A ROYAL VISIT FOR GUIDE DOGS

HRH The Duchess of Cornwall visits the Czech Guide Dog School

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

IGDF chair Jane Thornton

CANINE RESEARCH AT GUIDE DOGS UK

The expansion of Freedom Guide Dogs and its plans for future growth
First and foremost, membership of the IGDF enables Guide Dog Schools around the world to join a community dedicated to serving the visually impaired. That community needs and wants to share its knowledge and the IGDF facilitates that.

The map below outlines the contributing countries for this edition of Visionary.
Message from the Chair

I am honoured to be writing to you as the new Chair of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF).

Firstly, we must all thank Bridget Warr, who stepped down in March. Bridget, as Chair, was able to lead the IGDF towards numerous outstanding accomplishments in her four year term. Secondly, thank you to the outgoing Board for their tireless efforts.

As the new Chair, alongside the new Board, I look forward to working with our members to continue our important role in raising awareness and enhancing mobility, along with independence for blind and partially sighted people around the globe. Our goal is to do so by producing professionally trained guide dogs throughout the world. To do this, we will continue to focus on our three priority areas: setting and monitoring standards; promoting quality; and working together.

Our 2010 International Guide Dog Seminar was held in June, where Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind was delighted to play host. It was challenging, yet rewarding to serve as Chair of the IGDF and while also representing the Seminar host, Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind, as its Chief Operating Officer.

The camaraderie in the IGDF was evident through the 263 individuals that attended, all focusing on learning, sharing and gathering information. The Seminar’s theme was “Leading the Way for 21 Years” and featured many workshops and sessions. As we continue to work together to meet the goals of the federation, it is important that we meet IGDF standards, and assist as many blind and partially sighted people across the globe by training the best guide dogs we can.

The International Guide Dog Federation Board acknowledges the need to change the Accreditation and Development Committee into two separate committees to better serve our current, as well as future members, thus there will now be an Accreditation Committee and a Development Committee. The Board will work to finalize the structure and terms of reference for these two committees in the coming months and will report back to our members.

The Board also acknowledges the need to establish another type of membership for the IGDF. This will be for organizations wanting to become full members of the IGDF but who do not yet meet the criteria for full membership, who will now be known as “Applicants”. Again, the Board is working on finalizing the criteria for this new category over the next few months and will issue the details in the near future.

Our updated website for the IGDF will be up and running shortly. We appreciate contributions and ideas from our member organizations. Please continue to send in articles for your newsletter, Visionary.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Japan Guide Dog Association every success as they prepare to host the next International Guide Dog Federation Seminar. I look forward to working with you all and wish you a successful 2010.
Canine research at Guide Dogs (UK)

The expansion of Freedom Guide Dogs and its plans for future growth

Rachel Moxon– Technical Canine research worker
GDBA - United Kingdom

Canine research is one of four research areas supported by Guide Dogs (UK). The canine research programme has been in existence since 1990 with the aim of improving the quality of the breeding programme, the effectiveness of the dogs throughout their working life and their overall health and wellbeing. The research programme plays a vital role in improving the guide dog service by enhancing our understanding of guide dog health and behaviour. With a large sized colony, Guide Dogs is in an ideal position to undertake research that can help improve scientific knowledge in many canine fields of interest.

The canine research team consists of two research workers overseen by the Senior Operations Project Manager, David Grice, supported by the Chief Veterinary Officer, Gary England, and the Canine Research Manager, Simon Blythe. The research technicians are Rena Trybocka, based in Cheshire and Rachel Moxon, based at Guide Dogs’ Breeding Centre in Warwickshire. Rena graduated from Harper Adams University College with a BSc (Hons) in Animal Health and also has an Advanced Diploma in the Practical Aspects of Companion Animal Behaviour and Training. After completing a year’s placement at the Breeding Centre, Rena started working for Guide Dogs upon graduation in 2005. Rena has a keen interest in canine behaviour and is a member of the Guide Dogs Canine Behaviour Development Team. Rachel graduated from Nottingham Trent University with a BSc (Hons) in Animal Science, and before joining Guide Dogs in 2008, worked as a research assistant at an equine nutrition and exercise physiology research farm in Kentucky. Rachel is especially interested in aspects of canine physiology and reproduction as well as health and welfare.

