

FORWARD: Autumn/Winter 2024

Guide Dogs presents the Autumn/Winter 2024 issue of Forward, the official Guide Dogs magazine.

Introduction

This document contains every part of the print version of Forward, and in the same order as that used in the print edition.

Guide Dogs

Forward

The Guide Dogs magazine Autumn/Winter 2024

The start of a blossoming friendship!

ITV1's Love Your Weekend meets guide dog puppy Titch

Inside: A Day in the Life of a Specialist Education Support Officer

We celebrate partnering our 400th buddy dog!

Learn how we collaborate with guide dog schools around the world

On the front cover is a photograph of television presenter Alan Titchmarsh MBE holding Titch, a retriever/Labrador cross guide dog puppy.

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Included here are seven photographs. The first is of golfer Sir Nick Faldo meeting black Labrador guide dog puppy Faldo at the British Masters golf tournament. The second is of Wendi Peters dressed as Mother Superior for Sister Act the Musical with a yellow Labrador guide dog puppy in training. The third is of a small soft yellow Labrador guide dog toy, a Christmas tree decoration and sheets of Christmas wrapping paper. The fourth is of yellow Labrador Kai training with a mountain rescue team. The fifth is of the King and Queen, with the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, attending a garden party at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh. The sixth is of 11-year-old Freya at home with her golden retriever buddy dog Gwen and younger sister Ella. The seventh is of 83-year-old Maureen presenting a cheque to Guide Dogs staff outside the Northwest Regional Centre in Atherton.

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A welcome from Andrew

Firstly let me welcome you to this Autumn/Winter edition of Forward magazine – your window into what is happening in the Guide Dogs community around the UK. The general public often only sees our iconic guide dogs, not realising that our incredible volunteers and staff do so many other things in support of the vision-impaired community – and we have many of those stories in this magazine.

As we turn to some of those stories, we get to meet the star of this magazine's front cover, puppy Titch who's now part of the Love Your Weekend with Alan Titchmarsh family. You can read more about Titch in Star News on page 13.

Following her appointment at our Annual General Meeting in September, I am pleased to be able to introduce you all to our new volunteer Chair of the Trustee board, Isabel Hudson. You can read more about Isabel in the News section, starting on page six.

As we look ahead to Christmas, don't forget we have plenty of Guide Dogs Shop seasonal offerings, including our best-selling Christmas cards as well as some wonderful gift ideas. Find out more on page 14.

We also wanted to put a spotlight on an incredible milestone for our buddy dog service, where we have just placed our 400th buddy dog, Hetty. On page 20, you can read about the amazing difference Hetty has made to her young owner, Dom.

With just over a year in my role as the CEO of Guide Dogs, recently I have been reflecting on the many fundraising groups I have met as I've visited sites around the UK and at some of the events I have attended. From climbing Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) with the Gwynedd group, where we randomly bumped into superstar mezzo soprano Katherine Jenkins, to meeting speakers and community teams in Livingston in Scotland, to recording podcasts with some of our speakers, the stories I have seen and heard are truly inspirational.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition.

Andrew Lennox
Chief Executive
Guide Dogs

Included here are two photographs. The first is of Andrew Lennox, wearing a white shirt and smiling at the camera. The second is of mezzo soprano Katherine Jenkins with three members of the Gwynedd fundraising group at Llanberis Railway Station on the Snowdon Mountain Railway.

News

Introducing Guide Dogs' new Chair

At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September, Guide Dogs welcomed a new Chair of Trustees, Isabel Hudson, to the board. Isabel succeeded Jamie Hambro, who was Chairman for nine years and stepped down after completing three terms in the role.

Isabel brings significant experience to the charity with more than 40 years in financial services, latterly setting up her own business, and she has a strong track record in business development. Isabel has worked with the disability charity, Scope, and now sits on the Board of the ISC Group, a not-for-profit organisation supporting women to bridge the gender seniority gap in insurance.

Outside work, Isabel has a busy family life and enjoys spending time with her young grandsons. She has a young German shepherd and provides regular doggy daycare services for the other family dogs.

Isabel said: "I can see already from the short time that I've been involved with this charity the fantastic work that all of you do. I know that things have been tough recently. It's been tough in Covid and dealing with some of the after-effects of Covid. But I also know that there are still fantastic opportunities for this charity to make a real difference to everybody out there with visual impairment."

[Included here is a photograph of Guide Dogs' new Chair of Trustees Isabel Hudson.](#)

Charity partnership's a hole in one for Guide Dogs

Guide Dogs was proud to be the official charity partner of this year's Betfred British Masters, held in late August at The Belfry, a world-famous golf course near Birmingham, and hosted by British golfing legend Sir Nick Faldo. The Guide Dogs Demonstration Team and an information stand educated the thousands of visitors to the Spectator Village about how our services change lives, and a series of donate-to-play golf challenges helped raise funds. There were also numerous invaluable awareness-raising mentions of Guide Dogs on Sky Sports' live TV coverage.

Thanks to a 150-strong team of Guide Dogs volunteers and staff, plus the DP World Tour team and generous Betfred contributions, the partnership raised more than £77,000 over the five-day tournament.

Find out which celebrities played in Guide Dogs' pro-am team at the event in Star News on page 13.

[Included here is a photograph of Sir Nick Faldo meeting black Labrador guide dog puppy Faldo.](#)

Guide Dogs is Mars Badminton Horse Trials' Charity of the Year in 2025!

We are thrilled to announce that Guide Dogs has been selected as Charity of the Year for the 2025 Mars Badminton Horse Trials. Taking place from 7-11 May next year, Badminton is among the largest horse trials held annually, attracting the world's top eventers and crowds of approximately 160,000. We have a long history with Badminton, as our dedicated local fundraising team have had a stand at the Gloucestershire event for the last 30 years.

We are also very fortunate to have the support of world-renowned event rider William Fox-Pitt, who will be hosting a walk around the legendary cross-country course on our behalf. William said: "I have first-hand experience of sight loss – thankfully for me it was temporary, but I'm so pleased to be supporting Guide Dogs at Badminton."

[Included here are two photographs. The first is of William Fox-Pitt, his wife Alice Plunkett, Guide Dogs CEO Andrew Lennox, Badminton Event Director Jane Tuckwell, and Andrew Goddard with his guide dog Peter, with Guide Dogs fundraising volunteers and their guide](#)

dog puppies in training, standing by the lake in front of Badminton House. The second is a close-up of William Fox-Pitt with black Labrador guide dog puppy Lisa.

Refreshing your skills with Friends & Family Sighted Guide Training

Whether you are newly diagnosed with sight loss, or have been living with it for years, it's good to know that the people around you are confident and skilled in providing you with sighted guiding. Zoe, who's grown up with sight loss, told us: "We just muddle along usually, so it'll be great to have some formal training." Her mum Lynn added: "I want to know that I can take Zoe out, and that she's safe and confident with me guiding her. We do make an entrance, so I'd like everything to be a bit more smooth!"

