CELEBRATING 75
GDB turns 75 this year, and we plan to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee all year long! Check out our plans for this milestone anniversary. p2

DYNAMIC DUO
Meet GDB grad, professional musician, and world traveler Ioana Gandrabur of Montreal, Canada and her guide dog, Loyal. p4
WE’RE JUST GETTING STARTED!

2017 is a very special year for GDB because it is our 75th anniversary! Since 1942, our goal has remained the same: to increase independence, mobility, and safety for our clients and we have had the honor and privilege of serving over 14,000 clients during this time.

We hope that you will share in our celebration over the coming year as we will be commemorating this momentous milestone through our special events, social media, web site, campus signage, merchandise, and more.

We have achieved so much over the past 75 years, but we are just getting started! We begin 2017 with much hope and confidence about all the good things that we have yet to achieve. Thank you to all our wonderful donors and supporters for being a part of this journey and for sharing in GDB’s mission. We can’t wait to see what the next 75 years has in store for our great organization!
Greetings,

Happy New Year to you! Guide Dogs for the Blind has so many things to be thankful for in 2017. As you can see from the feature on the opposite page, we are turning 75 this year! We look forward to celebrating our heritage as well as our promising future with you and all the members of our amazing community.

We continue to be thankful for everyone who supports our life-changing mission and in this issue we highlight some of our wonderful alumni, including GDB board member Tom Kowalski and musician Ioana Gandrabur. We also feature President’s Circle members Grace and Ed Ehrman, long-standing supporters and volunteers who exemplify our donors’ enthusiasm and generosity. And we shine a bright light on our Puppy Raising administrative staff who — along with other members of GDB’s Canine Community Programs (CCP) Department — provide the support needed for our puppy raisers and future canine heroes to be successful.

This is also a particularly exciting year for us as we will begin construction of our new Puppy Center on our California Campus. The center is part of an integrated effort to help more puppies reach their potential to become guide dogs that truly transform lives. More information is available at guidedogs.com/puppycenter; please join us in supporting our Puppies with a Purpose Campaign.

We hope this year holds wonderful things for us all!

Sincerely,

Christine Benninger
President and CEO
Born prematurely with retrolental fibroplasia (RFP), Ioana Gandrabur equates her first experience of working with a guide dog to taking your first ride in a sports car. “It was very exhilarating and empowering to travel at such speed independently,” she said. “This feeling only got stronger as I learned to trust and work with my guide — the sense of cooperation, close companionship, and unconditional love we share is incredible.”

Ioana was born in Bucharest, Romania and spent her childhood in Germany before immigrating to Canada. Now a classical guitarist living in Montreal, she obtained music degrees from universities in Germany, Switzerland, and Canada, and in all of her travels she has learned six languages. She has given concerts in several countries, taught guitar classes, and participated in juries of guitar competitions — all with her guides by her side.

“Since I first started working with a guide dog 10 years ago, they have been my trusty travel companions for most of my trips,” she said. “One of the highlights in my travels with my current guide, Loyal, was returning to Germany where I had spent so much time walking with a cane while dreaming about doing it with a guide dog. It really felt like a dream come true and sharing my new lifestyle with old time friends was so enriching.”

Ioana said that a big inspiration to getting a guide was from her computer and assistive technology teacher, Ron Pelletier. “I was so impressed by his dogs, so the idea of a guide dog was the natural next step. A welcome surprise was that when I started working with my first guide, I realized I had totally underestimated the change in mobility he would bring. I was so eager to find any excuse to go outside and generally become more active.”

Ioana remembers coming to GDB for the first time and said, “There were so many friendly and professional people working there, all radiating the feeling that they loved being there — this was a big inspiration and put me at ease right away,” she said. “I also enjoyed the care given to the setup of the facilities — it encouraged students to be proactive, yet you always felt that there was plenty of support available as needed.”

In addition, Ioana said she appreciates the positive training style at GDB, the amazing follow-up services and generous veterinary financial aid program, as well as the high quality of dogs available. “My current guide, Loyal, is very eager to please and is an extremely diligent worker, always making sure I am safe above all,” she said. “As a guide dog user, I love the sense of responsibility of caring for another being. This fills a caretaker need in me, while also being grateful for the generous help and love I receive right back from my guide dog.”
• Natalie McCarthy and her guide dog, Vidal, were recently featured in *The Seattle Times* highlighting how the duo navigates the ever-changing streets of downtown Seattle given the city’s ongoing construction. Natalie is an accomplished rower, and was on the four-person para-rowing team that won the gold medal in the inclusion category at the prestigious Head of the Charles Regatta this past October.

• Cody Meyer, with his guide dog, Champagne (above), is one of our newest California campus kennel volunteers. Cody can often be found washing our many guide dogs right before they go into class.