The canine research programme is specifically focused on undertaking projects investigating dog health and wellbeing; breeding efficiency and diversity; temperamental suitability; socialisation and habituation; training processes and methodology; the longevity of guide dog working life; and efficient guide dog use within the environment. Through a robust review process, the design of research projects ensures that they are relevant to the business and to Guide Dogs’ research objectives, that they do not negatively affect the welfare of the dogs, and that the results are robust enough to be suitable for publication.

In recent years, research projects have been completed including the incidence and impact of dog attacks on guide dogs; the differences in husbandry techniques used during parturition at the breeding centre and in volunteer homes; the defecation patterns and faecal quality in kennelled dogs fed once or twice per day; the incidence of obesity and the impact of obesity on the health and workability of guide dogs; the variation in assessment of vaginal cytology and semen quality within and between technicians in the laboratory; the greeting behaviour of dogs; a study to determine which enzyme linked immunoassay was more reliable and accurate in measuring plasma progesterone; the kennel preferences of dogs exposed to five different kennel designs; the effect of downtime on learning; and monitoring incidences of adverse reactions to fireworks. The canine research team also undertake desk based reviews of...
Guide Dogs is currently supporting a wide range of research projects...

The canine research team would welcome suggestions and responses to this article, which can be directed to rachel.moxon@guidedogs.org.uk

2009 Assessments

Congratulations to our newest members who joined the IGDF in 2009

- Royal Society for the Blind Australia
- Dogs With Wings Assistance Dog Society Canada
- Blindenführhundeschule Katharina Richter Germany

Congratulations to the following schools which passed their five-year assessment in 2009

- Dog Guides of Canada. Lions Foundation of Canada Canada
- Ecole Limousine de Chiens-Guides d’Aveugles France
- Les Chiens Guides d’Aveugles du Midi France
- Scuola Nazionale Cani Guida per Ciechi Italy
- The Chubu Guide Dogs Association of Japan Japan
- Nippon Lighthouse Japan
- The Eye Mate, Inc. Japan
- Samsung Guide Dog School Korea
- Herman Jansen The Netherlands
- Irish Guide Dogs Republic of Ireland
- Freedom Guide Dogs for the Blind USA
- Southeastern Guide Dogs Inc. USA
Freedom online: opening channels of communication through social networking

As a guide dog school, our focus is on providing people with freedom and independence.

Online social networking has given people the ultimate freedom to communicate and share information with anyone, anywhere, and at anytime.

Social networking is no longer just a “tween” fad. Businesses, corporations and non-profit organizations are all jumping on the social networking bandwagon and seeing the benefits for themselves. In 2009, as part of its expansion efforts, Freedom Guide Dogs joined this communication revolution and took steps to begin growing its online social network. Among other benefits, it has brought more hits to our website, increased visibility and has contributed to a six per cent rise in our number of individual donors.

Being a small organization in a small, upstate New York town, Freedom does not easily get the visibility needed to grow its constituency. We are limited to what our time and resources will allow. Often, the only communication we have with people is through our website, mailings or events. By using Facebook and YouTube in conjunction with our website, we are able to reach out to more people using fewer resources.

Through Facebook we can have conversations with people, share pictures and video and even alert people to news and events. It allows us to stay connected between newsletters, events and other communications. Sharing information goes both ways. “Fans” can upload their own pictures for us to see. Some include puppy raisers, clients with their dogs, and even pictures from a guide dog school in Japan. The great part about having a Facebook page is that you can really start building relationships with people. Also, it is accessible for the visually impaired, which opens up a whole new mode of communication for current and prospective clients.

Although it may not seem like a social networking tool, YouTube has been another source of enhanced communications for Freedom. In addition to sharing video with the world, YouTube allows you to create your own channel, send messages to people, build followers, and more. While we love to show videos of puppies playing and being cute, YouTube allows us the opportunity to give people an inside look into aspects of guide dog training and placement. Some of these videos include apprentices on a blindfold walk with a dog, traffic training with the dogs and working with clients during a placement. We even posted an informational video about Freedom, which got us some really great exposure. In addition to raising awareness and educating people about what Freedom does, we are giving them a better understanding of all the work that goes into training and placing guide dogs. It also showcases our Hometown TrainingTM program, and our one-on-one customized instruction.

There are plenty of other social networking tools that can benefit your organization as well. Blogging has become very popular as a way to update people on what else is happening in your organization. It gives a more personal account of the daily goings on, as opposed to a standard website homepage. There are sites like blogger.com that let you set up a free account in about a minute. Flickr and Photobucket are both photo sharing sites that also give you the opportunity to network and communicate through messaging, posting and sharing photos, commenting on others’ photos, etc. These sites are great for guide dog schools. They make it quick and easy to share photos of a new litter, dogs in training, clients with their new guides and puppy raisers.