Having done our Friends & Family training online with Sighted Guide Training Officer Sharon, Zoe said: "A lot of people, and their friends and family, would find this very useful regardless of where they are in their sight loss journey. It's definitely led to me saying yes to more things."

To hear more of Zoe and Lynn's story, or to find out more including how to book training, visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/FriendsAndFamily.

Included here is a photograph of Mohamed with his wife and their young daughter.

Our Visitor Experience team look forward to welcoming you

After a short pause over the Summer due to construction work on site, tours at our National Centre near Leamington Spa returned in August. Regional Centre tours at Forfar in Scotland and Atherton near Manchester will also restart over the next couple of months - welcome news to staff, volunteers and the public, who have been eagerly awaiting their return since tours were paused due to Covid.

Specifically for younger audiences, we've also introduced an experience for schools/youth groups at the National Centre, which will also be available to book as a family-friendly experience during school holidays. If all goes well, the schools/youth groups experience will be rolled out to other centres.

To find out more and to book a tour, visit www.tinyurl.com/GuideDogsVisitorExperiences. Guide Dogs staff and volunteers can enjoy 50% off any tour or experience - email VisitorExperience@guidedogs.org.uk for more information.

Our first Academy Guide Dog Mobility Specialist qualifies!

When Darren Locksley saw a Facebook advert in 2021, he wanted to find out more about changing careers to become a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist (GDMS). Three years later he has gone from being a Deputy Headteacher in London to a fully qualified GDMS based in Scotland, and he's now preparing to go on class with his latest group of dogs. He also happens to be the very first GDMS to qualify under the Guide Dogs Academy.

Darren said: "I've worked with some amazing people in my first few years, and it's been great to use the coaching skills from my previous role."

Guide Dogs Academy was set up to bring people with transferable skills into the organisation. They are already working in local teams across the UK, and many more will qualify over the next few months.

Included here is a photograph of Darren Locksley with a yellow Labrador guide dog puppy in training.

First Partnership Funds go live

Our new Guide Dogs Partnership Fund is a wonderful way to celebrate a special partnership while also supporting Guide Dogs and raising money to help others.

The idea for Partnership Funds grew out of our service users asking for a way of giving back, and enables you to set up your own fundraising pot that you, your family and friends can keep contributing to. The fund can be used to celebrate how your guide dog, buddy dog or children/young person partnership has impacted your life, and to raise funds to help others.

To find out more or to open a fund, contact Community Fundraising Supporter Care on 0345 143 0192 or email FundraiseForUs@guidedogs.org.uk.

Hospital training session is just what the doctor ordered

Guide dog puppies Freddy, Riley, Hunter and Jane had a training session with a difference at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny when the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board launched its ground-breaking Visiting Animals policy.

The session helped to familiarise the puppies with the sights, sounds and smells of a busy medical setting, and even featured the noise of a reversing ambulance. The puppies tackled lifts, stairs, corridors, consulting rooms and other confined spaces, and learnt to remain calm as trolleys and wheelchairs passed by.

The visit was filmed for ITV Wales News, which aired in September and also included an appeal for puppy raisers.

Included here is a photograph of a puppy raiser with her yellow Labrador guide dog puppy in training inside Nevill Hall Hospital.

Betty's decades of volunteering recognised by royalty

Betty Kinnear has been awarded the British Empire Medal in the King's New Year's Honours List for services to Guide Dogs' Perth and District Fundraising Group, and she had her investiture with the Lord Lieutenant of Perth and Kinross in May. Betty has volunteered for Guide Dogs for nearly 30 years, twice winning a Local Volunteer Award and raising 15 guide dog puppies, with all but one becoming guide dogs.

Highlighting how Betty goes the extra mile, the group's volunteer fundraising coordinator Deirdre McVean said: "Betty is an extraordinary fundraiser and was Chairman of the Aberfeldy branch until it merged with the Perth and District Group. Betty has organised many events in Aberfeldy and surrounding areas - craft fairs, shows, street collections, markets and coffee mornings. She is an outstanding crafter and her high-quality knitwear is always in demand. She was instrumental in securing a Name a Puppy fund from a café in Pitlochry, as well as one at her local secondary school, Breadalbane Academy.

"Betty also sells a considerable amount of Christmas goods locally, with people having been known to knock on her door on Christmas Eve asking if cards were still available."

Tracey Berridge, Head of Volunteering at Guide Dogs, said: "We'd like to congratulate Betty on her well-deserved achievement of being awarded a British Empire Medal, recognising her

decades of volunteering for Guide Dogs. We simply couldn't deliver our vital services without incredible volunteers like Betty."

Included here is a photograph of Betty Kinnear with a golden retriever guide dog puppy in training.

Celebrating 40 years of Guide Dogs in Northern Ireland

The first Guide Dogs centre in Northern Ireland opened in late 1984 at Lanesborough House in East Belfast, and when this edition of Forward went to print, the Belfast Team were busy making plans to mark the 40th anniversary of Guide Dogs in NI. Before 1984, people with sight loss had to travel to Scotland and England to train with their guide dogs.

The first two dogs to qualify in Northern Ireland were Eve, a Labrador/golden retriever cross, and Roland, a German shepherd. Trainers at the time were seconded from across the water; later NI-based trainers were trained in Forfar in Scotland before returning to help establish Guide Dogs in Belfast. Since then, there have been more than 600 partnerships trained and matched in NI.

The Belfast Team now works from the city's Heron Road, with staff, volunteers, service users and dogs covering the area from the lakes of Fermanagh to the Glens of Antrim.

Included here are separate photographs of Eve and Roland in the garden outside Lanesborough House.

Remembering Brenda Clare, 1929-2023

When artist Brenda Clare passed away last year, she left a large gift to Guide Dogs in her Will in memory of someone who inspired her to fulfil a lifelong ambition. Brenda lived in East Hagbourne, Oxfordshire until 2000 and while she was there, she volunteered to read every week to a local blind clergyman, Canon Edgar Walmsley.

Canon Walmsley encouraged Brenda to write poetry, which she began writing on scraps of paper, often using her own life experiences or observations of local village life as inspiration. In 2015, aged 85 and having moved back to her native Lancashire, she was finally able to publish a book of her poetry, which raised £1,500 for charity.

Friend Joy Potter said: "Brenda was a very inspirational lady and touched the hearts of those who had the pleasure of knowing her. She also understood how difficult it must have been for anyone to lose their sight.

"In Canon Walmsley's memory, leaving a gift to Guide Dogs gave Brenda great pleasure knowing that it would help lots of other people have a guide dog by their side. Her memory lives on."

Abi Corney, Head of Legacies at Guide Dogs, said: "Nearly two out of every three guide dogs are made possible by gifts in Wills from kind people like Brenda. Gifts in Wills help to fund our life-changing services, enabling people with sight loss to live the life they choose."

Included here is a photograph of Brenda Clare admiring flowers in her garden.

On the Campaign Trail

On the trail to stop access refusals

The Campaigns team has been speaking to politicians at many of the major party political conferences all over the UK this Autumn about how we can tackle guide dog access refusals and make our streets more accessible. An access refusal is when a guide or other assistance dog owner is denied a service, or entry to a business/other place where the public is usually welcomed, because of their dog.

