

Side *by* Side

Spring/Summer 2021

Volume 36, Number 1



Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind

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Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind

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“Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind is a life changing organization. Each day I’m able to wake up and take the bus to work and not think about the various obstacles that may be along the way.”

Megan, Halifax, Nova Scotia



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Thank you for purchasing a ticket and supporting CGDB

David & Paulette Bradshaw of Ottawa, Ontario won a round-trip for two to any WestJet destination.

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Help save on printing and postage costs. The latest edition and past issues of Side by Side are available on our website at www.guidedogs.ca. New issues are posted in May and October. If you wish to read Side by Side online, please contact us to be removed from our Side by Side mailing list. Whether it’s in print or online, be sure to read Side by Side twice per year to stay up-to-date about Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind.

(613) 692-7777 info@guidedogs.ca

Navigating COVID-19 WITHOUT sight

COVID-19 is a challenge for everyone, but the pandemic has caused additional issues for people who are blind or visually impaired. Special measures and procedures put into place to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 have proven to be challenging for people like Darlene Wournell. Darlene is very independent, alongside her guide dog, Demetris, who she trained with and received in 2018. However, it has become increasingly difficult.

Darlene says, "Of course, not having any vision whatsoever, it's hard to tell if people are within your six foot bubble. It's even more difficult when you have a guide dog like I do. People try to reach out and pet your dog all the time, which can cause a problem. Of course, you don't know if anybody has COVID, which becomes a problem when you get home. It's almost like you have to sanitize your dog as well."

To avoid such problems, Demetris sometimes stays home. Darlene says, "When I go grocery shopping with family, I will leave my dog home because we're stopped so much by the public". Switching to online grocery shopping has helped.

It is important for the public to remember that guide dogs are working and should not be distracted in any way or touched by anyone. This has always been the case, but it is especially important during the pandemic.

In addition, those who are visually impaired cannot rely on visual cues and instructions. For example, distancing

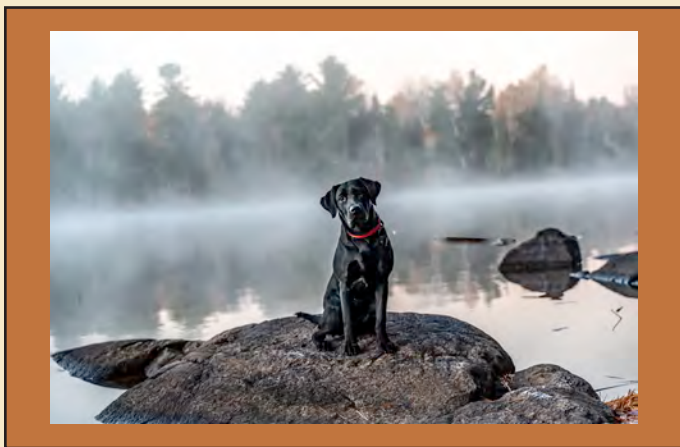


on public transit can be difficult when someone cannot see the signs or other passengers while trying to find a seat and still physically distance. Guide dogs are trained to enter via the front door which proved challenging when some transit companies forced entry at the rear of the bus. The problems don't end there. While point of sale machines are a great way to have a touchless payment, if your vision is poor you may have to touch to feel where the machine is. Touch is a primary sense when you cannot see.

Please have patience, communicate, be kind, and keep an open mind with any individual that is blind or visually impaired or have any other type of disability. ■

2022 Calendar Photo Competition

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind is now accepting photo submissions for our 2022 calendar.



Landscape photos only please

* A resolution of 300dpi is usually necessary for printing.

If your photos are lower resolution, please ensure they are at least 3MB in size.

Please keep the following guidelines in mind before submitting your photos:

- Photos must be of a dog active for Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind; puppy walking, breeding, working (no retired or career change dogs please).
- Photos must have been taken between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.
- Photos must be generic – no names, people, toys, harnesses, training jackets, date or time stamps.
- Only high-resolution* photos will be accepted. Please set your camera or device to its highest quality setting and send us the original sized photo.