Many social networking sites are very user friendly. They make it easy to get started, and it is also very easy to link your social networking to your organization’s website. When choosing a social networking site it is very important to outline your objectives and goals for online social networking. You do not want to get involved in social networking just for the sake of social networking or for the fact that “everyone else is doing it.” It has to be right for your organization’s needs.

First, know that maintaining a blog, a Facebook page or any other social networking tool can be time consuming if it is to be done correctly. Posting a message to Facebook every other week is not going to cut it. You want to take the time to interact with your “fans” – read what they are posting, comment on it, comment on their photos, etc. This does not take hours, just a few extra minutes to be involved and keep others involved. It can really go a long way.

Second, not all social networking is the same and it is not always the right choice. For example, when Twitter exploded onto the scene, we could not jump on the bandwagon fast enough. Twitter is a social networking tool that limits its users to 140 character posts (tweets). You build “followers” who can read your “tweets” and vice versa. While Twitter is a great way to blast a message to a very large number of people almost instantly, it affords little connection with those on the other end. Freedom learned that Twitter was not the way to connect with our small constituent base and get other people involved in our organization locally.

Online social networking is becoming a priority in many businesses and organizations. It is an easy way to stay in touch, get people involved and share information about what is going on. It can be a great asset to your organization’s mission and goals when used correctly.

For more information about the benefits of online social networking, visit: http://www.wdfm.com/marketing-tips/lee-odden-social-media.php
Keep the canine away from human grub!

Guided by Tim Su – Guide Dog Trainer
Taiwan Guide Dog Association – Taiwan

Guide dogs are not allowed to eat human food, which is primarily due to health and safety reasons. Unfortunately, once the dog discovers a way in which to gain access to food, it is very difficult to stop it from seeking the “rewards” no matter whether the dog is on duty or not. There is no better time than being alone and having access to grub for these food-loving dogs.

Once the dog gets into the habit of seeking food for itself, there is nothing much we can do apart from restraining it, limiting its activity area and clearing away all available food when the dog is alone. However, these measures only keep the dog away from human food when it is accompanied. We need to consider what to do when it is entirely on its own. Limiting its activity area and cleaning up the space are negative ways to prevent dogs from eating human food. The dog will not consider the message to be “Hey! You can’t eat human food”, it will simply perceive the meaning to be “Sorry! Food isn’t available now.” As soon as we forget to put away the food and leave the slightest chance of getting hold of it, the dog will quickly pounce without any hesitation, leaving no trace of leftovers whatsoever.

I was troubled by the habit of these food-loving and yet extremely clever canines. Fortunately, after many years of experience in guide dog training, I found an interesting method to put a curb on the dogs’ inexhaustible appetite, even when they are alone. My technique was to use a monitoring system to fight against gluttonous behavior. My initial steps involved setting up a trap of food to lure the dogs, and then watching closely from outside, identifying which specific dog jumped at the bait. The key to success here was to go in and correct the dog immediately. Next time when there was food around, the dog would wait a bit longer to make sure there was no one near, and then take the food more discreetly.

Yes, you guessed it, the situation seemed to become more of a problem than it was previously — the dog was being trained to steal human food even more carefully! This is where I identified that a hi-tech solution was needed, so I used the monitoring system with the addition of anti-burglar software on the computer to train these clever dogs. I also set up an alarm around the area where the food was positioned, which would make loud noises when the food was disturbed. The loud noises could also be replaced with a human voice saying “No! Leave it!!” as a reprimand to the dog. As soon as the alarm went off, the webcam on the computer automatically initiated the video recording. We then reviewed the video to examine the canine behavior more closely. Most of the dogs appeared surprised because there was no human in sight but they heard the reprimand. Their first reaction was to hurry back to their own beds quickly. I observed that the dogs would be tempted to try again after a while, but after the reprimand they would not try a third time. I should point out that this method is not appropriate for all dogs and especially not for uncontrollable puppies.

My experience has shown that I cannot eradicate the dog’s bad habit of stealing food by using this method just once. It takes several attempts before any obvious improvement can be seen, but using a hi-tech method definitely makes the training easier — and I don’t have to stalk and wait for a long time before I see any progress.
Ken Lord Award

Ken Lord was the co-founder of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) and served as its Chair for a number of years.