• San Francisco-based artist Maia Scott (*pictured above*) was recently interviewed on KGO 810 Radio to share her story of how embracing her visual impairment has impacted her art and performance. Maia’s MFA thesis was on the concept of seeing, for which she created an art installation of 100 square tiles of text-based abstract art at San Francisco’s main public library. Titled “Squared,” the work invites the viewer to find the 100 positive words within the tiles. Maia’s guide dog is Golden Retriever, Fiddler.

• Leanne Bremner of Ontario, Canada, is pictured at right with her guide dog, Ayanna, accepting an award recognizing Canada’s Top 100 Employers on behalf of her employer, CIBC, one of Canada’s largest banks, where she is a senior consultant in communications and reputation management. Leanne also serves on GDB’s Alumni Association Board of Directors.
Tom Kowalski was elected to the GDB Board of Directors in July 2016. Tom spent 23 years with Swinerton Incorporated where he developed strong business acumen in the areas of operations, employee development, and accounting. In 1998, Tom formed SIES, a company focused on finding innovative heavy construction equipment from Europe to sell through domestic dealerships, and later he established his own company, Crane and Equipment Group LLC, in 2007. Tom is now a senior consultant for Leadership Dynamics, where he is able to use and share the skills learned at GDB with his audiences.

Tom lost his sight in April 2007 to a rare eye disease called Non-Arteritic Anterior Ischemic Optic Neuropathy (NAION), where there is a loss of blood flow to the optic nerve, causing sudden vision loss. Tom said his vision is like going under water — he can still see shadows, but no details. In January 2014, Tom received his first guide dog, a yellow male Labrador named Dynamo. “I remember riding in the car on our way to the California campus to start my training and thinking that a dog could not really be of any benefit,” he said. “How wrong I was! After meeting Dynamo, things started clicking between us and I felt a freedom that I hadn't had in years. GDB and Dynamo definitely turned this skeptic into a believer.”

Holding onto Dynamo’s harness and leash allows Tom to take in the nature and sounds around him. “In addition, there is a social aspect. Nobody ever came up to me and asked what my cane’s name was or if they could they pet it,” he said. “Dynamo helps bridge the gap between the sighted and visually impaired community. Who doesn’t love a good dog?”

Tom and Dynamo are avid walkers and log 40-50 miles a week together. The duo also enjoys visiting different GDB puppy clubs in the San Francisco Bay Area. “Puppy raisers and breeder custodians — along with all of our volunteers — are truly special people,” he said.

Tom said he is proud to have been elected to the Board of Directors and to be part of the new Puppies with a Purpose Campaign for our Puppy Center. “The excitement and generosity of our donors has been fabulous. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank GDB — the employees, volunteers, and all of the people who support this wonderful and meaningful organization.”

Tom said he believes he has had four great gifts in his life: the marriage to his wife, the birth of his two children, and the gift of his guide, Dynamo.
At GDB, we rely heavily on our volunteers who raise and usher our puppies down the path to becoming guide dogs. Our Puppy Raising Department’s administrative team, which is a division under the Canine Community Programs (CCP) umbrella, provides the support needed for our puppy raisers and future canine heroes to be successful.

“Our team is responsible for the administrative side of the puppy raising program,” said CCP Operations Manager Sarah Blevins. “We name all of the puppies, arrange for placement with their raisers, coordinate the pups’ transportation, and support leaders and raisers with supplies and paperwork. We manage the club fundraising program, facilitate the career change process, and coordinate returning retired guides to their raisers. And, of course, we produce Fun Day!” Sarah came to GDB as a volunteer in 1998 and joined the puppy raising department a year later.

Puppy Raising Manager Emily Brown, who also started in 1998, brings a professional background in social work, and now manages GDB’s team of community field representatives (ten remote staff members who oversee puppy raisers in their respective territories).

Recall Coordinator Daniel Graubman and Puppy Logistics Coordinator Jim Christianson joined the department on the same day in September of 2016. They both bring diverse backgrounds ranging from nonprofit work to enology (the study of wines).

CCP Program Coordinator Mick Aguilera has been a part of the GDB staff for a number of years in many different positions, including canine neonatal welfare technician, resident advisor, and puppy truck driver. He also serves as the emcee for GDB events. “I love being the host for GDB fundraisers, graduations, and special events, and being able to share our mission and why we are such an amazing organization,” he said.

