



Scotland Regional Centre

Welcome to the Forfar newsletter.



Hello from the training team at the Scotland Regional Centre. I'm Kate, Canine Assisted Services (CAS) Operations Manager here in Forfar.

We have had a great start to the year in our region; welcoming 25 new dogs to Forfar for training, qualifying five new partnerships already and supporting several more dogs currently on class. In February, we had a visit from our CEO Andrew Lennox, who worked from Forfar for two days, enabling him to meet many staff members in various roles and departments, as well as some of our volunteers on site.

We are running low on collars, leads and T-Touch harnesses so we would ask anyone who has looked after one of our dogs to please check in cupboards, drawers, any hidden corners to see if you have any lying around that you could return to site. This would save having to order new equipment, leading to a financial saving for the charity.

Finally, at the end of March we will be hosting a 'Get Together' event at the Regional Centre for all CAS volunteers that work directly with the Scotland Regional Centre. This is a great opportunity for volunteers to meet each other as well as learn more about the various services we offer within Guide Dogs.

Thank you for your ongoing support in whichever capacity you volunteer with us.

Thanks,
Kate

CAS Operations Manager

Dogs in training

Handsome Henley



Henley is a yellow Golden Retriever x Labrador who has just turned two. Henley was in training for 10 months with his Guide Dog Trainer, Carol, as he had to wait six months for an eye health recheck before he could progress to the next stage. He was given the all-clear and moved on to our team based here in Forfar in January.

His Guide Dog Mobility Specialist, Kim, has matched him with one of our longest waiting clients. Volunteers **Claire and Ian** have fostered Henley for this entire time, we're sure they'll be sad to see him go when he starts class but happy that they've helped one of our life-changers!

Sassy Sophie



Sophie, a 19-month-old black Labrador x Poodle cross has been in training since early January and is loving life at the centre. She is very much keeping her Guide Dog Trainer, Gail, on her toes and making Gail laugh daily with her lovable, cheeky character. She is extremely bright and is enjoying learning her guiding behaviours, but also loves everything else in the environment!

Gail is having fun discovering which techniques work best for Sophie to regain her focus when she becomes distracted by the world (which can happen a lot as she gets plenty of attention due to her unique grey beard and because Sophie believes everyone should be her friend!). She had a brilliant time running around and playing in the snow when we had some in January, as you can see in the image of Sophie lying in the snow.

Sophie recently moved into her new home with **fosterers, Sally and Lee**, at the end of February and very quickly made herself at home. Good luck with your training Sophie!

Bonnie Berry



For Christmas, all of our training dogs were given the chance to choose their own toy. Berry, a 20-month-old yellow Labrador, opted for a rubbery, squeaky Brussels sprout.

Berry had two volunteer foster families during her training with us. Her **first fosterers, Aaron, Jenna and sons, Jack and Liam**, worked hard to meet Berry's needs. Berry wasn't her usual self which we determined was due to stress within the training centre environment, so we had to make the hard decision in October to change her foster home to one where she could stay at home during the day and be trained by Lorna from there.

Her new **fosterers, Jane and Derek**, were very patient with Berry and very flexible with Lorna which helped set Berry up for success. Lorna then gradually started to reintroduce Berry to the centre, which enabled her to choose her sprout!

Berry has now successfully moved on to the next stage of her training down in Teeside, good luck Berry!

Staff spotlight

A fond farewell: Elayne Coupar



Elayne joined us in 1988 - that's a massive 36 years with Guide Dogs! All of her roles have been within the Dog Care department, starting as kennel staff when there were only eight staff members.

Elayne then proceeded to have the titles of Deputy Kennel Manager, Assistant Kennel Manager and then Dog Care and Welfare Manager for Scotland and Northern Ireland, before her present role of Dog Wellbeing Technician.

Elayne considers herself one of the lucky ones that got to care for our local guide dog mum, Quella, when she was expecting. Quella's eight pups were born in Elayne's bedroom at the old Guide Dogs Forfar site.

Elayne always enjoys getting to know the new dogs and is also a volunteer fosterer. She has fostered many dogs over the years, her present one being Cindy who the whole family adore. Thirty-six years on, Elayne is proud of the role she has played in so many dogs' journeys to becoming guide dogs and it still brings a tear to her eyes when she sees one of the dogs she has cared for working with their guide dog owner. Elayne retires at the end of May; it's safe to say she will be sorely missed. Thank you for everything you have done for Guide Dogs, Elayne.

Puppy raising

Welcome to Scotland and Northern Ireland puppy raising.



Hi, Gillian here, CAS Operations Manager for puppy raising.

I hope that, like me, you are enjoying the days getting longer and brighter and as we head towards Easter. If you're partial to the odd creme egg or chocolate bar, please remember to keep them well out of the reach of puppies and dogs; chocolate is poisonous to dogs and symptoms may not show for up to several hours after ingested.

Within the team we have 13 staff: two supervisors, ten Puppy Development Advisors and me. We support our puppy raisers and puppy fosterers from Aberdeen to Dumfries and across the sea to Northern Ireland.