John Byfield – Training Director
Freedom Guide Dogs for the Blind - USA

Ken was the Chief Executive Officer of South African Guide Dogs and gave over 40 years of service to guide dogs nationally and internationally. The Ken Lord Award was established in 2001 to recognize the lifetime commitment of an individual to the guide dog movement. The award was established in his honour, and he was the first worthy recipient of it. Other past recipients have been Keith Holdsworth, Bill Thornton and myself, John Byfield.

I, along with Ken Lord, was a member of this year’s Ken Lord Award Committee, together with Christine Baroni-Pretsch of Switzerland and Ken Rosenthal of the United States.

The nominees for the 2010 Ken Lord Award were absolutely outstanding. All deserved international recognition for their accomplishments and contributions to their respective organizations and to guide dog programs across the globe. The person chosen spent over forty years as a guide dog trainer and instructor with extensive management experience. He is well known and highly respected within the worldwide guide dog community. That person is Doug Roberts of The Seeing Eye Inc. in the United States.

services, and the kennel facility. Not only did he handle these responsibilities extremely well but he initiated changes: increasing the apprentice program from two to three years; reducing the instructor-to-student ratio from eight to one, to five or four to one; increasing the dog training cycle from three to four months; and adjusting kennel staff hours to allow the dogs more “around the clock” human contact. Other innovations included a GPS pilot and clicker training and the hiring of a full time geneticist. Doug was also very astute in recognizing and then hiring talented people as trainers and for other positions who, in turn, made long term commitments to The Seeing Eye.

Doug actively encouraged The Seeing Eye’s interaction with other guide dog organizations both at home and abroad. He was in the forefront when the US Council of Guide Dog Schools was established in the late 1980’s, where Doug’s input at each meeting was invaluable.

On the international scene, Doug was appointed to the IGDF Board of Directors, on which he served until his retirement in 2009. Doug was certainly a goodwill ambassador on his visits to other countries, and in his position at The Seeing Eye, he frequently played host to many overseas professional visitors. Doug did not hesitate to share his knowledge for the benefit of the worldwide guide dog and blind communities.

One of Doug’s main interests was to meet with every student in training prior to their departure from the school. This interest extended to family members as well. It is not an overstatement to say that Doug personally knows every Seeing Eye graduate. This interest transcended professional responsibilities.

Doug Roberts was very surprised and honoured to have been considered for the Ken Lord Award. In accepting the award, he said: “I have always been humbled by the amount of training and instruction knowledge that gathers at IGDF meetings. There are so many people that are worthy of this award that I was stunned when told I had received it. I met Ken Lord in 1990. I was skeptical at first regarding the value of joining the IGDF. None of us in our chosen field have much spare time and I wondered if this would be worthwhile. After listening to Ken during meetings and socially after meeting hours, I became inspired by his spirit and his desire to help blind people around the world obtain a first-class dog and first-class instruction.

We all suffer from the misconception that the methods practiced at our respective schools are the best practices and there is no need to change. I quickly realized that Ken Lord was correct – we can all learn from each other for the betterment of our schools. We owe it to the wonderful people we serve and to our loyal dogs to be the best we can be.

Health care organizations and educational organizations are assessed regularly. This concept in the guide dog industry was unheard of until the IGDF made it a stipulation of membership. My experience traveling to other
We all suffer from the misconception that the methods practiced at our respective schools are the best practices and there is no need to change.

schools and also to be assessed by others has made it evident that assessment is a healthy exercise to ensure good quality.

In my travels to other schools, I became excited to witness the various ways we accomplish our tasks. It was evident that none of us own the truth about the guide dog industry and it is necessary always to seek a better way. The world is changing constantly and the challenges that our constituents and our dogs face are ever changing. The methods used 10 or 20 years ago to train and instruct might be old-fashioned and ineffective in today’s world.

My wish is that we all keep an open mind when we visit other schools or attend workshops and filter through the information to assess if we can use any ideas to enhance our programs for the ultimate benefit of the people we serve. I will cherish the Ken Lord Award and display it proudly.”

We, in the guide dog industry, have benefited from Doug’s good nature, wisdom, knowledge and professionalism. He set the bar very high but what a great example to follow! Doug has been an inspiration to his colleagues at The Seeing Eye and to every one who has known or come in contact with him over the years. Although he retired in 2009 after a career spanning 41 years, he is certainly not forgotten. We will miss him but nevertheless wish him the very best in his retirement. Doug, we all thank you. It is indeed a privilege to recognize you with the 2010 Ken Lord Award.