Rounding out the team is CCP Operations Specialist Michelle McNew, and what she loves most about working at GDB are the people. “Everyone at GDB is absolutely amazing!” she said. “Everyone does their job with such heart and soul. We are all here for a common goal, to help change people’s lives.”
GDB celebrated our 40th annual Holiday Luncheon in December at the Westin St. Francis hotel on Union Square in San Francisco with more than 500 guests and 100 dogs. Everyone enjoyed sharing the holiday spirit, and of course, puppy cuddles! Highlights of the program were the keynote address by GDB alumna Kathryn Marxen-Simonson with her guide dog, Nabisco, and a special presentation of new pups to their volunteer puppy raisers. In addition, we are proud to announce that after a special request to the audience, we raised enough money at the event to purchase a new ultrasound machine for our California campus veterinary clinic! A special thanks to our event sponsors: Presenting—Natural Balance Pet Foods, Inc. Guardian—Dodge & Cox. Benefactors—Harbor Point Charitable Foundation, Santen Incorporated. Patrons—Richardson Financial, Valero Benicia Refinery.
At Guide Dogs for the Blind, we believe that a dog can make a remarkable difference in any child’s life by fostering a sense of caring, companionship, and responsibility through the human-animal bond. Our K9 Buddy Program matches specially selected dogs to become wonderful friends to children and young adults who are visually impaired. A dog can contribute to sensory development, motivating a child to learn, and enhancing self-esteem. Many people are amazed at how quickly a bond is created and what a difference our K9 Buddies make in a child’s life.

K9 Buddy dogs come from GDB’s own colony, but are not qualified to work as mobility assistance dogs; K9 Buddies are not trained to perform a service and are not considered service dogs as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Rather, our program offers kids a chance to prepare for the level of responsibility and care that is needed when potentially having their own guide dog in the future.

“The impact that a K9 Buddy can have upon a visually-impaired child’s life is enormous. Besides providing unconditional love and companionship, many parents report that quite quickly they notice a change in their child’s level of responsibility and an increase in their confidence.” said James Dress, GDB’s dog placement manager.

GDB recently placed yellow lab Sevan with 5-year-old Kylee from Modesto, Calif. Kylee met her new buddy on our California campus and the pair has been inseparable ever since. Kylee’s mother Shawna shares, “They are taking to each other very well. Kylee feeds, waters, and brushes Sevan and even cleans up after her outside! Sevan sleeps in bed with Kylee now and follows her around the house. We love Sevan and are so happy to have her in our lives.”

Interested in learning more about our K9 Buddy program? Contact us at 800.295.4050, or online at guidedogs.com/k9buddy.
President’s Circle members Grace and Ed Ehrman are not only longtime GDB supporters, but have also been active puppy raising volunteers for the past decade. “We first came to GDB for very selfish reasons,” said Ed. “Our last two pet dogs lived with us for 15 and 11 years respectively, and when it came time to make end of life decisions for each, it was very hard and we said ‘no more dogs.’ But then Grace found out about GDB’s puppy raising program, and now we’re raising our 11th puppy, yellow Lab Thea.

Over the years (both in California, where they were living when they initially got involved, and in Arizona, where they live now), Ed and Grace have met many GDB alumni and their guide dogs, and are proud to be a part of the mission that provides enhanced mobility to people who are blind.

“The fact that GDB is so committed to this mission, the dogs, and the clients is impressive,” Grace said. “That GDB does this with no cost to the client and with no government funding is an outstanding community service and act of human kindness.”

In addition to their puppy raising activities, Grace and Ed volunteer in other ways as well. They provide puppy sitting for their fellow raisers; give presentations to groups of potential volunteers and donors, and stay active in community outreach and events that build awareness about Guide Dogs for the Blind. As donors, they support GDB in a variety of ways. In addition to their annual giving, they are generous in their financial support of specific projects or items, such as purchasing a new dog scale, or underwriting branded, professional scrubs for our staff to wear.

“Life has been good to us, our two children, and our two grandchildren, and we believe in giving back,” Ed said. “We totally support the GDB mission and have confidence in the abilities and passion found in the staff. Grace and I would recommend GDB as an organization in the blink of an eye.”

Thank you Grace and Ed for your tremendous support!
THANK YOU TO OUR NEW & CONTINUED SUPPORTERS  November 1-December 31, 2016*

*Please note: This list represents donations received in our office and deposited by December 31, 2016. Donations received and deposited after December 31, 2016 will be reflected in the donor list of our next issue of Guide Dog News.

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PUPPIES WITH A PURPOSE

We are making great progress on our new Puppy Center, but we still need your help! To learn more about our Puppies with a Purpose Campaign, please visit our website at guidedogs.com/puppycenter. Gifts of $1,000 or more will be recognized on the Puppy Center donor wall.
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Guide Dogs for the Blind will, on occasion, share donor information with like-minded non-profit organizations in an effort to better fulfill our mission and serve our clients. If you do not wish to have your information shared, please call our Development Department at 800.295.4050 extension 4160 or email us at donations@guidedogs.com.