This year marks 80 years since Dorothy Harrison Eustis and Morris Frank began the dog guide movement.

It’s a small world

Greetings from the Middle East

European Federation Scores Big Victory with Petra’s Law

The Historic text of Petra Pintelei’s speech to Members of the European Parliament.
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.
In other words, if Member States of the European Union agree, our standards will soon be enshrined in European law.
in the future. They are due to start next year, having evolved over a six-year period.

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed in any way to the evolution of these standards, but particularly to Kathy Kelly and her Curriculum Development Task Force and to Christine Baroni-Pretsch in Switzerland. Christine’s account of the fascinating background to this important development is on page Y. I am convinced the benchmarks will make a huge difference to the lives of many millions of blind and partially-sighted people throughout the world in the years to come.

Many of the above topics will be discussed at length at our 2010 conference, which is being hosted by Canadian Guide Dogs in Ottawa, Ontario, next year. Communication is challenging when we are all so far apart, so the website www.igdf.org.uk – is always a useful start for any query about the Federation, but there is no substitute for face to face conversation. I do hope you will make an effort to attend the next IGDF Seminar from June 25 to 27 2010.

So, overall, the IGDF is raising its game, and putting into practice the good intentions that led to the Federation being started two decades ago. Clearly, there is much still to do, but we are on a roll and all of us just need to keep up the momentum. As I mentioned in the New Year: the sleeping giant is waking up!

Bridget Warren


On Sunday April 19 2009 His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito together with Her Imperial Highness Princess Masako visited the Japan Guide Dog Association’s Kanagawa Training Center.

President Yukihiko Inoue escorted the royal couple to the kennel to see the dogs followed by a guide dog training demonstration. Dogs in training and puppies greeted them at the kennel. The royal couple each held a puppy with a big smile and enthusiastically asked questions regarding puppy raising. The Prince was delighted to find out that one of the puppies was born on the same day as himself. The Prince and Princess even switched the puppies that they were holding. When they left the kennel, Princess Masako kindly said: “It is our hope that the puppies all grow up healthy and happy.”

After visiting the kennel, they were led to the training room on the third floor. Here they watched a demonstration given by the students and guide dog trainers at the training center, and also saw a guide dog user. After the demonstration the Prince himself held the harness and walked with a guide dog. As the Prince walked through the course with obstacles, he closed his eyes and tried to feel the movement of the dog through the harness. Princess Masako tried out a basic training session. She gently gave the commands “sit” and “down” to the dog. The dog seemed to know how much the Princess liked dogs by wagging his tail and constantly looking up to her face.

At the end, the royal couple walked up to the staff, students and the guide dog user and had a short conversation with each one of them.

“You keep your partner very well groomed,” Princess Masako told Yoko Sakurai, the guide dog user. When she responded “I keep him more polished than myself!” the Prince and Princess exchanged smiles. Then they reached out and shook hands with her. They left the Kanagawa Training Center after an hour and a half and the visit was publicized nationwide.

We were greatly honored to be given the opportunity to welcome the Imperial Crown Prince and Princess. We will treasure the words of encouragement extended to us by the royal couple and continue earnestly to commit ourselves to raising guide dogs.
The Seeing Eye Celebrates it’s 80 year History

This year marks 80 years since Dorothy Harrison Eustis and Morris Frank began the dog guide movement by establishing the very first school specifically for the training of dogs to lead people who are blind and to instruct people in the use of those dogs.

Although January 29 2009 marked the actual 80th anniversary of The Seeing Eye’s incorporation in Nashville, Tennessee, the dog guide school began its celebration last spring, on March 23 2008. That particular date marked what would have been Morris Frank’s 100th birthday.

With a birthday cake and stories shared by staff, the event kicked off commemorative events that will continue through 2009. In April 2008 the organization marked the occasion of the first meeting of Frank and his guide dog Buddy. And on June 11 The Seeing Eye recognized the day, 80 years earlier, when the newly trained team arrived in New York City and made the legendary walk across West Street.