All of our volunteers do an amazing job preparing our pups to be future life-changers. I thought it would be nice to share photos of two very handsome Scottish pups, Jess and Nimmo (shown above).

A massive thank you to all who sponsor us by fundraising, caring for or supporting our dogs through their journey, from pup to adulthood. You open your homes and hearts to support us. We know many volunteers support Guide Dogs in more than one way and I would love to share puppy raisers (and now fundraisers), [Susie and Peter's story](#).

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

Make Every Cuppa Count



The Community Fundraising groups are looking forward to meeting volunteers, service users and supporters across the area at our upcoming Make Every Cuppa Count events. The events will be an opportunity to celebrate Guide Dogs over a cuppa, and maybe even a cake or biscuit. We would love for you and your families to join us in the celebrations.

There are Make Every Cuppa Count events at:

Guide Hall, Forfar - Saturday 27 April 10am-12pm
Park Hotel, Montrose - Saturday 27 April 10am-2pm
Rescue Hall, Peterhead - Saturday 11 May 1.30pm-3.30pm
Lochee Parish Church, Dundee - Saturday 18 May 2pm-4pm

And at:

Forth Valley Sensory Centre, Falkirk - Friday 19 April 10am-12pm
Highland Gate by Marston's Inns, Stirling - Sunday 28 April 10am-12pm
Spiral Weave by Marston's Inns, Kirkcaldy - Monday 22 April 10.30am-12.30pm
Bankhead Gate by Brewers Fayre, Glenrothes - Wednesday 24 April 11am-1pm
Sweet Chestnut by Marston's Inn, Dunfermline - Tuesday 23 April 10am-12pm
The Haberdashery Bistro, Dunfermline - Tuesday 23 April 4pm-6pm
The Cross Keys Hotel, Kelso - Friday 26 April 10am-12pm
The Tontine Hotel, Peebles - 25 April 10am-12pm
Bulldogs Bakehouse, Galashiels - 25 April 2pm-4pm

For more information on all the above events, please contact anne.rowse@guidedogs.org.uk.

Aylth Golf Club remember fosterer and puppy raiser, Malcolm



Guide Dogs Perth and District Fundraising Group started the year with a visit to Aylth Golf Club where Willie Young presented a cheque for £640 on behalf of the seniors to fundraising group coordinator, Deirdre McVean. It had been collected in memory of Malcolm Connor who sadly passed away last year. Malcolm had been a fosterer and puppy raiser for Guide Dogs. His wife, Linda, came along with her 17-week-old pup in training, Laura. Also present was Deirdre's ambassador dog, Waffle, and Sue Webb with her ambassador dog, Beau.

Roscoe and Bramble Walk Down the Aisles



Sainsbury's in Kinross have been great supporters of Guide Dogs over many years and continue to name puppies with the funds they raise. Two puppies, Bramble (above left) and Roscoe (above right), visited the branch recently and the team got to ask lots of questions of the puppy raisers, Joyce Wallace with Roscoe and Tracey Johnston with Bramble. Roscoe and Bramble received lots of cuddles and left everyone with very big smiles.

The store is well on their way to naming their next puppy, which will be puppy number five! For more information on how you or a local business or organisation can name a puppy, please contact anne.rowse@guidedogs.org.uk.

From puppies to pennies



Valerie MacAulay joined Guide Dogs in 2018 as a puppy raiser, along with her husband Allan. Val, as she is known by her fellow puppy raisers, soon became part of the West Fife puppy raising community. This extended to providing support to the West Fife fundraising group and she has been a real asset: supporting collections, cheque presentations and even naming a puppy in memory of her late mother. Val is always mindful that the support she provides to fundraising is in the best interests of the pups she raises.

In January, we asked if any of the group volunteers would like to become the Treasurer. Val came forward to say that she had accounting skills from her working life and her support roles within the running club she is a member of, so this role was a great fit for her.

Val is awaiting her next pup and has already completed her training and is now active as fundraising group treasurer for West Fife. Thank you, Val!

Upcoming events to raise funds for Guide Dogs

As always, our fundraising groups are busy most weekends raising vital funds for Guide Dogs. If you would like to come along to find out for yourself how much fun it is, we have the following events coming soon. If you plan to join us with a dog in training, please ensure that you have checked with your volunteer manager that the activity is right for you both.

We have bucket collections in:

Tesco **Arbroath** - Saturday 30 March.
Tesco **Blairgowrie** - Friday 19 April.
Tesco **Ellon** - Saturday 27 April.
Tesco **Aberdeen Westhill** - Saturday 27 April.

For more information on how to support the above events, please contact andrea.williams@guidedogs.org.uk.

We also have events at:

Rosyth Gala Saturday 25 May 12noon to 4pm (West Fife Group): Family entertainment and a wide variety of stalls that takes place at Rosyth Public Park.

Kinross Spring Market Saturday 25 May starts 10am until 3pm (Kinross Group): The May Kinross Farmers' Market takes place on Saturday 25 May at the Market Park with a great variety of stall holders.