Joined by volunteers, we created opportunities to talk to hundreds of Members of Parliament, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Members of the Welsh Senedd, and Northern Ireland Assembly Members, as well as local councillors and many others about how they can help.

At the Labour and Conservative party conferences, the team held an interactive Open Doors quiz on access refusals. The questions and answers illustrated how distressing and frustrating refusals are, as well as highlighting the most common types of refusals.

Staff and volunteer guide dog owners spoke about the refusals they had experienced and the impact of these on their lives, as well as the importance of tackling refusals.

Minicab and taxi drivers continue to be one of the most common sources of refusals, despite it being a criminal offence to turn away a working assistance dog unless the driver has a valid medical exemption certificate.

Guide Dogs is calling for compulsory disability equality training for all minicab and taxi drivers as part of the licensing process to help prevent refusals from happening. Drivers would learn about the essential role guide and other assistance dogs play, and the legal rights of their owners, as well as how they can best assist disabled passengers.

The team were especially grateful to the volunteers who joined us across the conferences to share their experiences, and make sure these issues are at the top of the agenda for politicians all over the UK.

Included here is a photograph of Lilian Greenwood MP, holding a sign reading "I am supporting Guide Dogs.", with guide dog owner Penny and her yellow Labrador guide dog Questa. Photography by Gus Campbell.

Guide Dogs launches Designing for Inclusion report

In the last edition of Forward, we mentioned that Guide Dogs had partnered with University College London (UCL) on new research to better understand the accessibility challenges of certain bus stop designs and pavements for vision impaired and other disabled people. The research is now complete and the report, including Guide Dogs' recommendations outlining what action needs to be taken, can be found at www.TinyURL.com/DesigningForInclusion.

Guide Dogs in the Media

Look what Taylor made us do!

In August, we gave a litter of 11 guide dog pups special names inspired by Taylor Swift songs and lyrics, celebrating the return of the pop star's record-breaking Eras tour to the UK and encouraging Swifties to volunteer for us.

Our adorable pictures of pups Betty, August, Inez, Marjorie, Clara, Tim, Peter, Archer, Red, James and London appeared in multiple print and online titles including the Daily Express,

the Daily Star, The Scotsman and the Evening Standard, as well as in the Daily Mirror's live coverage of Taylor's concerts at Wembley Stadium in London.

Included here are two photographs. The first is a close-up of one of the very small guide dog puppies from the Taylor Swift litter, being held by someone who is wearing Guide Dogs-themed friendship bracelets. The second is of all eleven puppies on the grass with their yellow Labrador mum Sandy and their black Labrador grandma Wispa.

Guide dog pups are in our good books

We hosted a special reading session at the iconic British Library in London, where some of our young service users read to guide dogs in training. We released adorable photos of the reading session alongside new research, which found just 60% of children with sight loss said they enjoyed reading compared to 78% of sighted children. Some 72% of the children we surveyed agreed that reading to a dog would help their confidence, so we happily obliged!

The children read books made by CustomEyes, our service producing tailor-made tomes adapted for each child's eye condition. Photos of the session featured in the Evening Standard's Best Pictures of the Day from Around the World section, on BBC News online, in children's weekly publications The Week Junior and First News, and in regional titles the Yorkshire Post and The [Plymouth] Herald.

Included here is a photograph of a young girl lying on a beanbag, reading to a German shepherd guide dog puppy in training inside the British Library.

Life's a beach if you follow our canine tips

With the annual re-opening of the UK's beaches to dogs on 1 October, we issued advice to the public on how to keep their four-legged friends safe on coastal adventures. Alongside top tips from our veterinary surgeon, Dr Caroline Goulton BVetMed (Hons), we included eye-catching photos of guide dog puppies playing on West Wittering beach in West Sussex, which featured in The Times and the Evening Standard's Best Pictures of the Day from Around the World section.

Included here is a photograph of two Labrador guide dog puppies running along West Wittering beach on a sunny day.

Star News

A blossoming relationship with Mr Titchmarsh

There's a new member of the Love Your Weekend with Alan Titchmarsh family - a retriever/Labrador cross guide dog puppy called Titch. Titch's first appearance on the show was on Sunday 6 October, coinciding with our month-long Guide Dogs Puppy Appeal. Alan was thrilled with his little puppy namesake, and is looking forward to seeing how Titch progresses with his training over the coming months. You can follow Titch on Sunday mornings on ITV1.

Included here is a photograph of Alan Titchmarsh MBE sitting on a straw bale holding puppy Titch.

Faldo was everyone's cup of "tee"

Celebrities were out in force to meet puppy Faldo at the Betfred British Masters at The Belfry in August. Host Sir Nick Faldo chose Guide Dogs as the tournament's official charity partner and so we named black Labrador puppy Faldo in his honour. Faldo attended a press conference with Sir Nick, and met celebrity golfers including Strictly Come Dancing judge Anton Du Beke and TV presenter and former swimmer Mark Foster at the pro-am day.

Guide Dogs' pro-am team comprised Boyzone's Keith Duffy, Westlife's Brian McFadden, Liverpool football legend Robbie Fowler, and professional golfer Harry Hall, who were cheered on by guide dogs in training positioned all around the course.

Included here is a photograph of Keith Duffy, Robbie Fowler, Harry Hall and Brian McFadden with four guide dog puppies in training at the first tee for the Betfred British Masters pro-am day.

Wendi gets Guide Dogs in on the Act

Over the Summer and into the Autumn, Guide Dogs Ambassador Wendi Peters played Mother Superior in an award-winning production of Sister Act the Musical that has toured theatres around the UK. Wendi invited Guide Dogs volunteers and puppies in training into theatres to hold bucket collections, and she also spoke to audiences about Guide Dogs at the curtain call to encourage donations.

Collections at performances in Bournemouth, Northampton, Darlington, Nottingham, Swansea and Liverpool have raised an incredible £24,122. Wendi said: "The cast had a wonderful time meeting the dogs and volunteers. Being a dog owner myself, I know the huge benefits dogs can bring to people's lives. I'm proud to have been an ambassador for Guide Dogs since 2012 and in that time, I've seen how these extraordinary animals can transform lives."

Included here is a photograph of Wendi Peters dressed as Mother Superior with a yellow Labrador guide dog puppy in training, in the foyer of a theatre.

Guide Dogs

Joyful gifts for everyone

100% of profits go to Guide Dogs

Full of inspiring gift ideas for friends, family – and of course dogs! – our shop also stocks festive favourites such as beautiful decorations, yummy food and exclusive Christmas cards, wrap and 2025 calendars.

Ordering online is easy at the Guide Dogs Shop and saves us money. You can also order by phone on 0345 143 0197, with lines open Monday to Friday, 9am-8pm.

For guaranteed Christmas delivery, the last date for orders to reach us is Friday 20 December.

www.guidedogshop.com

Included here is a photograph of Christmas cards and wrapping paper, Christmas tree decorations, a stocking and a yellow Labrador soft guide dog toy.

