

Redbridge Community Team

Welcome to the Redbridge newsletter.

Hi, I'm Meghann Gibson, the CAS (Canine Assisted Service) Ops Manager here in Redbridge.

I work with a wonderful team, including the Guide Dog Trainers and Guide Dog Mobility Specialists 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.

But it's not all about training dogs. 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 (Make Every Cuppa Count on 19 April), 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 your local team, activities from other departments, events, volunteer/service user stories and how staff and volunteers support our dogs, from puppy to partnership.

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

Also, [let us know what you think about our first newsletter](#), we hope to improve with every issue.

Thank you so much for your dedication and ongoing support.

Newsletter highlights

March 2024, Issue 1

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Dogs in training

Elizabeth

Let us introduce you to Elizabeth, a 17-month-old Labrador who is being trained by Guide Dog Trainer, Helen Ford.

Elizabeth likes to keep active, loves working and keeping her mind busy. Her **fosterer, Gerry**, is doing a great job keeping her occupied and on track. Elizabeth is progressing well in harness by showing her understanding of the guiding behaviours including stopping at kerbs and negotiating obstacles in the environment to keep her trainer safe.

She can sometimes get a little distracted when working, particularly by other dogs. To help her concentrate, we've been using stooge dogs to teach her to focus on her trainer rather than on dogs. Elizabeth also has high chase. She gets distracted by leaves blowing in the wind. We are working on this by using a flirt pole to teach her she can chase on cue.



Elvee

Elvee is a super bright, willing, and energetic 16-month-old Labrador x golden retriever who is progressing well in her early training! Thanks to the great work of her **puppy raiser, Sonia**, when Elvee came into training she already walked nicely on the lead and knew all the non-guiding cues (e.g. sit, stand, down etc). Elvee is now learning the guiding tasks in the harness and her drive and willingness makes her a pleasure to work with...even though we can't seem to ever tire her out!

One area we're working on with Elvee is her settling behaviour as she wants to be doing something all the time and therefore struggles to switch off and settle in environments such as cafes etc. We're hoping with more practice she will learn to lie down and relax in these environments and will continue to progress well with her early training. We know her **fosterers, Robert and Monika**, are putting a lot of effort into continuing her learning to settle while out and about, and at home.



Staff spotlight

Meet Helen Ford, Guide Dog Trainer

I joined Guide Dogs at the age of 18 and have been with Guide Dogs for almost 11 years.

I love being able to work with dogs and support a life-changing partnership with someone who has a visual impairment. It's a rewarding process and I get a lot of job satisfaction particularly when you see a dog working with the client knowing you have had a positive impact on their life.

I work closely with volunteers by providing handling inputs so they can properly handle a trainee guide dog in a range of situations and understand their behaviours. I will continue supporting our volunteers - either as an individual or family - to enable a dog to successfully go through training. I will meet the fosterer and go through the dog walking on lead and covering any behaviour they may need support with e.g. jumping in the car, free running or settling at home.

Our volunteer fosterers support us by having our dogs in their homes, evenings and weekends, and by continuing with elements of a dog's training outside of 9-5, which really sets them up for success.

My hobbies include walking my pet dogs and being outside.



Puppy raising

Welcome to South East 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 easy! Below, Puppy Development Supervisor, Sophie Boorman, has given 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 giving you every desperate bribery either ignorance or 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 as a regular occurrence 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 as our technical teams work to resolve the issue. Any puppy could develop this pattern of behaviour, some common reasons are distraction, desire to go to a certain place, anxiety, inadvertently rewarding a pup for stopping, and fatigue 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 food or moving your hands towards where you carry this. Calmly changing directions, waiting your dog out and making distraction noises are 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 may stop, what encourages this, and distracting them through it can work wonders to eliminate the behaviour if they do practice it. Please contact your Puppy Development Advisor if your puppy is regularly stopping on walks so they can help put the best plan to help you 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

Make Every Cuppa Count

You may know this event as Tea Party, but this year, you can Make Every Cuppa Count when you host a tea party, coffee morning or bake sale on or around **Friday 19 April** for Guide Dogs. Small or large, at home, work or school - every cake, cookie and crumb really does make a difference.

If you would like to join one of our local Make Every Cuppa Count events in your area to celebrate our life-changing work over a cuppa and lots of cake, then please email: Tina.boreham@guidedogs.org.uk

If you're interested in hosting your own event and want to get your paws on a free guide dog shaped cookie cutter and dog nose cake toppers, head over to: www.guidedogs.org.uk/tea-party

If there's a better excuse to get together over a cuppa and cake, we haven't heard it!