Photos submitted for the competition become the property of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. Photos should be submitted by email to events@guidedogs.ca by June 30, 2021 or shared via DropBox. Please send the dog(s) name with all photos. Winners will receive a complimentary copy of the 2022 calendar. ■

Planned Giving – How to Leave a Legacy to CGDB

LIFE INSURANCE

Would you like to give a large donation, or would you like to give more than you presently do, but just do not have the means to do so? Have you thought about giving, but thought that an annual donation of a few hundred dollars would not go very far, or be very worthwhile?

A life insurance policy is the best way to turn a small annual donation into a large future gift, often increasing your giving power to far beyond what you would otherwise be able to give. As an added benefit, this allows you to leave a legacy without encroaching on your estate or jeopardizing the financial security of your dependents, and you could realize significant tax savings now, while you can take advantage of it, as opposed to your estate receiving a tax receipt after your death.

There are several ways to contribute life insurance to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. You can...

- transfer the ownership of an ongoing or new policy, and continue to make monthly or annual payments, which are tax deductible;
- transfer the ownership of a paid-up policy, receiving a tax benefit for the cash value of the policy;
- name Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind as an irrevocable beneficiary of a policy, and your estate will receive the tax benefits upon payment; or,
- name your estate as the beneficiary, and include a bequest equal to the proceeds of the policy to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Each of these options makes sense given different circumstances – speak with your insurance representative about which makes the most sense for you. The size and duration of your short-term pledge, along with your age, will determine the value of your ultimate gift; however, relatively

small contributions translate into a gift many times greater than the contributions made by the donor.

Benefits of the gift of life insurance

An insurance policy can be arranged quickly and immediately, instead of waiting until later in life to give from accumulated assets. Premiums usually grow with age, meaning it is more cost-effective to give now than later. Payments can be made on the “installment plan,” meaning that a substantial gift can be given without impairing your capital, or adversely affecting your financial security. The gift also passes outside of the estate settlement process, and will not shrink because of taxes, probate, or legal and administration fees; meaning that Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind receives the full amount of the gift you wanted us to receive.

An immediate cash gift with wealth replacement life insurance

You could also use life insurance in a different way. If you are reluctant to make a significant current donation, or to include Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind in your will because you plan on passing your assets to family or other beneficiaries, you could take out an insurance policy to replace the assets being gifted or bequeathed. This enables you to make that large financial contribution now to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind, while ensuring your family or beneficiaries are cared for as well. In some instances, the tax savings you receive from the gift may be large enough to support the life insurance premiums!

BEQUESTS

When you leave a gift to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind in your will, this gift is called a bequest. Bequests are by far the most popular type of planned giving because they are remarkably simple to understand and easy to establish with professional

assistance. Some gifts are large, others are small, but almost everyone can participate in this form of giving.

Bequests can take several forms, so there are several ways to leave a donation for Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. A general bequest leaves a specific dollar amount or percentage of your estate to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. A residuary bequest donates the remainder of your estate to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind after all of your beneficiaries have been cared for through initial provisions in your will, and expenses and any taxes have been paid. You may also leave a specific bequest, which is a special asset, such as securities or a piece of property.

Benefits of Bequests

A charitable gift in your will does not affect your current income, and can help ease the burden of probate fees on your estate. A donation receipt is issued to your estate, resulting in a tax credit on your estate’s final income tax return. You also retain full control of the gift property, so you can change your will at any time should your situation change.

General/Specific bequests and the Endowment fund

General and specific bequests allow for Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind to use the funds according to the most urgent needs at the time of your gift. Both capital and income may be spent for general or specific purposes as designated by you. Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind also has an established endowment fund to which contributions can be made. This endowment fund only uses income earned on investments, and the organization cannot spend the capital investment.

