

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind Celebrates 35 Years

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It was January 12, 1984 when Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind was incorporated and became one of three guide dog training organizations to open in Canada between 1981 and 1984. Prior to that, the service was lacking in Canada.

Since 1984 and its' humble beginnings, Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind has become a well-respected leader in the industry, and continues to assist Canadians who are blind and visually impaired.

The mandate of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind is to provide Canadians with greater mobility and independence through the use of professionally trained guide dogs. Intentional or not, advocacy does play a role. While the focus is on breeding, raising and training the best quality guide dogs, Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind is also proud of its many accomplishments which have contributed to the industry as a whole.

It's difficult to imagine a world where individuals with guide dogs are not granted public access. To this day, there are still some occasional challenges for handlers regarding access. However, prior to 1985, it was much more common in Canada. Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind was the first guide dog organization to receive accreditation within the Blind Persons' Rights Act of Ontario, giving people with guide dogs full legal access to public locations.

Now, similar provincial laws exist across the country, as well as additional laws pertaining to accessibility for persons with disabilities and human rights acts.

Leadership was also evident in 1989 when Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind was established as a charter member of International Guide Dog Federation or, as known back then, the International Federation of Guide Dogs Schools for the Blind. That same year, the first Canadian to obtain certification as a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor within the internally recognized training program was from Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Jane Thornton, a Co-Founder of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind, has been through all of the accomplishments, as she remains with the organization in 2019, as Chief Operating Officer. Thornton has also played a role at the international level serving as an IGDF Director for four years and a term as Chair of the IGDF. Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind hosted the IGDF Seminar in 2010. Thornton is proud of her work with IGDF, but her heart has always been at the root of the service, since emigrating from the U.K. to start a guide dog school in Canada; giving back independence to Canadians through the use of a guide dog.

Canada is such a large country that providing a national service can be, at times, challenging. However, it is important that applications and services are treated equally and fairly from anywhere in the country, including some extremely remote areas. Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind has trained and provided guide dogs to individuals in all ten provinces and one Canadian territory. In 2018, the organization surpassed 850 guide dog teams.

The future looks bright too, as Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind opened a Canine Development Centre in 2017.

IGDF Assessments

Congratulations to the following organisations which passed their five year assessment:

- Association de Chiens Guides d'Aveugles de Lyon et du Centre Est, France
- Geleidehondenschool Herman Jansen, The Netherlands
- Les Chiens Guides d'Aveugles d'Ile de France, France

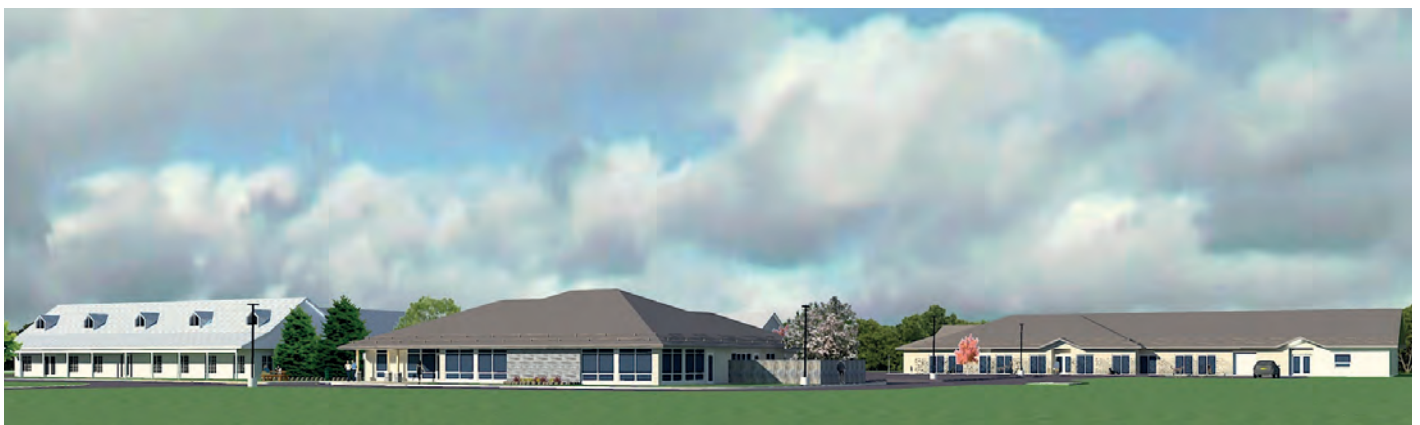
The following organisations have been accepted as Applicant Organisations:

- Guangzhou Guide Dog Service Development Centre, China
- The Danish Association of the Blind, Denmark

Please note there are additional organisations being processed.

In 2018, a major construction project started on a new residence building and kennel on their existing property, which should be fully functional by 2020. The expansion will only further enhance to quality of service provided to clients during their residence training course, and the well-being of dogs in training.

Cheers to thirty-five years Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind!



Rendering of new building and kennel due to be functional by 2020