Singing while collecting

Mother and Daughter Jean and Sara Burell with guide dog puppy Dylan attended a cheque presentation with Chelmsford Lions and Chelmsford City Mayor Linda Mascot. Guide Dogs received £425 which is part of the £12,000 cheque shown. Chelmsford Lions also organised a Santa sleigh ride collection with our volunteers going door-to-door accompanied by Santa in his sleigh with lots of Christmas music!



Community fundraising

Classic cars open days

J D Classics of Chelmsford regularly invite us to their open day events as the charity they support. It's a great way for us to raise awareness of Guide Dogs among the public and if you're a car enthusiast, there's plenty of classic cars to admire too. As you can see, guide dog puppy, Dylan, doesn't care much for the classic Jaguar behind him as he gazes at Julie's lunch.



Upcoming events and collections in Redbridge

Do you have a spare hour or two? Would you like to meet up with likeminded Guide Dogs volunteers? If yes, then come and join us at one of our local fundraising events in the Redbridge area:

- 23 June, 12-4pm - Jessel Green Family Fun Day, Loughton, IG10 2EQ
- 7 July, 11-4pm - Epping Town Show, Stonnards Hill, Epping, CM16 4QF
- 21 September, 11-4pm - Loughton Day, Loughton High Road, The Uplands, Loughton, IG10 1NQ

To find out about upcoming events, please email Regional Community Fundraising Manager, Tina Boreham: tina.boreham@guidedogs.org.uk

Volunteering

Your local volunteering update

Local Volunteer Awards: start nominating now

This year, the Local Volunteer Awards are going to be held in early September instead of June. Watch this space for further news! The Awards are our way of recognising and thanking volunteers for their outstanding contribution.

You don't have to wait for the Awards nomination window to open!

Staff/service users/fellow volunteers can nominate a volunteer for a Pat on the Back at any time of the year and these nominations are automatically entered into consideration for a Volunteer Award. Nominated volunteers will receive a special Pat on the Back pin badge and a 'thank you' letter with your nomination message and endorsed by our Head of Volunteering.

So don't wait! Thank a volunteer today via the [Pat on the Back volunteer nomination form](#).

Volunteering opportunities

We're still looking for volunteers to foster our wonderful training dogs! We are particularly looking for people who live near the Redbridge centre or around Chelmsford, Canvey Island, Basildon or Braintree. Requirements for the role will vary depending on where you are based, so please feel free to get in touch if you'd like to find out a little more. We are also looking to trial a puppy bus in the Redbridge area and are looking for volunteers to drive one of our Guide Dogs branded vans on a rota, approximately once a week, to pick up and drop off dogs at our Redbridge centre. Operating times are to be confirmed but will likely be around 7-9am and 4:30-7pm Monday-Friday. Please get in touch if you'd like to express your interest.

Help us spread the word

Most new volunteers state they found out about us through an existing volunteer! We would love to hear from you if you have any connections with local community groups or business where we could promote our volunteering opportunities. We would also love you to spread the word by helping us to distribute our volunteering leaflets to your networks. If you would like a stock of leaflets, then please get in touch or pop into Redbridge.

Join us for a social

We'll be hosting a volunteer social at the **Chelmsford Central Baptist Church on Tuesday 2 April, 2pm-4pm**. We'll be joined at the event by our new CEO, Andrew Lennox. All are welcome, although spaces are being offered on a first come, first served basis due to venue restrictions.

For more information about any of the above, please email our Welwyn and Redbridge Volunteering Coordinator, Phoebe Coles: phoebe.coles@guidedogs.org.uk

Volunteering

Event volunteers needed: London Landmarks and London Marathon

Join our cheer squad and be a part of the action at London Landmarks Half Marathon on Sunday 7 April and London Marathon on Sunday 21 April.

You'll play a vital role in keeping spirits high and our runners motivated all the way to the finish line. Dog ears, noses and t-shirts are provided.

Whether you can join the fun for a full day or just a few hours, we're happy to have you with us. To sign up, please email us at: eventvolunteers@guidedogs.org.uk

Please note that all volunteer roles are eligible to claim reasonable travel expenses for attending the event.

The Guide Dogs Run

On Saturday 29 June, [The Guide Dogs Run](#) is coming to Hylands Park, Essex, but we can't do it without you! We'd love you to join us by signing up to one of our volunteer roles on the day. Roles on the day are varied, so if you fancy a full day or just a few hours, please do come along.

For more information, please email: eventvolunteers@guidedogs.org.uk

Please note that all volunteer roles are eligible to claim reasonable travel expenses for attending the event.



Media round-up

London Fashion Week

Siobhan Meade, a social media content creator, says people with sight loss are not often associated with the fashion industry. The disability advocate is calling for [greater representation of people with sight loss](#) on the catwalk ahead of London Fashion Week.



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.