The Guide Dogs Shop © The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Trading Company) Limited, a company registered in England and Wales (1596945). Trading in support of Guide Dogs, a charity registered in England and Wales (209617), Scotland (SC038979) and Isle of Man (1334).

International collaborations – stronger together

Did you know that Guide Dogs is the largest assistance dog organisation in the world? We are also a founding member of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), which currently has 99 members in 33 countries, supporting 19,500 guide dog partnerships.

The IGDF sets the global standards and assesses organisations against these standards. By working with them we are connecting with organisations that share our professional standards and commitment to dog welfare, training and client services.

Our breeding programme has a long history of collaborating internationally. We recently provided two dogs to Croatia and another to Japan - meanwhile, yellow Labrador Bertil came from Finland to join our own breeding programme. We also received frozen semen from stud dogs in France and the USA, protecting the genetic health of our own dogs, and those of our international partners.

The global pandemic caused a shortage of dogs entering training, so we worked internationally, receiving eight adult dogs from Finland, three from Sweden, and four from the USA, among others. Some of these dogs were at an age to enter training, whilst others were partly or even fully trained, and most of these dogs are now in partnerships with our own service users.

John Garrett from Leamington Spa has recently been partnered with yellow Labrador Enzo, from Sweden. John said: "Enzo is an absolute star; I love him to bits, and he is a great worker! I have established contact with his trainer and puppy raiser in Sweden and hope to stay in touch. After nearly two years without a dog, it is great to be mobile again and in a more efficient way than using a long cane."

Amit Patel from London has recently been partnered with black Labrador retriever Quark, who was trained by Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind. Amit said: "I was slightly nervous about getting my second guide dog, but Quark is the perfect partner for me and adored by my entire family. Going out to Ireland to train with him in his home environment really helped to cement our bond - overall it was a great experience, and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend being partnered with a dog from abroad."

These recent partnerships highlight the importance of belonging to the IGDF community. We are hugely grateful for the support we have received from our friends and colleagues around the world.

Included here are two photographs. The first is of yellow Labrador Bertil. The second is of one of Bertil's litters, nine tiny black and yellow Labrador puppies with their black Labrador mum.

Born to guide – but then called to do something else!

Guide dog owners put a huge amount of trust in their dogs to get them out and about safely. This means our dogs need to be trained to a very high standard. While most go on to be life-changing guide dogs, some just aren't cut out for this role. They're still incredible dogs, but if

guiding or becoming a buddy dog isn't right for them, then they'll come under the care of our dedicated rehoming team.

We caught up with Rehoming Supervisor Daniella Kennedy, who explained: "We're looking for two types of home for the dogs we look after – firstly, forever homes for our guide dogs when they reach retirement, and secondly, homes for younger dogs who've been withdrawn from our training programme."

Our rehoming team are passionate about finding the right home for our dogs. They know their full history, including their health, temperament, likes and dislikes. Daniella added: "Some dogs have health or behavioural needs that have prevented them completing their training. They can be trickier to rehome but it's the best feeling when you find the right match for your dog and you know they're going to fit right in."

Cody was an excitable young dog who needed new owners with the time, patience and experience to help him learn new behaviours and channel his energy. When Ian and Jane, who live in Moray, Scotland, approached us about rehoming a second dog, we knew they could give Cody structure, and understood he'd always need a way of letting off steam.

Fortunately they attend training sessions at Canine Hoopers, an agility sport using hoops, tunnels and barrels that's proved perfect for Cody. Jane said: "Hoopers is great for building a bond. You can see the joy on Cody's face when he gets it right and he gets his reward. It won't happen overnight, and it will take time and effort, but Cody is getting very good and, most importantly, we're all having fun!"

Some of our dogs go even further and find themselves in a new career, helping people in a different way. Energetic Labrador Kai is one such dog. Kai needs lots of physical and mental stimulation and was rehomed with Jen and Craig in rural Scotland when he was 13 months old. He is now training to be a search and rescue dog.

Optometrist Jen first thought about rehoming a dog when she was helping one of her customers with a referral for a guide dog. After her rehoming application was successful, Jen spoke to our team and explained that she and her husband Craig live on a farm, are very active, and that Craig is involved with mountain rescue.

"They said they already had a dog in mind for us," said Jen, and following their home check, they met Kai for the first time and took him home on the same day.

Jen added: "Kai is the nicest-natured dog, but he's quite full on. Because we have so much outdoor space, he can run and play as much as he likes. We also have a big horse arena where Kai and our other dog love to play together. He's a totally different dog now, he's so relaxed."

After a couple of months Craig took Kai to his first search and rescue training session to see how he got on.

"Kai just took to it, he really loved it. He's a physically fit dog, but he also needs to be learning and focused. He enjoys it and it's one of the only things that will tire him out!"

Kai passed the initial assessments with flying colours and his training now takes him all over Scotland, doing practice searches of different difficulties. "We're so proud of him," added Jen.

It's homes for dogs such as Cody and Kai that are often harder for our rehoming team to find. Daniella points out: "We're lucky to receive lots of great rehoming applications but most people are looking for a "perfect" well-behaved older dog that's relatively easy to look after.

"Who we'd really love to hear from are people with the time, patience and commitment to take on a dog that might have behaviours that need to be worked on, or a health condition that requires long-term management - we can provide tailored advice and support to help manage any additional needs the dog may have.

"In particular, we're looking for experienced dog owners or those who can offer an active lifestyle for some of our very energetic dogs! It won't always be easy but if you're prepared to put the time and effort in, rehoming a dog like this can be highly rewarding."

To find out more about applying to rehome one of our dogs, visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/rehoming.

Included here are three photographs. The first is of Jane and Ian with black Labradors Cody and Rebus. The second and third photographs are of Kai, in action training with a mountain rescue team, and then proudly wearing his uniform.

Volunteering for Guide Dogs – by royal appointment

Earlier this year, three of our wonderful volunteers attended His Majesty's Garden Party at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh. The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh invited three volunteers and their guests to represent Guide Dogs: Catriona Rose, Jim Grundison and Pauline Duff were nominated to attend by their volunteer managers. Read on to hear their stories, learn more about how volunteers make everything we do possible, and find out how you can join our volunteering community.

Included here is a photograph of the King and Queen, with the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, attending a garden party at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh.

Jim Grundison

You may remember Jim from the Spring/Summer 2024 edition of Forward – as one of our Collection Box Repairers, he has refurbished more than 140 life-sized collection dog boxes at his home workshop in Livingston, Scotland. Since joining the Guide Dogs volunteer community eight years ago, Jim and his family have also boarded 44 dogs – and he was unexpectedly reunited with one at the royal garden party, in attendance with her owner! Along with his wife Mary and son Stephen, Jim is also a regular at local fundraising events in West Lothian and West Fife – and is particularly popular when he brings along a puppy or dog in training.

Fundraising is vital to Guide Dogs. In 2023 we created 469 new guide dog partnerships and supported a total of 3,478 partnerships, and we rely on donations to make our life-changing work possible. Last year our groups and community fundraising team raised over £7.1million and we couldn't have done it without volunteers like Jim – not only volunteering as a fundraiser, but restoring the old, tired collection boxes which raise awareness of, and funds for, the work we do.