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind is governed with the direction of the Board of Directors, a select group of volunteers serving without remuneration for the sole benefit of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. ■

Client Profile – Louise Bark & Ellie

Our Assistance Dogs Division, trains and provides dogs for individuals in the Ottawa area with mobility-related disabilities. Assistance dogs have a long list of duties, but they can be trained in such a way that they perform specific tasks for their handler, as required by that person.

Louise Bark recently graduated with her second dog from the Assistance Dog program. Louise's first dog, Bruce, was an amazing companion and helper before becoming ill and being forced to retire. She was blessed to receive her second assistance dog, Ellie, in September 2020.

It's difficult to not compare the two, Louise says, "Ellie and Bruce both brought joy and freedom into my life. With the physical assistance both dogs brought me, I've been able to lower my pain substantially". Ellie, like Bruce, picks up things that Louise may drop or fetch things that she names. For example, each morning, Ellie will fetch Louise's shoes. Each evening, she will help to tug off shoes, socks and pants, all tasks that are difficult for Louise.

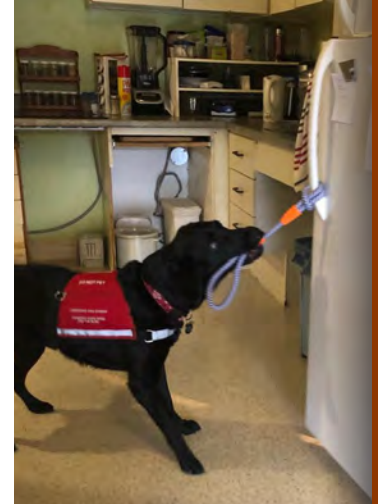
Despite the pandemic, Louise and Ellie have managed to stay active, including a few train trips as Louise must venture out of town as the principal caregiver for her elderly father. Louise says, "When the pandemic is over, I'm sure Ellie and I will find more exciting places to venture to."

"The training experience was great with both dogs", adds Louise. "The dogs are smart and can do what is needed to suit my needs."

Ellie is an intelligent and active dog, so to combat boredom and keep up her work ethic, Louise has created boundaries depicting work versus play. Louise is involved in Toastmasters, two choirs and a church.



Ellie pulls off Louise's sock on command.



Ellie opens the refrigerator and will bring Louise any item she's been trained to retrieve.

She also volunteers at a museum. Twenty minutes before Louise logs into her virtual meetings, she puts on Ellie's working assistance dog vest, puts her leash on, takes her out the back door to relieve, and comes back to her desk. Then, Louise says, "I ask Ellie to lie and keep her tied to me. That's what I did whenever I was out with Bruce, so I decided I could safely establish that pattern with Ellie. It's not perfect. However, it seems to be showing signs that it's going to work."

This is an ingenious way to keep Ellie motivated to work outside of the home, and understand the expectations of having the vest on being focused.

For now, the pandemic means more time inside and Ellie continues to master the skills necessary to enhance Louise's daily living and challenges within the home. Keep up the great work Ellie and Louise! ■

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Client Profile – Mike Hodgins & Tosca

Mike Hodgins has always called Shawville, Quebec home. Mike only left for eight years to study and work in Ottawa, returning to his hometown to work maintenance at the Pontiac Community Hospital. It was safe to say he knew his way around town, but in 2006, he had to re-familiarize himself with the place he'd known his entire life in a whole new way.

On October 3, 2006, Mike was on the job clearing a blocked floor drain with Drano, an alkaline drain cleaner. He poured it down and continued to work.

"No one told me there was a 15 minute time delay fuse on it," Mike recalled. "It blew out of the floor drain and it sprayed across my face, blew a hole in the ceiling and of course, when it hit my face, it got in my eyes."

Alkaline chemicals in cleaners are used to break down organic matter, which makes contact on skin more dangerous. Mike suffered severe burns on his corneas and eyelids as well as the rest of his face. Immediately following the accident, Mike had completely lost his vision.

"I'm in a white world, not a dark world," he said of his range of sight. "Everything's white to me, I have no focus. I can see some shades of colours, but it's like someone threw a white blanket over my face."

