so no one person or role alone can fully maximise a dog's potential - the best results come when all those involved with the dog offer consistent and meaningful support.

Ava's trainer, Gabby, and Ava's fosterer worked together to deliver a plan to help Ava. They used different vehicles with Ava and let her try the boot and back seat to find her preference. They baited the vehicles with treats, and rewarded Ava with a free run after she chose to jump in and she is now fine with cars and travel. Without the consistency and commitment of the fosterer, this result would not have been possible - thank you!

Lilly



Lilly, a Labrador trained by Charlie, is nearly two years old but has not been with us as long as Ava, as she entered training when she was a little older. Lilly is about to move from early to advanced training.

All our dogs are regularly reviewed to establish their progress. Lilly did encounter a setback when she was frightened by a firework but again, the whole team including Lilly's **fosterer, Charlie**, our Dog Care Technicians and our dog care volunteers came together to help Lilly build her resilience back up.

Together, volunteers and staff have been able to address firework fear and the possibility of it spreading. It was important this fear did not generalise into a fear of any noise such as car engines, so dog care volunteers played traffic noises for Lilly while she was relaxed/playing. This gave Lilly positive associations with noise and helped her feel more confident. Lilly continues to progress and go from strength to strength now.

Puppy raising

Welcome to South West and Wales puppy raising.

Puppy raising is the starting point for all future partnerships and our volunteers are out there doing amazing things every day to make that happen. But it isn't always easy! Below, a Puppy Development Supervisor gives an overview of stopping behaviours with some ideas as to how to work through it:

So, you're out for a walk, all is going well until the moment you've been dreading - your puppy stops. Legs locked, feet firmly planted and ignoring you or giving dubious looks. Now you're trapped in this moment of cajoling, frustration and embarrassment, perhaps helplessness, as your puppy refuses to budge. Sound familiar? Well, if it happens on your walks, your puppy is performing what we call 'stopping', and for a guide dog owner those feelings are tenfold and can lead to a partnership dissolving entirely.

Stopping can prevent puppies from entering the next stage on time and delay their training to work on this issue. Any puppy could develop this pattern of behaviour; some common reasons are distraction, desire to go to a certain place, anxiety, or you inadvertently rewarding pup for stopping or discomfort.

Now, what to do about it? In the moment be patient, wait alongside your puppy in walking position and give them time to acknowledge you. Avoid using any food or moving your hands towards where you carry food.

Calmly changing direction, waiting your dog out and making distraction noises are all tactics you can try to encourage your puppy to move. With stopping, prevention is usually the best cure - take the time to note where you are, your pup's body language, what you usually do and what is going on around you that might be influencing your puppy. Noting when your pup might stop, what encourages this, and distracting them through it can work wonders to eliminate the behaviour.

Please contact your PDA if your puppy begins stopping on walks so they can work with you to make a plan for your puppy to help overcome stopping and go on to succeed.

In case you missed it: watch the recording of our recent 'Royal Canin diet for guide dog puppies' webinar, which is now available [on-demand](#).

Community fundraising

Every little helps!



Throughout the year, our wonderful fundraising groups across Wales hold hundreds of collections to help raise money to fund our life-changing services. In February, our Bridgend group were out in force in the Tesco store in Maesteg and collected a magnificent £530.42. Volunteer Sandra, pictured above, brought along Corby, her puppy in training, to help out on the day.

‘Making a Diff’



Cardiff councillor Graham Hinchey is proud of his city and here's the proof! His recent term as Lord Mayor has come to an end and during that time, along with his wife Anne, he raised more than £85,000 - enough to name seven guide dog puppies, and they have chosen to call each one "Diffy".

Cardiffians commonly refer to their city as "the 'Diff" but these will be the first guide dog puppies to bear the name. The first two puppies, both females, have already been placed with puppy raisers in the South Wales area. Graham and Anne will receive regular 'pupdates' detailing the progress of each individual 'Diffy' as the pups grow and develop into confident guide dogs.

To find out more about Naming a Puppy, please visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/nap.

Make Every Cuppa Count



Every year around National Tea Day on Friday 19 April, Guide Dogs hosts a campaign to encourage supporters to hold a tea party or coffee morning. This year, we have renamed the campaign and you can now 'Make Every Cuppa Count' by carrying out an event that suits you! Small or large, at home, work or school - every penny you raise will go towards helping us provide life-changing services.

Some of our local fundraising groups will be hosting events across the area and we'll be sending out invites in the coming weeks. Please go along and support them if you can. Alternatively, you could host your own event by registering for a fundraising pack at the [Make Every Cuppa Count website](#). If there's a better excuse to get together over a cuppa and cake, we haven't heard it!

Volunteering



Welcome back to our Volunteering Coordinator, Jaye Connelly, who returned from maternity leave in January. Whether you're new to Guide Dogs or an experienced volunteer, Jaye is here to support you through any stage of your volunteering journey. To speak with Jaye directly please message her on Jaye.connelly@guidedogs.org.uk.