If you would like to find out more about joining one of our fundraising groups, hosting your own event or taking on a sponsored challenge, visit www.tinyurl.com/GuideDogsFundraisingGroups.

Included here is a photograph of Jim Grundison painting a life-sized guide dog collection box in his home workshop.

Catriona Rose

Puppy Raiser Catriona has been volunteering for Guide Dogs for 15 years. It all began when her eight-year-old son wanted a dog, but Catriona wasn't sure... Some 17 puppies later, she is still puppy raising and currently taking care of Flossie, a black German shepherd. Until recently Catriona also supported her Puppy Development Advisor by organising puppy fostering in her area, as well as providing support and advice to new puppy raisers as a mentor.

Puppy raisers like Catriona provide a loving home for a future life-changer for around a year, before they enter their formal guide dog training.

Catriona said: "A few of my favourite moments volunteering with Guide Dogs have been the arrival of my first pup, raising puppies who went on to become guide dog mums and then raising their puppies, fostering pups I have raised when their guide dog owner goes on holiday... And being invited to the royal garden party was also a highlight!"

For more information about puppy raising, visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/puppyraising.

Included here is a photograph of Catriona Rose attending the garden party.

Pauline Duff

Many volunteers tell us that volunteering for Guide Dogs is addictive – they start with one role and before they know it, they are taking on more and more. But not many volunteers do as much as Pauline - she is a Treasurer, Collection Box Coordinator, Fundraiser, Speaker, Speaker Trainer, Driver, Puppy Raiser and Puppy Fosterer. In between all this, she even finds time to make and sell her legendary tablet (a crumbly Scottish confectionery) at fundraising events – all while raising beautiful puppy Piper.

Pauline said: "It was a real pleasure to be nominated and invited to the royal garden party at Holyrood Palace this year. I was accompanied by Fiona McDermid who, along with myself, volunteers with Guide Dogs' Southside group. It was such a special day getting the chance to dress up in all our finery and meet so many other volunteers from such a wide range of organisations.

"We got to see the King and Queen as well as the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh. It was so well organised and the tea and cakes were, as expected, gorgeous. Thank you Guide Dogs for giving me the opportunity to attend."

If you are an existing volunteer who would like to follow in Pauline's footsteps and try a new role (or two!), contact the Volunteering Office via volunteer@guidedogs.org.uk or 0345 143 0191 and we will help find the right role for you.

Included here is a photograph of Pauline Duff and Fiona McDermid at the garden party.

Meet Dom and Hetty - our 400th buddy dog partnership!

This year we celebrated our 400th buddy dog partnership, which saw two-year-old golden retriever Hetty matched with Dom, who lives with his family in Luton, Bedfordshire.

Our buddy dog service was first introduced in 2011 and brings a friendly, well-behaved dog into the life of a child or young person with a vision impairment. More than a pet, buddy dogs can help children learn new skills, have huge wellbeing benefits and, in some cases, prepare them for guide dog ownership.

Donna, Dom's mum, said: "I didn't want to get my hopes up that a dog would bring about changes in Dom but Hetty's made such a difference. She's been brilliant. She settled in straight away and is such a calm and gentle dog.

"Dom's connections with the world are limited but he's much more animated when Hetty's around. When she barks, he'll laugh a real big belly laugh. He enjoys watching her in the garden, and when she rests her chin on his knee, he'll touch her fur once he realises she's there. They're little connections but for us they're enormous.

"Hetty comes everywhere with us and trots along next to Dom in his wheelchair. We go to the park, the café and have taken her on holiday. Dom's very social and we've also found that more people come up to talk to us when Hetty's there, which is great for Dom."

Before becoming a buddy dog, Hetty was training to be a guide dog in London but kept on stopping on walks, both in and out of harness. She was therefore given a career change because life as a guide dog wasn't quite right for her, as is the case with all our buddy dogs.

Dom and his family first met Hetty at a Buddy Dogs Experience Session at our South East Regional Centre in Redbridge, near London, and immediately fell in love with her.

Donna added: "After hearing about the buddy dog service from a friend, I decided to look into it and I'm so glad we did. We couldn't have asked for a better dog.

"Hetty's impacted us all in one way or another. She came along at just the right time.

You can find out more about our buddy dog service at www.guidedogs.org.uk/buddydogs.

Included here is a photograph of golden retriever Hetty sitting next to Dom in his wheelchair at the beach.

"She's the kindest dog in the world"

Freya and Gwen's story

Before being partnered with buddy dog Gwen, 11-year-old Freya felt worried whenever she was alone in a room at home. Gwen's kind, calm and protective nature has made her the perfect companion for Freya, boosting her confidence with unconditional love, and bringing joy to her whole family.

Gwen was partnered with Freya, who has the sight conditions nystagmus and ocular albinism, and her family three years ago. The golden retriever had completed all her training to become a guide dog, but when the time came for her to guide someone with sight loss, the responsibility was too much and she started coming to a stop for no reason while in harness. Instead, her trainers knew she had all the qualities to be a wonderful buddy dog for a child with a vision impairment.

"Freya used to get very worried about being in a space on her own at home," said Laura, Freya's mum. "She loves animals so we wanted to get a dog who could provide calm and

reassurance. I was researching breeds for therapy dogs when I read about buddy dogs on the Guide Dogs website, and just knew they would be perfect for us.

“As Freya is getting older, things can be quite tough some days. She can feel like she’s different and she can get very tired from being in a mainstream school. But Gwen has a really calming, positive effect on her when she comes home. To stroke Gwen makes things feel better.”

Freya said: “Gwen has definitely helped with my confidence a lot. When she’s around me I always feel really safe and it’s like I get a power boost.

“I help to feed Gwen. I help to take her for walks. I brush her. I weigh out her food in the morning. I give her a lick mat and snuffle mat. I like playing games with her.”

Laura added: “Now Freya is the first to come downstairs in the morning so she can get an early morning snuggle. Gwen has given her that extra confidence and unconditional love as well, she’s been such a positive influence.

“Gwen’s behaviour is amazing. She came to us with incredible training and she’s so responsive when we use the same commands that she learnt in her guide dog training. So many people comment on what an amazingly well-behaved dog she is. And that helps with Freya and her vision, because when we’re out and we need to keep an extra eye out to support Freya, it helps that Gwen is so sensible on the lead.”

It hasn’t always been this easy. When Gwen first joined the family, she needed some extra time to settle in and build her confidence. “For the first few weeks, Gwen wouldn’t go for a walk. She would plant herself on our driveway and we couldn’t move her,” said Laura.

“The buddy dog team from Guide Dogs really supported us. They arranged for one of the guide dog trainers to come out, who gave us some extra help and reminded us that it was a big change for her. They gave us reassurance that Gwen was just getting to know us, and we needed to get to know her, and within a month it all clicked and was brilliant. She was then happy to go for walks and loving life. It really helped to have that extra support and we knew we could phone the buddy dog team and they would be there.