Kelso Races Ladies Day Sunday 26 May, gate collection starts at 4pm until 6pm (Kelso Group): It's the Kelso Racecourse social event of the season. Ladies Day at Kelso Races has it all: competitive jump racing, awards for the most stylishly dressed racegoers and a fabulous after party in the centre of the racecourse. Our fundraising group are collecting for Guide Dogs at the exit gate.

For more information on how to support the above events, please contact anne.rowse@guidedogs.org.uk.

Volunteering

Trying my hand at fostering



Hello, I'm Allison Wines and I have been in my role as a Volunteering Coordinator for just over a year now. My main focus has been recruiting volunteer fosterers for our trainee guide dogs here, where there can be 60-80 at any one time! And what better way to promote a volunteer role, than to do it yourself?

Once I had completed my training, I was ready to welcome a future life-changer into my home and after a little wait for a dog that was suitable to my home and family situation, along came Heather. Heather has full time fosterers, so she was just looking for a weekend sleepover. I was a little apprehensive that she wouldn't settle in an unfamiliar environment. How wrong I was; two minutes in the door and she was sniffing around her new surroundings with a toy in her mouth and then rearranging her bed. She had a busy week of training, so I ensured she had a few gentle walks and lots of rest and relaxation.

I'm sure Heather is going to make an amazing guide dog and I am so pleased to have had the opportunity to have her for a weekend.

If you live near Forfar and want to find out more about fostering, please contact me or one of the volunteering team at VolunteerScotNI@guidedogs.org.uk.

Pat on the Back

Are you familiar with our Pat on the Back scheme? It's designed to recognise outstanding achievements of individuals or teams, volunteering or working for Guide Dogs. You can recommend a volunteer through the Pat on the Back volunteer nomination form which you can find on the 'Saying thank you' section of the [Volunteer Information Point](#). As a result of receiving a Pat on the Back, a volunteer will also be entered into consideration for a Local Volunteer Award, which will be held this year in September.

The Big Help Out

We are taking part in the [Big Help Out](#) event, 7-9 June. The aim is to raise awareness of volunteering throughout the UK and to provide opportunities for people to make a difference in their communities.

Make Every Cuppa Count

The team will be out and about supporting Make Every Cuppa Count events alongside the Fundraising teams during April. I am looking forward to meeting more of our volunteers across Scotland so please pop along to one of the events - dates are listed under the community fundraising section of this newsletter.

Help promote our volunteering opportunities

We need your help with promoting our volunteer opportunities locally. If you can put up a volunteering poster or hand out a leaflet in your local area, please do get in touch by emailing: volunteerScotNI@guidedogs.org.uk.

We will send out a pack of materials to distribute in your local community as well as an 'ask me about volunteering' badge. We are currently promoting a range of volunteer roles including puppy raisers from Aberdeen down to Edinburgh, as well as volunteers to help coordinate groups in Stonehaven, Peterhead and West Fife. Or maybe you know someone in Stirling or West Fife who is good with numbers and could support our groups with looking after their finances. If so, do let us know.

Media round-up

In the last newsletter, we shared our recent campaign success, with nationwide measures being introduced to tackle pavement parking. On 29 January, Edinburgh became the first city in Scotland to enforce these changes, which we have been celebrating in national media.

Guide dog owner Elaine MacKenzie shared her experience of dealing with dangerously parked vehicles in lengthy segments on BBC Breakfast and BBC Morning Live, with her quotes also being broadcast across countless TV and radio news programmes. Online articles included BBC News, as well as regional and local titles.

In January, [Guide Dogs featured on BBC One's Lifeline Appeal](#) with 71-year-old Margaret, from Kirkintilloch, sharing her sight loss journey. Margaret starred in the episode, presented by actor and Guide Dogs ambassador Wendi Peters, and spoke about the life-changing support she has received from our Vision Rehabilitation Service (VRS).

Margaret shared how, after losing her guide dog Bob in tragic circumstances, she felt she had lost her independence. Thanks to the support of Lucy from our VRS team, Margaret told how she has now been learning independent living and long cane skills, which have enabled her to get out and about again. The Appeal has been brilliantly received, with significant donations to Guide Dogs as a result.

Guide dog owner, Margaret Barclay, featured in the Daily Record, having recently been partnered with her beautiful new life-changer Ranger. Ranger is one of our record-breaking litter of 16, born to guide dog mum Unity in early 2022, and was given his name through our [Name a Puppy scheme](#).

Margaret said: "He has absolutely changed my life and given me the confidence to get back out again. I love going out walking and he gives me the freedom to go shopping, use public transport independently and meet friends. Between dogs, I often relied on my husband, so it has been great having that independence again."

Volunteer Betty Kinnear was named in the New Year Honours list, which was reported by The Courier. Betty, from Aberfeldy, is set to be presented with a British Empire Medal (BEM). These are awarded to people who have shown a 'hands-on' service to the local community, such as a charitable or voluntary activity.

Having supported Guide Dogs for three decades, Betty has made a monumental impact on the lives of people living with sight loss, initially through puppy raising, and more recently through her fundraising with the Perth & District Branch. Congratulations Betty!

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.