Pat on the Back

Have you heard of Pat on the Back? Guide Dogs' internal recognition scheme provides staff, volunteers and service users with the opportunity to recognise a volunteer for a job well done. You can find out more, plus nominate a fellow volunteer, via the [Volunteer Information Point](#).

Volunteer events

Our first recruitment event of 2024 took place at St David's shopping centre in Cardiff, and we were lucky enough to be joined by 20 volunteers, staff members, colleagues from Legal and General and famous rugby star, Gareth Davies, who all helped us promote our volunteer vacancies. As the stall had so much interest, we've reserved another space at St David's on 3 and 4 June to celebrate the national [Big Help Out](#) campaign. If you'd like to join us on the day to chat to members of the public about what you love about volunteering at Guide Dogs, please contact Jaye.

Ideas wanted!

We need your creative ideas! We have two banners which advertise our Training Dog Fosterer role and have had difficulty placing them near our office in St Mellons. We are keen to put them in locations with lots of traffic, but which won't cause distraction for motorists, and are looking for fresh ideas. If you live or work local to St Mellons and have an idea for where these could be placed, please let Jaye know.

Thank you

Finally, a huge thank you for everything you do for Guide Dogs. We would not be able to provide our life-changing services to those living with sight loss without our 17,000 volunteers across the UK.

Media round-up

One in a Million

Heart of Britain
Celebrating Women Who Inspire

One in a MILLION!

This week, feel the puppy love with Sandra Corben, 66, from Porthcawl. She said...

Shaking the rubber toy, a set of puppy gnashers instantly latched onto it. My golden retriever puppy Corby had such a cheeky side – something I realised after taking him home in September last year. Losing interest in the toy, he ran to my skirting boards and chewed the wood instead. ‘You’re so cheeky,’ I giggled. Corby was named after my husband Neil Corben – and even though they’d never met, he had an adventurous streak just like Neil.

Throughout our 36-year marriage, Neil and I had always loved dogs. ‘When we retire, we should raise a guide dog puppy,’ I suggested. ‘That’s a brilliant idea,’ Neil agreed. Having had multiple pet dogs together, we were confident we’d meet the criteria Guide Dogs required for puppy raisers.

We both loved the idea of raising pups to fulfil their mission of helping others. But when Neil’s non-Hodgkin lymphoma returned at age 53 – blood cancer that he’d beaten in his 40s – our minds turned elsewhere. Neil deteriorated and on 2 June 2013, he peacefully passed away, aged 56, with me beside him. Immediately I was consumed by grief. It felt like I was living in a bubble. I stopped going out and socialising, too. *I can’t go on like this, I realised – that’s when I remembered our idea. I should volunteer with Guide Dogs UK.*

It was the perfect idea, so I signed up to be a Guide Dogs puppy raiser online just a month after Neil passed. After multiple interviews, Guide Dogs selected me as a suitable candidate to raise and train a golden retriever puppy. And just a month later in July 2013, I took in my first puppy, Berry.

Teaching her to sit, toilet-training her and getting her used to walking in public, it was a full-time role. Berry was a very full-on puppy, too – she needed around-the-clock care and attention. But she did a brilliant job of keeping me busy, stopping my mind from lingering on losing Neil.

After a year, I said goodbye to Berry – she was ready to move on for further training. I was devastated. It was so difficult giving her up, especially as she had been a new focus for me.

But I knew this was all part of the process and she had a lifelong purpose to fulfill. Since that day, I’ve raised eight puppies for Guide Dogs – it gives me a reason to get out of bed in the morning. And ever since taking in Corby, I feel like Neil is sharing the journey with me. I know that Neil would be proud that I’m putting our plans into action.

Guide Dogs has given me a new lease of life, and I’ll volunteer for as long as I can.

● Please visit: guidedogs.org or call 0345 1430191

We’d always loved dogs

Bitesize!

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WORDS BY LUSHE PALMER. PHOTOS: SIMS

Perfect pooches!

Puppy raiser Sandra Corben and guide dog puppy Corby are featured in Pick Me Up magazine in an article entitled ‘One in a Million’.

Sandra and her husband Neil had planned to raise a puppy when they retired but Neil tragically passed away. Sandra became a puppy raiser alone and the pups gave her a new focus - she has now raised eight puppies, and is currently looking after Corby, named in honour of her late husband.

Meet Chloe and Emily



Chloe McBratney is an UEFA B coach, Cardiff City’s under-19s assistant goalkeeper coach, head coach of Barry Town FC’s pan-disability team and a full-time special education needs multi-sport coach for Cardiff City Foundation.

Chloe has appeared in the Western Mail (in print and online at [WalesOnline](https://www.walesonline.co.uk)) along with her guide dog, Emily. The partnership features in a giant mural in Cardiff city centre. Chloe is quoted as saying: “Emily has changed my life, she saved my life.”

What did you think of our newsletter? [Tell us](#). Your feedback will let us know if we’re on the right track or if we need to improve. Thank you.