“The bond that Gwen has with Freya and her little sister Ella is so strong now. Gwen is really caring and protective of them. If Freya is upset Gwen will be right there, she really picks up on emotions. If Freya’s had a bad day, Gwen’s head will be on her lap. She’s always looking out for both girls, making sure they’re OK.”

Illustrating just how strong their bond is, Freya and Ella have raised money for Guide Dogs to say thank you for Gwen. They baked some dog-friendly biscuits which they sold outside their home and raised £130.

Freya’s school also got in on the act, raising money for Guide Dogs and making the whole school year all about Guide Dogs. They had a volunteer speaker come into school with a guide dog puppy. This made Freya feel very proud and helped open up conversations about vision impairment.

Guide Dogs has helped Freya in other ways too. Our Education Support team has given advice on what support is available in school. For example, now Freya uses a laptop which projects an image of the white board at the front of the classroom onto her screen.

Laura said: “Freya gets most of her books through Guide Dogs’ CustomEyes Books. She has a reading passport every term and she likes the paper copy rather than anything else, so we use CustomEyes a lot.”

Laura added: “We really can’t thank Guide Dogs enough for providing us with Gwen, she’s just amazing. She has heaps of personality and she’s so well-behaved and loving, she’s a joy to be around.”

Freya said: “A buddy dog is different from any other dog, they’re like normal dogs, but they just care and they have such a big heart.

“Gwen is kind and funny. She’s just always so happy. She’s like the shadow of me. I wouldn’t really want any other dog than Gwen. She’s the kindest dog in the world.”

Included here are three photographs. The first is of the whole family on a walk in the countryside, with Gwen just ahead of them. The second is of Gwen waiting patiently as Freya puts treats in her snuffle mat. The third is of Gwen lying on her mat next to Freya and Ella, who are reading CustomEyes books.

Karate Union masters the art of fundraising for Guide Dogs

Karate Union of Great Britain (KUGB) has been raising funds for Guide Dogs over the past 18 months after choosing us as their charity partner. Clubs across the country have collectively raised £3,500 and are naming a guide dog puppy Brennan after former KUGB Chairman, Sensei Frank Brennan.

When it came to choosing a charity to support, KUGB were inspired by two of their members who are vision impaired. Sensei Dylan, who has been a driving force behind their fundraising, began his sight loss journey two years ago after he started to experience slightly blurry vision in one eye.

He said: “Assuming I just needed glasses, I had an appointment with the optician, who sent me to the eye hospital for further testing. I was diagnosed with Leber’s Hereditary Optic Neuropathy in September 2022. My eyesight continued to deteriorate, and I was registered severely sight impaired two months later at the age of 25.

“Prior to losing my sight, I led a busy life, working full-time and running a Karate club together with my sister Gemma in the evenings. I immediately knew that I did not want my sight loss to stop me from doing everything that I was already doing. Gemma and I were able to work out a new teaching arrangement for the Karate club and use each other’s strengths to make sure my sight loss is not affecting the quality of teaching at the club.

“This year, I celebrated 20 years of KUGB membership, and still travel across the country most weekends for training events and to volunteer as an official at competitions. I am now the Mental Health and Disability Officer for the organisation, and my contribution to the community following my sight loss was recognised in a special award from the High Sheriff of Northumberland earlier this year.”

The inspiring stories of Dylan and fellow KUGB member and guide dog owner Mark have led the organisation to arrange a variety of fundraising events, from Karate competitions up and down the country, to donning Halloween costumes, raffles and a guess the name of the Easter bunny competition.

To find out more about naming a guide dog puppy, visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/NAP.

Included here is a photograph of Guide Dogs volunteer Moira and ambassador dog Maisie with Gemma and Dylan at their “Karate on the Beach” event in Blyth, Northumberland.

Dedicate a star this Christmas in memory of a loved one

As Christmas approaches, we’d like to send Forward readers our very best wishes and hope that you can enjoy the festivities with all those who are special in your life. Christmas can also be a time when our thoughts turn to those who are no longer with us. It can be especially poignant to share those memories and honour what was important to our loved ones at this time of year.

That’s why every Christmas, we run a very special campaign where a star can be dedicated to the memory of a loved family member, friend or pet. Those who dedicate a star can take comfort in knowing their loved one’s memory will live on through our work, helping people with sight loss to live the life they choose. Last year’s Guiding Stars helped to name a very special chocolate Labrador puppy, Robin, who is now training with his puppy raiser but has also been identified as a potential breeding dog.

Our Guiding Stars pack includes two stars – one to keep and one to post back to Guide Dogs to be displayed on a Christmas tree at one of our regional training centres. It’s also possible to take a photo of your star with its message to put on our online dedication page at www.guidedogs.org.uk/guidingstars.

Thanks to the beautiful stars we receive, and the kind donations included with them, we can continue to transform the lives of people living with sight loss.

To find out more, call 0800 953 0113 or visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/guidingstars.

Included here is a photograph of young chocolate Labrador puppy Robin sitting next to a wrapped present.

Thank You to our Supporters

Dear supporters,

I’m delighted to be writing this, my first ever greeting in Forward magazine. I joined Guide Dogs over the Summer and am loving learning all about our life-changing work.

One thing that’s struck me is just how incredibly dedicated our fundraisers are, whether you’re travelling to other countries to raise money for Guide Dogs, like Bob Colclough, or you’re co-ordinating more than 100 fundraisers, like Dr Elizabeth Marsden! A big thank you to each and every one of you.

I want to wish you a very merry Christmas, and a peaceful new year.

Terry McGrath
Chief Marketing & Fundraising Officer

Bob Colclough cycled down the Atlantic coast of America in May, starting in Boston, Massachusetts, and ending more than 1,700 miles later in Miami, Florida. Bob, from Leigh in Staffordshire, is a cycling fundraiser veteran, previously completing numerous adventures across the world for various charities. He raised money for Guide Dogs because he and wife Karen rehomed retired guide dogs Hattie and Grace, and Bob is also a volunteer driver and

fundraiser. Bob raised £3,000 and has decided to name a guide dog puppy Nora, after his late mother.

Included here is a photograph of Bob at the North Carolina state line.

Ian West raised more than £3,000 by walking from Nottingham to the south coast of Portugal. Ian's six-week feat didn't even stop on the ferry from Portsmouth to Santander, as he got permission from the captain to complete 12 hours of walking whilst onboard. Ian, who turned 70 this year, said: "My brother is going blind and has been diagnosed with macular degeneration. Once I found out about his sight problems, I knew Guide Dogs would be the charity I wanted to support forever – that's my world now." Ian hopes to name a guide dog puppy Neptune.

Included here is a photograph of Ian in Nottingham at the start of his walk, with Claire Robotham and her black Labrador guide dog Jacqui.

A huge well done and thank you to 83-year-old Maureen, who walked up Holcombe Hill near Bury in Greater Manchester to raise £620 for Guide Dogs. Maureen lives in nearby Lavender Hills Care Home, and she was supported by the staff to complete her challenge. Guide Dogs is a charity close to her heart as her mum had three guide dogs, which Maureen said changed her mum's life.