Japan Guide Dog Association’s visit to Expo 2010 in Shanghai China

World Expo 2010 in Shanghai China is being held from 1st of May to the 31st of October.

Michiko Shirai
Resources Management Section
Japan Guide Dog Association-Japan

The Life and Sunshine Pavilion, which has been established at Expo 2010, is a significant initiative in the 160 years of world expositions. By promoting the human rights of the world’s 650 million persons with disabilities, the Pavilion can help to advance their wellbeing. Not only is it the first pavilion promoting welfare, but also the first time in the history of the World Expo that they have promoted assistance dogs.

We had the opportunity to promote what we do at the Shanghai Expo because Mr Osamu Tanaka, who is a councilman of the Japanese Society of Service Dog Research (JSSDR), was delegated special adviser to the Life and Sunshine Pavilion, and Mr Yutaka Akita, who is a director general of JSSDR, was delegated chief of the Life and Sunshine Pavilion’s Japanese preparation office.

When they discussed with the director of the Life and Sunshine Pavilion what they should promote from Japan to the Chinese people, they thought raising the quality of life of disabled people through the use of service dogs would be an interesting subject.

The Japan Guide Dog Association took our guide dog users, Mr Morio Sugai and Ms Yoko Sakurai, to Shanghai. Over two days we did five demonstrations on the stage of the Life and Sunshine Pavilion, showing visitors what guide dogs can do. In addition to guide dog users, mobility service dog, and hearing dog users were also present. Mr Shuichi Takano, General Manager of the Promotion Department at the Japanese Guide Dog Association, and I were also there to promote Japanese guide dogs.
A Royal visit at the Czech Guide Dog School

Marie Hájková – Secretary
Czech Guide Dog School- Czech Republic

I have met different types of people at work, especially blind clients who benefit from our services and are accompanied on their travels by a four legged assistant, a guide dog. These people have different appearances and characters and, as they say themselves, they do not differ from other people except that they cannot see. Many of them are truly exceptional; the way in which they cope with their disability is amazing. They enjoy their life and are able to share their enthusiasm with others, and when with them, a healthy person always realizes that his or her worries are trivial and silly. Just try closing your eyes in the morning before getting up and with a blindfold on, then making your coffee, having breakfast, cleaning your teeth, choosing the right clothes and going to work. These are really different worries! Therefore, it is important to help blind people and contribute to making their difficult lives easier.

Fortunately, among us, there are people who are helpful and not indifferent. There are the volunteer puppy walkers who take care of future guide dogs, the sponsors – companies as well as individuals – and also some famous fundraisers. I have met them at work as well. However, I never thought that one day I would have the privilege of speaking about guide dog training with Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall and wife of Prince Charles. I will never forget that day.

Her visit was preceded by a number of negotiations, a lot of preparation, organisation and arrangements. The content of the visit had been thoroughly planned and the guests carefully chosen. In the weeks before the visit, representatives of the British Embassy and the Prague Castle security service visited our school several times. For a long time it was not clear whether the visit would in fact take place. The precise time was announced only a couple of days before.

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On the morning of her visit, we finished the last preparations and the guests began to arrive to meet the Duchess of Cornwall at our Guide Dog School. The guests included Countess Mathilda Nostitz, a generous lady full of energy whose heart has always belonged to Czech lands and to blind people, for whom she is a patron in the Czech Republic. She has always cared about the visually impaired and about us at the School, as if we were her children, and we all love her; also Mario Quagliotti, husband of the Countess and Ambassador of the Sovereign Order of Malta; Eva Holubova, our fundraiser, a famous Czech actress and a great woman. She is very busy but she always reserves some time for us and she has become a puppy walker for one year; Milos Placek, who has sponsored the dog food Eukanuba for the dogs in training and puppies in puppy walking for several years; Antonin Maly, a photographer and author of the calendar “Dog – Man’s Friend”, featuring photos of famous Czech people together with our dogs; Lubos Krapka, director of the Mathilda Civic Association, founded by the Countess to help blind people; and Josef Stiborsky, President of the Czech Blind United (SONS), a Czech organisation for blind and visually impaired people. The guests also included our three four-month-old puppies together with their puppy walkers; representatives from
our clients with their guide dogs; trainee dogs from our School specially bathed and groomed; and us, the employees. Of course members of the security service from the British Embassy and eager journalists and media representatives also awaited the Duchess. All of them were restless and curious because of her visit.