On January 6 2009 representative trustees, staff and puppy raisers, along with a puppy named Nancy, rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange in anticipation of the celebratory events held on campus on January 29. But possibly the event with the most impact will be the school’s graduate reunion, scheduled for August 20 - 22. As many as 200 Seeing Eye graduates are expected to return to the Morristown, New Jersey campus in recognition of the anniversary.

The Walt Disney Co., in recognition of the anniversary, agreed to re-release a series the company produced in 1967 called ‘Atta Girl, Kelly.’ This is the first time the series (which originally appeared in three parts on the ‘Wonderful World of Color’ television show) has been available on DVD. Disney sent a crew to The Seeing Eye campus in fall 2008 to film a 16-minute ‘extra’ that is included on the video disc. To spread the celebration far and wide, Seeing Eye graduates were encouraged to hold their own local anniversary festivities throughout the United States and Canada. “These celebrations will personalize the significance of our history throughout the entire United States and Canada,” said Seeing Eye President and Chief Executive Officer Jim Kutsch.

So much has changed since its founding on January 29 1929, and yet so much remains the same. The Seeing Eye continues to pioneer techniques in canine health research, genetics and training; and to innovate new programs that ensure the continued safety of dog guide teams that travel increasingly complicated and challenging streets and sidewalks.

“We are an organization that bears tremendous pride in our 80-year history, but no more so than the pride we hold in our commitment to the future,” said Kutsch. “As long as people who are blind resolve to maintain their independence, it is our privilege to be the catalyst in helping them to help themselves.”

The Seeing Eye kicked off its 80th anniversary year by ringing the opening bell on Wall Street.
Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind Celebrates its 25th Anniversary

By Steven Doucette
Special Events Manager | Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind

Armed with enthusiasm and the knowledge they acquired in England, Bill Thornton and Jane Thornton came to Canada from England in March 1984 with a dream in their hearts: to start a professional guide dog school. The dream came to fruition, and twenty-five years later Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind celebrates a milestone and has graduated more than 640 working guide dog teams across the vast country of Canada.

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind began in a rented property in the Ottawa area. It was in this townhouse that the garage was transformed into a kennel where the organization hosted its first dogs. The first guide dog team, John and Sasha, graduated in July 1984. Co-founder Jane Thornton, who remains as Chief Operating Officer of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind, remembers the first six months as being very difficult, both emotionally and financially, with many highs and lows.

It was a year later, in 1985, that Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind became the first guide dog school to receive provincial accreditation within the Blind Persons’ Rights Act of Ontario which, amongst other things, gives guide dogs access to all public places. Similar legislation now exists in all provinces of Canada. With the hope and foresight of growing the organization, Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind established its own breeding program and the first litter of pups was born in 1986.

This was one year prior to another huge achievement – moving from a kennel in a converted garage into a custom-built, modern new facility. This meant a kennel with running water, heating and air conditioning. In 1987 clients from across Canada would also be more comfortable, spending their four weeks of training living in residence at the facility, and this remains in operation today. Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind takes pride in the residential facility and does everything it can to make its clients feel as if they are ‘home away from home’. The National Training Centre is located in Manotick, Ontario, which in 1987 was a small village itself, 30 minutes south of downtown Ottawa. As Canada’s capital city has grown, so Manotick is now part of the City of Ottawa.

Established and operating efficiently, Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind started to gain a reputation across Canada, as well as internationally. In 1989 the organization was established as a charter member of the International Federation of Guide Dog Schools for the Blind (now the International Guide Dog Federation, IGDF), and the first Canadian obtained certification as a guide dog mobility instructor under the internationally recognized training program. To this day, our international involvement remains strong, as Jane Thornton has been an elected director with the IGDF since 2006.

“I’m lucky to do this each day, as I don’t feel I’m going to work. It is such a part of my life and a place where I enjoy being”, says Jane Thornton, referring to her role as Chief Operating Officer of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind.