In the years that followed, Mike underwent 26 surgeries in Ottawa, Montreal and as far as Boston, in hopes of regaining his sight. He did regain some vision; he came out of his first surgery with 20/30 vision and could see relatively well for six years. A plastic cornea operation was even approved in Canada using him as an example of success.

But after years of surgeries, the complications began. His ocular tissue was too badly damaged, scarred and fragile.

"The eyes had enough and I guess so did I," he said. "So we stitched up my eyes and preserved what was left, hopefully for something in the future."

For the last eight years, Mike has been living in his white world.



In that time, he was taught to use a cane. A trainer would visit him every day in Shawville and they would go for walks, sweeping the ground as they went. Mike could no longer enjoy his walks because of the constant concentration required and he described it as a difficult time not only for him, but for his whole family as well.

It was on a trip to nearby Renfrew, Ontario, seven years ago with his wife, Mary, that would put the hardest times behind them. They came across a man with a guide dog, and they approached him for more information.

"He said, 'Take the harness off your wife and put it on a dog,'" Mike recalled with a laugh. The man recommended Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind.

"He heavily endorsed them. Great facility. Great dogs, well trained, and great instructors."

That's where he met Nellie, a golden retriever, in the summer of 2013.

After a 26-day stay learning voice commands, specific movements, canine health and bonding with Nellie, the pair returned to Shawville.

"Throughout the years, Nellie and I met a lot of challenges in Shawville walking down the streets. Our street here does not have a sidewalk on it. So that was challenging getting down the street, trying to stay over to the side."

Distractions are also a challenge, as Mike can get disoriented if the dog wanders and pulls him off course.

However, while on the job, Nellie was very obedient. When she wasn't wearing the harness, she was a playful and friendly golden retriever.

"When I put the harness on her, it was like a flicking a light switch," said Mike. "She's all play-dog, but when she got that harness on it was just work. She was in work mode."

For seven years, Nellie served as Mike's companion and source of independence, guiding him all over Shawville. She reached her eleventh birthday – guide dogs' age of retirement – on May 31, 2020, which meant it was time to hang up the harness and become a full time play-dog.

Keeping this in mind, Mike had applied for a new guide dog earlier in the year, and was set to travel back to Manotick for a course in mid-March to meet and train with his new canine partner. Those plans came to a halt when COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, but fortunately, Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind had a new plan: domiciliary training, meaning their Instructor would travel and train with Mike in his home community. Mike was to start this on April 1, but then the Quebec and Ontario borders shut down. With Nellie's retirement date approaching, the timeline was uncertain.

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

The restrictions eased on May 31, Nellie's birthday. The very next morning, Tosca, a Labrador retriever, arrived and an instant bond was formed between the two.

The first day she got out of the van to greet Mike, a bond was formed, and he knew their partnership would last. "The first day [the trainer] let her out of the van, she came to me I said this is going to work", he said. "She's a firecracker. She does circles around Nellie. She's a very, very affectionate dog, very smart. They're both very smart. But when she came in it was so much more energy to her. She adapted to the environment and the family, we all enjoy her very much," he continued. "She's here now and she gets along great."

The biggest challenge in planning the at-home training was ensuring that all parties would be safe, which included obtaining necessary PPE and setting limitations on where they could and couldn't go for training to keep everyone safe. It has gone on since then with promising feedback. Mike said that COVID-19 worked out the best for him, since he was able to receive training from the comfort of home.

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind normally trains clients in a group residential setting, but the organization had to adapt in 2020, due to COVID-19. Some clients, like Mike, were trained in their home community, while others still trained in a one-on-one environment at Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind's National Training Centre.

Now, Tosca accompanies Mike on all of his walks while Nellie enjoys retirement and the occasional casual walk with the family. Mike, his wife Mary, and their two children, Hailey and Jaime, would not call their family complete without their dogs. Mike is grateful to have not only a supportive network of friends and family, but also for what his guide dog have given him.