Included here is a photograph of Maureen presenting a cheque to Guide Dogs outside the Northwest Regional Centre in Atherton.

Cardiff guide dog owner Ryan Moreland made history as the first guided vision-impaired runner to take part in the Roman Run from Brecon to Merthyr in South Wales. He completed the 16-mile multi-terrain challenge in just over three hours 35 minutes with his guide runner, Colin Johnson, and raised £556 for Guide Dogs. The race featured challenging ascents and cross-country sections before the runners rejoined the road at the Upper Neuadd Reservoir, finishing at Cyfarthfa Castle. Ryan said: "It was a tough race but I was very happy with my time. The last three miles were the hardest, particularly the final mile going uphill, but the cheering saw me to the finish."

Included here is a photograph of Colin and Ryan training in the hills.

St Bridget's CofE Primary School had great success with a coffee afternoon, raising £239.65 through cake sales and donations. This is an amazing total for such a small rural school near Cockermouth, Cumbria. The children had chosen Guide Dogs as their annual charity after a visit from Andrew Curtis and his guide dog Rose, with volunteer speaker Margaret Woodward. They had created striking artwork displays on the theme of guide dogs for parents to admire – and all the guide dog-shaped biscuits vanished.

Included here is a photograph of pupils at St Bridget's looking at an artwork display featuring a working guide dog.

Penn Pacers running group raised £24,000 for Guide Dogs. Group founder and organiser Jo delivers all runs and training sessions for free and instead asks members to donate or fundraise for Guide Dogs. As well as setting up a Just Giving page, the group have organised a range of fundraising activities around running events and raised sponsorship by taking part in 10Ks and relays. The group have named six guide dog puppies, with their most recent puppy, Andy, named in memory of a dear runner friend.

Included here is a group photograph of members of the Penn Pacers running group.

Staff, pupils and parents at Bosmere Junior School in Havant, Hampshire, have named a seventh guide dog puppy Junior, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross, through Guide Dogs' Name a Puppy scheme. Staff and pupils had lots of fun organising a variety of fundraising events including a sensory trail, cake sale and playground activities such as pin-the-tail-on-the-dog and guess the number of dog treats in the jar, managing to raise more than £7,000 in just one week!

Included here is a photograph of young yellow Labrador/retriever cross Junior sitting in a dog bed.

Staff at the Halifax branch in Belfast raised £10,000 by organising a five-a-side football competition, a Christmas fundraiser and a street collection as well as a variety of office-based fundraising events. Some colleagues took part in the Belfast City Marathon, and the team also got involved by volunteering at locally held events and shows. Staff named a guide dog puppy Watson, a black golden retriever/Labrador cross, as a result of their incredible fundraising.

Included here is a photograph of puppy Watson with his paws outstretched.

More than 100 guide dog owners, Guide Dogs volunteers and staff, plus their friends and family, took part in a series of fundraising skydives over the Summer and Autumn. Organised by Dr Elizabeth Marsden, who called her campaign "Blind Panic", together skydivers from across the UK have raised more than £38,000.

Former PE teacher Elizabeth, from Prestwick in Ayrshire, has a guide dog called Ivan and was inspired to raise money by her own sight loss journey, having been diagnosed with glaucoma aged 35. Elizabeth employed her PE training to organise fundraisers into geographical areas, then contacted a skydive centre within each before handing the reins over to the area's fundraising team leader to make arrangements.

Elizabeth said: "Once I realised we were getting applications from all over the country and large numbers were involved, my PE training kicked in. PE teachers, when faced with large numbers of people, organise them into teams and make sure each team has a captain."

There have been skydives in Swansea in South Wales, Honiton in Devon, Brackley in Northamptonshire, Lancaster in Lancashire, Nottingham, Ashford in Kent, Old Sarum in Salisbury, at Fife Airport in Glenrothes and at Shotton Colliery in Durham.

Elizabeth travelled to Kent for her own skydive. She added: "I do not have the words to describe the experience, except to say it was truly amazing. We were extremely high with views of London, Essex, and even France. What's not to love?"

Included here is a photograph of Elizabeth skydiving with an instructor.

Michelle Moss spent seven and a half hours swimming the length of Lake Windermere, Cumbria, raising nearly £2,000 for Guide Dogs in memory of her late father, Keith Fairhurst. Keith and wife Rose were popular members of the Pembrokeshire group and helped with the weekly Saundersfoot Harbour stall, come rain or shine. Michelle said: "It wasn't just standing on a stall, it was meeting people, the social side. There would always be a hot chocolate and a piece of cake involved as well! They made so many friends and were made to feel so welcome from day one."

Included here is a photograph of Michelle in her wetsuit, ready to swim.

A Day in the Life Of...

Andrea Davies, Specialist Education Support Officer

For the parents of children with a vision impairment, navigating the education system can be challenging. Andrea Davies is one of our small team of expert Specialist Education Support Officers, dedicated to assisting families at every stage of their child's education, from starting school right through to college and university.

"It's the interactions with families that I love," explained Andrea. "They get in touch with us for information and advice, often at times when they're feeling confused or worried about how best to help their child."

Support can range from, but is not restricted to, empowering parents about what rights and entitlements their child has, help with accessing specialist support in school and liaising with key professionals, completing complicated paperwork and deciphering jargon.

Andrea said: "In conversations with parents, seemingly straightforward matters can lead to unexpected paths. It's crucial to have a deep understanding of the education system and available services, as the landscape can vary significantly."

These discussions often unfold over days or weeks, involving collaboration with education professionals, local authorities, and other third-sector specialised sight loss charities where appropriate, to provide families with personalised recommendations.

"It's a role that allows for creativity and has a profound impact," reflected Andrea. "For instance, I worked with a university student facing challenges due to her vision impairment. By working closely with the university to implement additional support measures, she was able to remain on her course and ultimately graduated with a first-class honours degree."

Andrea started her career as a primary school teacher and then trained as a Qualified Teacher of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (QTVI), working for a local authority in a variety of settings. She joined the education team at Guide Dogs ten years ago.

"Having worked as a mainstream classroom teacher, then directly with children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), specifically a vision impairment, and now families, it's broadened my experience and given me the full picture of services for children," she said. "We're truly privileged to do this role and be part of people's journey."

For more information about our education support service, visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/education.

Included here is a photograph of Andrea Davies.

Letter & Caption Competition

Letter: wise words from Margaret

As a volunteer for Guide Dogs for 18 years, I've noticed that the smaller the community group, school or organisation I've visited, the more heart they put into fundraising and donating. People may not have much to give, but they frequently give regularly, say £1 a month for years on end. It all mounts up. Givers also tell others who might do the same, or give more down the line when they are able.

The mantra “every penny counts” is common for a reason, but experience has taught me that it’s not just money which matters. The warmth and goodwill which comes from involvement is the real currency, the sharing of experiences with guide dogs and their owners, the ambassadorial duties creating laughter, maybe tears, and certainly a better understanding of the challenges of sight loss.