It is difficult to sum up the many accomplishments of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind after a quarter of a century. Perhaps the simplest summation comes from one of our clients: “Having my guide dog has given me the independence and courage to go out in the world and make my mark. It has also given me a friend I would trust my life with. She is responsible for ensuring that I get to where I need to go safe and sound and she has become my eyes. That’s what having a guide dog has given me, and I am truly thankful to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind for their hard work in making all this happen.”

We look forward to continuing with our mandate and we appreciate the wonderful support from all of our friends in the ‘world of guide dogs’, and especially our clients, Board of Directors, donors, volunteers and staff.

You can learn more about Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind online at www.guidedogs.ca

Jane Thornton, co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind
IGDF assessors – who are they?
The International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) has up to 26 assessors who, as many of you will be aware, undertake assessments of member organisations every five years. Organisations who wish to join the IGDF must successfully pass an assessment against the IGDF standards which are the world’s standards for our industry. The assessors are individuals who have been technically qualified and are at the top of their profession.

Each assessor must meet very strict criteria before they can join the group. The criteria includes: being qualified as a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (GDMI) for a minimum of ten years with experience in all areas of our work, including training apprentices; management or supervision; planning; and, where possible, a background knowledge of orientation and mobility. The ability to travel long distances, write reports and computer skills are all relevant to the role. Naturally, these assessors must have the right personal qualities of excellent communication skills, tact and integrity, in addition to their professional experience and background.

Training assessors
The assessors themselves are not simply selected and turned loose! Each will be mentored through their early tasks by one of our established and experienced assessors, who have been undertaking the work for some years. In addition, every two years all assessors undertake further training through a two day workshop which takes place prior to the IGDF conference. During this workshop we are able to exchange knowledge and experience and highlight problems with our processes or standards, and, most importantly, change those aspects that need improvement. We widen our

“These factors can also be very useful for raising the profile of their own guide dog organisation. The quality standards of their employer can also be improved from the knowledge gained from overseas”

knowledge, learn from each other’s experience and, where necessary, undertake additional training. Primarily the training relates to the assessment process but it frequently has significant benefits for our regular roles as practitioners or managers in the guide dog industry.

More benefits
The benefit of being an assessor, in addition to the training provided by the IGDF, is the recognition within and beyond our industry that these individuals are at the top of their profession. Many employers are aware of this and do not hesitate to promote the fact that their organisation employs an IGDF assessor. Carefully promoted, this can have a positive influence on potential fund providers.

When visiting guide dog training schools, assessors not only assess against the standards but also gather information on how different countries and cultures address our various problems and how training techniques are developed in other schools. This additional knowledge and methods of good practice can be brought back to their own organisation at no financial cost to their employer whatsoever! Many organisations require their staff to travel to other guide dog programmes overseas in order to broaden their knowledge, yet this is an opportunity that assessors undertake on a regular basis when visiting other guide dog organisations.

Assessors clearly expand their own network and often this leads to collaborative undertakings which benefit their own and other organisations, and also the IGDF.

The assessors themselves can influence standards that are constantly being developed by the IGDF and this contributes to the development of the guide dog industry on a global basis. These factors can also be very useful for raising the profile of their own guide dog organisation. The quality standards of their employer can also be improved from the knowledge gained from overseas.

Are you up to the task?
Currently the Assessment and Development Committee of the IGDF is looking to recruit a few assessors to join the 20 currently active assessors. Providing you meet the criteria to become an assessor, we would be more than happy to hear from you. This may not only the IGDF and the assessor as an individual but also your organisation, if you are lucky enough to employ someone who meets the criteria that joins the team.

Your commitment
However, there is one disadvantage to your organization in promoting a member of staff as an assessor. The staff member would be absent for approximately 12 days every other year in order to undertake assessments for IGDF. Other than that, we believe the advantages greatly outweigh this one disadvantage. We would be more than happy to hear from you if you believe you have the member of staff who meets the criteria and has the right personal qualities to be an IGDF assessor. Please refer to the advert in this copy of “The Visionary” to find out how to obtain an application form.

Do you employ the best Instructors in the industry?