"It gives me independence," Mike said. "If I didn't have them, I'd be straining going around with a cane, trying to feel my way, or walking on someone's elbow, and so this way I can go out by myself and I don't have to hang onto that person's elbow. We're partners." ■

Puppy Walking and Breeding Program

The following litters were born from September 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021:

Rosie III (YLB) bred to Tom (BLM)
Doll (YLB) bred to Bert (YLM)
Dottie (YLB) bred to Rufus III (YLM)

YLB - yellow Labrador, bitch
BLM - black Labrador, male
YLM - yellow Labrador, male



A sincere thank you to puppy walkers whose dogs have completed the Puppy Walking Program and breeding stock boarders whose dogs have been used for breeding from September 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021:

Jessica Beers, Susan Bergeron, Duana Bergman, Carrie King, Nathalie Lachance, Diane Lyon, Marc Meyers, Tim Nason, Janet Reside, Imre Rohonczy, Adrian Sirett, Lucia Taggart, Jessie Thornton. ■

Thank You!

to the following businesses which have donated goods or services to CGDB:

- Aventix Animal Health
- Bayer Healthcare Animal Health
- Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada) Ltd.
- Elanco Animal Health Canada
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- National Alternate Media
- Purina Canada
- RC Pets
- Ren's Pets

Obituaries and Guide Dog Memorial Tributes

Submissions may be sent to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind, 4120 Rideau Valley Drive North, PO Box 280, Manotick, ON, K4M 1A3; or by email to info@guidedogs.ca.

Tyler...

Tyler was a retired stud dog for Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. Living with volunteers Harvey & Livvie Scott, while part of the breeding

program, Tyler produced many incredible guide dogs who have given a wonderful life to many people. He loved going to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind when the call was made to invite him to "work" and always happy to oblige. As a pet, he was the most incredible, loving, loyal, devoted dog we ever had. He was a best friend, whom we will miss deeply.

Submitted by Livvie Scott ■



Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind

We provide *freedom* to Canadians

Operating solely through donations since 1984. Thank you for your support.

Monthly Pre-authorized Debits - Arrange for automatic monthly withdrawals from your bank account on the 1st or 15th business day of the month. You'll need to complete a PAD agreement - email donations@guidedogs.ca to request this agreement. A tax receipt will be issued at the end of the year for the total amount donated.

Monthly Credit Card Donation - Phone our office at (613) 692-7777 to set up a monthly donation on the 1st or 15th of each month. We accept Visa, Mastercard and American Express. A tax receipt will be issued at the end of the year for the total amount donated.

Online Donation with The Royal Bank (RBC) - This is available only to RBC clients at this time. Select Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind as the Payee and enter donation amount. You must have your Individual Donor ID which can be requested by email at donations@guidedogs.ca by giving your name and address, or by phoning our office at (613) 692-7777 and speaking to someone in our Donations Department.

Cheques/Money Order - Make payable to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. Cheques and money orders can be mailed to PO Box 280, Manotick, Ontario, K4M 1A3.

Cash - Donate in person at our National Training Centre 4120 Rideau Valley Drive North, Manotick, Ontario..

Online Donation via Credit Card - Visit our website at guidedogs.ca. You can donate using Visa, Mastercard and American Express. A tax receipt is issued immediately and emailed to you.

Gifts of shares, stock options, life insurance, bequests, wills, capital property - Please call us for more information or have your legal or financial representative contact us at (613) 692-7777.

I would like to support Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind (Registered Charity No. 10684 6819 RR0001)

- I have enclosed a cheque in the amount of \$ _____.
- I would like to make a one-time donation of \$ _____ charged to my credit card.
- I would like to make a regular contribution of \$ _____ charged monthly to my credit card.

Credit Card No. _____ Expiry date: ____ / ____

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Please send donations to:

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind
4120 Rideau Valley Drive North
PO Box 280
Manotick, Ontario K4M 1A3
(613) 692-7777

**Donate online at
guidedogs.ca**

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind Gift Shop

If you live in the Ottawa area, you may call us and order by phone.
We'll assemble your order and have it ready for curbside pick up.



