

April 25, 2018

Dispelling myths about guide dogs on International Guide Dog Day



**CANADIAN GUIDE DOGS
FOR THE BLIND**

Wednesday, April 25, 2018 marks International Guide Dog Day. Guide dogs are amongst the most impressive animals on the planet. They give back freedom to individuals who are blind, and can often mean the difference between someone stuck at home relying on other people to help versus living an active, independent lifestyle. Guide dogs have saved the lives of many, figuratively and literally. The last Wednesday in April each year is recognized as International Guide Dog Day by the International Guide Dog Federation, the umbrella organization that provides training standards for

guide dogs in thirty countries around the world. Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind is a founding member of the International Guide Dog Federation. They mark International Guide Dog Day by sharing some interesting facts and dispelling some myths about guide dogs in Canada.

Guide Dogs – Fiction or Fact?

Fiction: Any dog can be trained to become a guide dog.

Fact: Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind breeds its own puppies based on temperament and health. Pups are raised with the purpose to become a guide dog. Only the puppies that have the right temperament, attitude and desire to do the work will complete the training program. No dog is ever forced to be a guide dog.

Fiction: It is okay to say hello to a guide dog.

Fact: Most people know that you do not pet a guide dog when it is working. However, it is even important to not say hello and ignore the dog completely if possible, so that it can focus on its work.

Fiction: Guide dogs do not get to play and enjoy their life.

Fact: Guide dogs love to work. It is pleasurable for the dog, and it spends every minute of the day with its master. However, dogs love to play, and guide dogs are no different. When the harness is off or when the dog is at home, it is not working and is a well-behaved pet, off-duty and ready to play or relax. The dog gets to enjoy work time and down time.

Fiction: Guide dogs know where to go and read signs.

Fact: Guide dogs will obey commands such as “find the stairs”, “find the bus”, or “left” and “right”, but they will lead only if instructed to do so. The guide dog user must familiarize him/herself with routes in advance. The dog will always navigate better in familiar environments.

Fiction: The government funds guide dogs and all people who are blind want one.

Fact: Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind operates solely through donations, as an independent registered Canadian charity. They train guide dogs and provide them free of charge to their clients. Before applying for a guide dog, an applicant must have the necessary orientation and mobility skills and required for enhanced mobility and the use of a guide dog. The person must also be ready to accept the responsibility of properly caring for a dog and be in a financial position to provide for food and veterinary expenses.

Fiction: Guide dogs wait for a green light.

Fact: Dogs are colour blind. A guide dog will lead its owner to a curb, then sit and await further instructions. The person must decide when it is safe to cross. A dog will block the path of the person if an error in judgment is made and there is oncoming traffic.

Fiction: Guide dogs are permitted access to public places if a business owner is community minded.

Fact: Guide dogs are permitted access to all public places in Canada through various provincial legislations and the Canadian Human Rights Act. The person who is blind cannot be denied entry with a guide dog. It is against the law to deny access to a guide dog.

Fiction: Guide dogs are taken away from the handler when the dog retires.

Fact: Most guide dog handlers will keep the retiring guide dog as a family pet when it retires.

Fiction: Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind is the CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind).

Fact: Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind and CNIB are not affiliated and are two completely separate organizations. Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind was founded in 1984 and has trained 843 working guide dog teams across Canada.

To learn more about guide dogs in Canada visit guidedogs.ca.