The Duchess arrived with her entourage in the afternoon. She was relaxed and smiled a lot, and it was clear she was looking forward to the visit. Outdoors, she met the Countess and the Director of our School, petted the puppies and greeted their caretakers. In the School lounge she greeted the guests, shook hands with them and spoke briefly with everyone. Then she went to our T-shirt shop where I was supposed to sell her a T-shirt if she was interested. “Good afternoon, Your Royal Highness, welcome to our T-shirt shop. Pictures painted on the T-shirts were given as a gift to our school by leading Czech artists. Proceeds from the sale are an important source of funds for our organization …” I have to admit that I was really nervous, not only because of Her Royal Highness but also because of the whole entourage and crowd of journalists and photographers. After shaking hands with the Duchess, she smiled at me and I was able to overcome my nervousness. At her request, I showed her the smallest children’s T-shirts, which she said she wanted for her grandchildren. She chose four, and we gave her a calendar as a gift.

Later on she went to see our indoor facilities where she greeted our dogs in training. We had prepared an obstacle course in the outdoor training area and the trainers were ready with the dogs in harness to show the work of guide dogs. I was supposed to comment on the demonstration and by then I was not nervous. The Duchess listened carefully and she asked several questions. It was apparent that she was very interested and she certainly has a very good relationship with animals. She told me she has Jack Russell Terriers at home. She greeted all the trainers and their dogs one by one. She observed the demonstration of obedience, necessary for good control of the guide dog, and the work in the obstacle course. In response to my timid question of whether she would like to try to walk the obstacle course with a guide dog herself, she said yes enthusiastically. She chose the dog and, according to the instructions, grasped the harness handle and then accompanied by the trainer, she was guided through the obstacles by the dog. The Duchess was delighted. The photographers took hundreds of pictures, and the following day the photos appeared in almost all the dailies. Finally, she greeted the blind clients and talked to them in the lounge and she showed a lot of interest. Then group photos were taken and we said goodbye.

The Duchess was very kind and generous during the whole visit. She showed a lot of interest and I am sure that she enjoyed herself. The fact that she visited us and showed such appreciation is a great reward for our work and we are thrilled that she chose to visit our School.

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands visits Dutch guide dog school

Irma Metzger
KNGF Geleidehonden- The Netherlands

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands was the guest of honour at the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Dutch guide dog school, KNGF Geleidehonden. The Queen was present at the announcement of the winning work of art in the art competition, which had been organised to celebrate 75 years of guide dogs in the Netherlands. The theme of the art competition was - what else - guide dogs. Visually impaired people - with or without guide dogs - were invited to contribute. Ellen Greve, Chief Executive Officer of KNGF Geleidehonden and currently IGDF Board member, delivered a welcome speech to the Queen, in which she referred to the rich history of the Dutch guide dog school. The Queen visited the exhibition of the ten nominees’ work and spoke with them. Afterwards, she also conversed with guide dog users, volunteers and employees of the guide dog school. She was very much impressed with the school and the developments it has undergone in the 75 years of its existence. The highlight of the visit was a tour around the kennels and her encounter with the guide dogs in training. The members of the Dutch royal family are great dog lovers and Queen Beatrix is no exception to that rule. It was clear she enjoyed meeting the dogs and seeing their spontaneous and natural behaviour.
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Elementary students learn about disability assistance dogs

In Korea, both Disability Awareness Day and Guide Dog Awareness Day take place in April, and to mark these two days, Samsung Guide Dog School is delighted to announce the development of a brand new special project! Elementary school students will be taught about what guide dogs and hearing dogs do as well as the appropriate behavior and protocol to adopt around people who have visual or hearing disabilities.

A flash animation concerning this has been produced and will be distributed to elementary schools free of charge. The flash animation will also teach children about the behavior of dogs and how to behave safely and responsibly around them.

The material comprises two sections, which can be studied separately or together: “Dogs Helping Humans – the Story of Disability Assistance Dogs” and “Your Best Friend – the Story of Companion Dogs”. As dogs are the main characters – in order to capture the children’s enthusiasm – real-life stories have been incorporated to develop the children’s understanding of the issues relating to assistance dogs.