1. Golden retriever with blue sky notelets

(package of 10 cards with envelopes)

\$12.00 x _____ = \$ _____

2. German shepherd in trees notelets

(package of 10 cards with envelopes)

\$12.00 x _____ = \$ _____

3. Golf Shirt - blue

Ladies: Small _____ Medium _____ Large _____ XL _____ XXL _____
Mens: Small _____ Medium _____ Large _____ XL _____ XXL _____

\$40.00 x _____ = \$ _____

4. Christmas cards – chocolate Lab puppy in snow

(package of 10 cards with envelopes)

\$12.00 x _____ = \$ _____

5. Custom Pet Tag (Dog bone tag in your choice of colour and engraving)

Blue _____ Black _____ Red _____ Pink _____

Personalize Your Custom ID Tag _____
with up to 4 lines on the front _____
of the tag (NOTE: Limited to a _____
max of 4 lines) _____

\$6.00 x _____ = \$ _____

6. CGDB Face Mask

Please note that face masks are sold at cost and include free shipping.
It's our way of giving back to our generous supporters.

\$10.00 x _____ = \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Card #: _____

Expiry: mm/yy _____ Name on Card: _____ Telephone: _____

Type of Card: Visa MC AMEX

Cheques payable to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind
may be mailed to 4120 Rideau Valley Drive North, PO Box 280,
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Sub-Total: \$ _____

Add 15% Shipping and Handling: \$ _____

Donation: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

* Items may not be exactly as shown. All prices include taxes.
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a larger selection of merchandise. Curbside pick-up is available.
Call us and order by phone and we'll assemble your order
and have it ready for you at our National Training Centre.

CGDB Events

Upcoming Events

Online Auction



Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind is excited to host our first online auction from June 7-21. Retailers and wholesalers are donating premium items, which will be auctioned off similar to an online silent auction to raise funds. From artwork to pet photography sessions, jewellery to gift baskets, there is something for everyone to bid on! Stay tuned to the events page on www.guidedogs.ca for the auction link as we get closer to June 7. ■



Spring Online 50/50 Raffle

Another new and exciting fundraising initiative coming in the middle of May is our online 50/50 Raffle. You can buy tickets for the chance to win big while also supporting Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. Buy tickets for as little as \$10 and have the chance to take home 50% of all proceeds raised through the draw. The winner will be selected on June 28th! Check our events page on www.guidedogs.ca for more details closer to the event. ■

Past Events

Guide Dog Motorcycle Ride

The 33rd annual Guide Dog Motorcycle Ride took place on September 13, 2020. The pandemic forced a change in the format of the event, eliminating our amazing bbq and our guide dogs meet and greets, removing much of the social aspect from an event that drew in 154 motorcyclists in the previous year. Despite the challenges, we had a few dedicated supporters who completed the ride and others who decided to forgo the day on the bike, but still stopped by to contribute to the event. We plan to host another ride on September 12, 2021. Save the date! ■



Our amazing group of volunteers for the 2020 Guide Dog Ride!



The Baxter Family were the first to arrive for their 'bubble walk'. Andrew, Neil and Margaret cut the ribbon to open the event, with CGDB pup Hank.

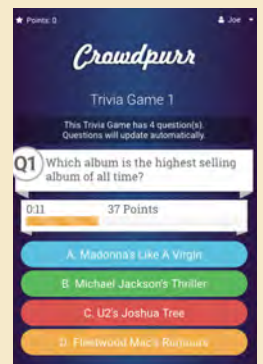
Dollars for Dogs Fundraising Walk

2020 was an interesting year for our Dollars for Dogs Fundraising Walk. The original date in May was postponed and rescheduled for September 20, 2020. To adhere to bylaws with regarding to gatherings and social distancing, we had to stagger start times throughout the morning keeping limits to less than 25 people at any time, and ensuring that everyone walks independently or with those in their personal bubble. Thank you to all participants who attended with their dogs, and even a few without dogs, to walk the 4-kms.