Whatever the donation, leaving with the warm support of the community is more important to me.

Yours, Margaret Woodward, speaker and former puppy raiser

Turn to page 26 for our Thank You to our Supporters section

Caption Competition

Love Your Weekend pup Titch had to share the limelight with his siblings before finding cover star fame! He’s pictured as a tiny puppy still nesting with his mum, Vicki, who’s cared for by volunteer breeding dog holder Claire Cobbold.

Included here is a photograph of Titch’s front paws and nose, as he lies underneath his siblings.

What would you caption this photo?

Send your suggestions to: Forward, Communications Team, Guide Dogs, Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, RG7 3YG or email forward@guidedogs.org.uk with your name, address and a daytime phone number. The winner gets a £10 Marks & Spencer voucher.

The last competition winner is Graham White from Derby, with the caption “I don’t know why Eric’s looking so cheerful. I want to know when he’s going to bring me some sunshine!” Congratulations, Graham!

Included here is a photograph of yellow Labrador retired guide dog Spencer sitting in front of Eric Morecambe’s statue on a grey day in Morecambe.

Competition rules: This competition is open to anyone resident in the UK, except employees of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, their families and anyone connected with the competition. No purchase necessary. Proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. No responsibility can be accepted for entries delayed, damaged or mislaid or wrongly delivered. Illegible entries will be disqualified. Only one original entry is allowed per envelope. The winners will be notified by either post or telephone and the results will be published in the next issue of the magazine. The winners must agree to the publication of their names, photographs and any publicity, if requested. In all matters concerning the competition the Editor’s decision is final. No correspondence can be entered into. Entry implies acceptance of the rules. The closing date for the competition is 31 January 2025.

In Good Company

CVS Group partnership raises more than £67,000 for Guide Dogs

Leading veterinary services provider CVS announced its Charity of the Year partnership with Guide Dogs in July 2023. In the last year, their colleagues and customers have undertaken a

variety of individual and group fundraising activities including charity bake sales, walks and challenges, in addition to donations via traditional cash collection boxes.

CVS also introduced a micro-donation platform, called Pennies and also known as a “digital charity box”, at client payment points within 440 of its practices throughout the UK. Funds raised have supported a broad range of Guide Dogs’ work, from our guide dog service through to the work we do to support young people and children with a vision impairment and their families.

CVS Group has around 500 vets and referral centres in the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands, covering small animal, farm animal and equine practices, plus laboratories and crematoria.

Thank you to all colleagues and customers of CVS Group for raising such an incredible amount for Guide Dogs.

Thank you to everyone who visited our paw-some accessible art trail!

In the last edition of Forward we told you about our free, fun and family-friendly trail of adventure, Paws on the Wharf. The trail saw 25 larger-than-life guide dog sculptures pop up around Canary Wharf for eight weeks from mid-March to mid-May, with the aim of raising awareness of sight loss and vital funds for Guide Dogs.

The trail was designed to be as inclusive and accessible as possible – it was short in distance and step-free, there were sighted guide and sensory tours for people who preferred support, and sculptures were created with artists who have sight loss. There were also tactile elements to the sculptures, and visitors could use NaviLens technology (an app which uses QR code-style symbols that can be read by a smartphone) to find their way around the trail.

We’re pleased to share that the trail was a huge success, receiving amazing coverage and feedback in the media and from people visiting the trail! Not only that, but we raised a fantastic £295,000 for Guide Dogs too.

Thank you to everyone who supported the trail, and special thanks to our event partners and sponsors: Wild in Art, Citi, Canary Wharf Group, Canal and River Trust, United Airlines, James Wellbeloved™, Cirrico, Petplan, NaviLens, The Liquorice Press Ltd and The Big Yellow Storage Company.

Included here is a photograph of a woman crouching down to take a selfie with one of the guide dog sculptures. The sculpture is a gold dog with a multi-coloured floral and nature pattern including butterflies and birds.

Promotions

The following are three advertisements that are presented in different places in this issue of Forward.

1. Guide Dogs | ebay FOR CHARITY

Did you know you can help Guide Dogs on eBay?

Make Guide Dogs your favourite charity on eBay and support us whenever you shop or sell!

Learn more at www.charity.ebay.co.uk

Guide Dogs is a working name of The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Registered Office: Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire RG7 3YG. A company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (291646) and a charity registered in England and Wales (209617), Scotland (SC038979) and Isle of Man (1334).

2. Guide Dogs

We'd love for you to join our pack

Whether you're an avid runner or wanting to take on a new adventure, we have a variety of opportunities for you to get involved and make a difference.

London Landmarks Half Marathon – 6 April 2025

TCS London Marathon – 27 April 2025

The Guide Dogs Run – June 2025

Great North Run – 7 September 2025

Royal Parks Half Marathon – 12 October 2025

Facebook challenges – Stay tuned for updates

Join #TeamGuideDogs

To join #TeamGuideDogs, check out www.guidedogs.org.uk/challenge-events.

If you're taking on your own sporting challenge, we'd love to hear from you:
events@guidedogs.org.uk.

Included here is a photograph of a lady wearing a Guide Dogs top competing with others in the Great North Run.

3. Petplan®

Petplan & ADCH Animal Charity Awards 2025

Celebrating those within the animal charity sector.
Nominate today!

Say thank you to those that dedicate their time to helping pets without a forever home by nominating today

Nomination Categories

Animal Charity Team of the Year

Animal Charity Employee of the Year

Animal Charity Volunteer of the Year

Visit <https://awards.petplan.co.uk> to nominate now.

Nominations close on 31st January 2025.

Included here are three separate photographs, of a cat, a terrier and two rabbits.

Contact details

This is a list of phone numbers and contact details arising from the articles in this edition of Forward magazine.

Guide Dogs | ebay FOR CHARITY

Visit: www.charity.ebay.co.uk

To join #TeamGuideDogs

Visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/challenge-events

If you're taking on your own sporting challenge

Email: events@guidedogs.org.uk

Friends & Family Sighted Guide Training

Visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/FriendsAndFamily

Visitor Experiences

Visit: www.tinyurl.com/GuideDogsVisitorExperiences

Email: VisitorExperience@guidedogs.org.uk

Partnership Funds

Phone: 0345 143 0192

Email: FundraiseForUs@guidedogs.org.uk

Designing for Inclusion report

Visit: www.TinyURL.com/DesigningForInclusion

Guide Dogs Shop

Visit: www.guidedogsshop.com

Phone: 0345 143 0197

Rehoming one of our dogs

Visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/rehoming

Fundraising groups

Visit: www.tinyurl.com/GuideDogsFundraisingGroups

Puppy raising

Visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/puppyraising

Volunteering Office

Email: volunteer@guidedogs.org.uk

Phone: 0345 143 0191

Buddy dog service

Visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/buddydogs

Naming a guide dog puppy

Visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/NAP

Guiding Stars

Visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/guidingstars

Phone: 0800 953 0113

Education support service

Visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/education

Caption Competition

Post: Forward, Communications Team, Guide Dogs, Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, RG7 3YG

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