A trial presentation of the flash animation was held at an elementary school in Yongin to acquire feedback from a sample set of children and to confirm their understanding of the material. A survey of the 187 participants showed that the majority of responses were highly positive, for example, “I was able to get a better understanding of disability assistance dogs” (97.3 per cent), “I learned how to treat dogs properly,” (96.3 per cent) and “I enjoyed the presentation” (86.6 per cent).

With the help of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, all elementary schools in Korea will now receive this material, which will be available to download online. It will also be available on CD.

Sadly, Korean society still remains unaware of the significant differences disability assistance dogs can make and some young children may not completely understand issues of disability or accept people with disabilities. Now, thanks to this new educational material, viewers can learn valuable lessons and influence their friends and family members, and in so doing, help to create a brighter, more compassionate and tolerant society for the future.

Accreditation and Development Committee hosts assessors workshop

As is customary at our IGDF bi-annual seminar, held in 2010 in Ottawa, the Accreditation and Development Committee hosted a workshop for the IGDF Assessors. This year was no exception in that the Accreditation and Development Committee (ADC) were delighted to have 100 per cent participation – our thanks on behalf of the IGDF to everyone for taking the time and making the effort to attend our workshop.

We were pleased to welcome our most recent appointments, David Markham (Australia), Madeleine Jardine (France), Eloy Aranda Flores (Spain), Lee Stanway (UK), Brian Francis and Kathy Kelly (USA). We now have a full complement of 25 assessors. The Assessors and the ADC combined represent agencies from eleven countries.

During the two-day workshop we discussed issues relating to international protocols and cultural differences, the upcoming new IGDF website and its applications for accreditation, the new Assessors Training Package and the Assessors Handbook.

For the majority of the second day we dealt with Assessors’ issues pertaining to our IGDF Standards. This was a very lively session and the Assessors broke into working groups to discuss and make recommendations to the workshop.

On behalf of the ADC, Marc Lyell, Judy Campbell and myself, would like to take this opportunity to thank Alan Brooks for his dedication, hard work and sage advice whilst serving as an Assessor and a member of the Accreditation and Development Committee. In October 2010, Alan will be retiring from Guide Dogs (UK) after 43 years of outstanding service. Alan’s experience and knowledge will be greatly missed by not only the ADC but also the IGDF at large. We wish him a long and enjoyable retirement.

At our seminar in Switzerland in 2004, Malcolm Driver was appointed Chair of the Accreditation and Development Committee. Prior to this, he served as an IGDF Director. Malcolm was tasked with taking the ADC from its old format to its current format as a standing IGDF Committee. Under Malcolm’s skilled guidance and patience, the accreditation process has been refined, developed and enhanced to the high standards that our member agencies are able to enjoy today. On behalf of the entire Accreditation Group, we thank Malcolm for his leadership. He has now stepped down as Chair but we are delighted that Malcolm will continue with the ADC as an Assessor.
Getting and using Reldog Lite Database (RDL)

Whether an industry leader or a fledgling school just finding its way, service dog organizations around the globe struggle with the same challenge: how to effectively manage data in a way that provides the greatest return on their investment.

As non-profit organizations struggle to keep administrative overheads low and the economy has required many to slenderize their staffing patterns, one result on our business has been a “quick and dirty” approach to filing and data management. Done with the whelping log? Stick it in the file. Have medical printouts? Stick them in the file. Puppy raiser reports are in? Stick them in the file. Training reports? Stick them in the file. Email communication with the raiser/foster/graduate? Print it and stick it in the file (yes, each of you that received it... yes, we will have five copies. Just get it in the file.) The dog has medical problems? Stick all the records in the file.

What is amassed over the course of a dog’s lifetime is 2.5 inches and potentially 12 years worth of records – from neonatal reports to working team notes – usually stuck together in one very out of order and extremely important tome.

The result?
What saved us time on the front end (“get it in the file”) we lose four-fold when the time comes to try and find information critical to genetic improvement (weeks of analysis), determining opportunities for improvement in training (where do we start?), or even simply identifying a person’s current phone number (minutes add up!).

The answer?
Reldog Lite’s central filing structure. With clear, user-friendly forms created by peers in our industry and easy-to-generate reports and queries, the small investment of time you take to enter the data (which is comparable to the time you would have spent using a paper method of filing) provides you with limitless ways to view and understand the data you keep. No more lost files. No more hours spent reading through hard-to-read hand-written logs. No more hunting and pecking to find a medical report provided 10 years earlier. In a few simple steps you are working with real data in the pursuit of genetic improvement. Run a few queries and you will instantly know the most common training-related reasons for dog failure in your training program.