route through Ottawa's beautiful Andrew Haydon Park. Many also walked in their own community or neighbourhood to support the event. It turned out to be a very successful event, thanks to our loyal supporters and those who come and walk every year. Dollars for Dogs returns to May in 2021 with a scheduled date of May 30, 2021. ■

Virtual Trivia

COVID-19 forced us to change the format of some events and add new virtual events, safe to everyone. In November, January and March, we hosted Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind Virtual Trivia. It was a fun 90 minutes of online trivia, with a great mix of questions giving everyone a chance to win. Follow our social media or check our website to sign up for the next trivia night. ■



Giving Tuesday Virtual Comedy Night

Our first virtual comedy event took place on Tuesday, December 1, also known as "Giving Tuesday". Hosted by U Streat, a virtual comedy show production company, our comedy show featured four comedians, Thanks to everyone who bought a ticket and watched the show live! ■



Christmas Bake Sale



Our 11th annual Christmas Bake Sale was a success despite a format change. The 2020 edition was a curbside pick up only bake sale, but thanks to our many bake sale contributors and supporters, who enabled us to continue with our sale on December 12. Curbside isn't quite the same as walking in and seeing the goodies in their beautifully wrapped holiday packaging, but hopefully we'll get back to that with our 2021 Christmas Bake Sale. ■

Gift Wrapping Fundraiser

Place d'Orleans, in the east end of Ottawa, was kind enough to grant us the gift wrapping kiosk for a sixth consecutive holiday season in December 2020. Safety protocols were in place for shoppers and our gift wrapping volunteers, who all donated their time to raise funds for Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. Thank you to everyone who, despite the pandemic, made this annual fundraiser another huge success! ■



Email Bingo

In 2020, we had to be innovative with our events and started a virtual "Email Bingo" game. We played several games throughout the year and congratulate all of our winners. ■



Remember you can always visit the events page at www.guidedogs.ca to keep updated on our latest events.

Off leash dogs are a safety hazard for guide dogs

Most dog owners are responsible pet owners who love their dog like part of the family. Most people are good people who follow rules and expectations set out by lawmakers and the community. However, there are always a few who take no notice of how their actions may affect others. We've certainly seen evidence of that in many parts of the world during the pandemic.

Relating to dogs, in most communities there are bylaws that specify basic dog care standards and owner responsibilities. Examples include leashing when in public and maintaining control of the dog at all times, and proper care of aggressive or dangerous dogs.

Often, people who don't adhere to rules are aware of them but figure, somehow, they have a valid reason for exemption. Dogs being off-leash can be a prime example. "I know my dog is supposed to be on a leash, but don't worry, he's friendly"; a common refrain by rule-breakers. Somehow they interpret the bylaw to exempt their furry friend. Or, they don't realize that as friendly as their dog might be, nobody else loves them quite like they do.

Not everyone wants a strange dog approaching them. There are people who have a genuine fear of dogs and others, unbeknownst to some, that actually don't like dogs. That is why many communities have dog parks, where people choose to go and understand dogs will be off-leash.

Often forgotten in the mix is the impact on guide dogs. Having an off-leash dog approach a guide dog can cause distraction and be a safety hazard for the service dog handler. For example, Ross Levan of Smithers, British Columbia is visually impaired, and he and his guide dog Albert have faced this situation on several occasions. A guide dog is trained to ignore other dogs and avoid distractions, but this training is away from the dog's natural instinct. That means the dog needs constant reassurance and commands from the handler, who will often use the command "leave it", which instructs the dog to do just that and focus on the job at hand. An off-leash dog is a massive and unnecessary temptation for a service dog. The temperament is irrelevant. Even if a guide dog isn't threatened, excitably and wanting to say hello to other dogs could mean guiding someone into an



Ross Levan and guide dog Albert

obstacle, missing a curb or stairwell, or making a very dangerous mistake at an intersection.

During the pandemic, people are getting out more with their pet dogs to stay active. If we are truly 'all in this together' remember those who cannot see and the extra challenges faced during these challenging times. ■

The Newsletter of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind

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