Yes. It’s that simple.
Reldog Lite is a relational database designed for organizations breeding and training working dogs. Organizations of all sizes can use the program’s tools to increase the speed at which they improve the quality of their dogs, use the data from training and client placements to monitor the effectiveness of program improvements, and identify further areas to make the best use of their resources.

RDL originated from the database in use at Guiding Eyes for the Blind in Yorktown Heights NY USA and was modified to meet the varied needs of organizations world-wide. During the past 18 months, Southeastern Guide Dog in Florida USA implemented RDL at their school while completing a thorough beta testing of the program.

Schools considering using RDL would like.
1. Staff acceptance of using a database instead of their other methods currently in use.
2. Funds to purchase the necessary equipment, to pay for IT support to establish a computer network/server and to have computers available for staff to use. You will have to purchase Microsoft Access licenses for each concurrent user because RDL runs on Access.
3. Committing the time to gather and load your initial data into RDL. There are specific steps to follow for data entry. The process of locating accurate data can be time consuming and may not feel very rewarding to your organization until it is done. This part of the process took about six months for Southeastern Guide Dogs.
4. Commitment to train staff in using RDL. There is a User’s Manual to help you. You will need to identify a key person to lead others.
5. Commitment to IT support for database, hardware and software maintenance as well as RDL customized modifications your school would like.

Until 2013, the RDL development team will continue to provide updated forms that can be imported into your copy of RDL.

Until 2013, the RDL development team will continue to provide updated forms that can be imported into your copy of RDL. These forms provide added functionality and/or fix database bugs that are discovered. We have worked hard to eliminate as many bugs as possible, but, as with any new program, you may discover something that needs fixing. The contact form you fill out when downloading RDL will provide us with your contact information so we can make you aware whenever RDL updates are available.
The RDL development team has committed to work with two cooperative breeding groups to create RDL-C, which will allow multiple organizations using RDL the ability to combine their genetic data. If smaller organizations have 25 per cent of their breeding dogs related to each other, for example, they can have an effective breeding colony size of at least 20 broods and five studs of the same breed producing at least 100 puppies. The health and temperament genetic data from each cooperative organization’s RDL would be imported to RDL-C to use powerful genetic tools called Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs). EBVs can help you select the best breeding dogs and improve your dogs more quickly than any other method. This saves your organization money and time by breeding, raising and training more successful dogs.

RDL is an open-source program written in BASIC code, which is familiar to many computer programmers. You are welcome to customize your copy of RDL by creating your own reports, etc. We are hopeful that you share your modifications with others through a RDL users group. If schools are converting RDL to a language other than English, they need to be aware that language changes to RDL forms would have to be re-done for the newly imported forms.

Reldog Lite is a relational database designed for organizations breeding and training working dogs.

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**2010 Derek Freeman Scholarship**

The Derek Freeman Scholarship committee was pleased to announce the names of the 2010 scholarship recipients at the International Guide Dog Seminar in Ottawa.

Naomi Wallace of Guide Dogs Victoria and Jade Hill of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind received the Derek Freeman Award. Left to right: Malcolm Driver, Matthew Bottomley, Jade Hill, Graeme White (accepting the scholarship on behalf of Naomi Wallace), Bill Thornton.

This year two scholarships were awarded, one to Naomi Wallace of Guide Dogs Victoria and one to Jade Hill of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind.

The Derek Freeman Scholarships are awarded to assist the recipient in attaining more knowledge for their organizations in the areas of puppy raising and breeding. The scholarships are issued bi-annually at the International Guide Dog Seminar. Scholarships are in the range of 500 to 2,500 pounds.

The committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the host organizations for sharing their time, resources and knowledge with the Derek Freeman Scholarship recipients. This year’s host organizations are Guide Dogs for the Blind Inc., California, Guiding Eyes for the Blind, New York and the Royal Dutch Guide Dog School (KNGF), Holland.


The Derek Freeman Scholarship was established to recognize Derek’s exemplary service of over 30 years to blind and partially sighted people worldwide. Renowned for his excellence in breeding and puppy raising guide dogs in the United Kingdom, Derek generously shared his knowledge and resources with a great many organizations globally.
The deadlines for Visionary submissions are May 31st and Nov 30th

Please supply your articles as a word file with original images sent separately as jpeg images.

Remember to include your country of origin, school name, name of the author of the article, their position within your organisation and any captions for photos.

For the index, please include a one-sentence description of your article.