Alan Brooks
The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

Doyou employ the best Instructors in the industry?
Several years ago, Emmelie (who works at Guide Dogs Stockholm, Sweden) and I met in Australia doing our cadetships at Guide Dogs Victoria and stayed in touch. In this article we would like to share with you an experience which saw us working together again – in beautiful Malta.

Malta is a small country with around 400,000 inhabitants. Among them there are visually-impaired people whose situation is somewhat different from the situation for visually-impaired people in other developed countries. They can get support, such as getting a lift by minibus between their home and work or school, which seems great at first glance. However, the fact is that such a good service does not promote independence and mastering of mobility skills. The first instructors in orientation and mobility skills are only just being trained in Malta and so the possibility for visually-impaired Maltese to acquire these skills is about to become a reality. Guide dog mobility has been quite an unknown concept in Maltese society, however, until a while ago. So how could visually-impaired people in Malta move around independently and safely? This question was an inspiration for Ron Colombo, himself partially-sighted, to start doing something about it. As a dog lover he was instantly keen on the idea that guide dogs could bring independent mobility to his friends and he started to work on this idea from scratch.

As Malta is such a small country, it would have been a big step to get its own instructors, breeding program and dog training in place. Therefore Ron was looking for a way to acquire fully trained guide dogs abroad until they could set up their own program. Slovak Guide Dog School received his plea for help a few years ago.

After a long exchange of emails and a personal visit all was ready to start. In the next long period we assessed potential Maltese clients, selected suitable dogs – Macy and Aval - and completed their training first in Slovak and then in English. The dogs were matched to two young gentlemen, Joseph and Leone, and the whole domiciliary instruction program lasted for one month in February this year.

The initial stages would have been very difficult to complete with just one instructor and as Slovak Guide Dogs was lacking another English speaking instructor, we were lucky that Emmelie came to our aid! She did so eagerly and selflessly. Her help was greatly appreciated; we could not have done it without her!

The list of countries involved in the ultimate success has not finished yet. The two dogs, whose excellent temperament was a key to their success with the Maltese clients (quite apart from their training), happened to be at Slovak Guide Dogs thanks to the support of other guide dog schools. Macy was donated as a puppy by Irish...
Guide Dogs for the Blind and Aval came from the breeding lines of Guide Dogs Victoria, who provided his mother Bronny. And so providing Malta with guide dogs became an international project directed by Guide Dogs Slovakia but with an invaluable input from others.

Back to Malta – the dogs settled in very well and became dignified ambassadors for the Slovak school. They had to cope with an enormous change. Malta is a typical Mediterranean country with busy and loud traffic, narrow streets full of obstacles and without footpaths, with large numbers of stray dogs and especially cats... - very different to Slovakia! The dogs adapted to the change well and our work was made much easier by the dogs being able to perform well with little support. In the month of instruction we dedicated a lot of time to teaching orientation and mobility to the two clients as they had not had any formal training and had not been traveling independently before. It was a great challenge for the clients in such a difficult and disorganized environment. The team work of the dog and client proved to be an excellent way of tackling the challenges as both were putting everything into the work. Of course providing follow-ups and after-care services would be tough considering the distance between Malta and Slovakia, so everybody had to put their maximum into the work – the clients, the dogs, the instructors – in order to get the teams ready for independent problem solving in the near future.

The month’s effort was worth it – both teams bonded very well, got used to each other, mastered several routes on their own and were well on track for further improvement. At the end of the program Joseph and Leone were very happy. Working with a guide dog has made a great difference to their lives and the lives of their families. Both gentlemen understand the privilege and responsibility of being some of the first Maltese visually-impaired clients to work with a guide dog, and they will be spreading the word about the benefits of guide dog ownership in their country.

This challenging program could not have been completed without the strong will and capabilities of all involved: Ron, the father of the whole idea; Maria, Michael and others from the Malta Guide Dog Foundation, who provided support before, during and after the program; excellent dogs Macy and Aval, who are a credit to their breeding lines; their trainers, Janka and Rado, who put so much into their training; and Joseph and Leone, smart and highly motivated gentlemen, willing to battle with challenges and listen to advice. We, the instructors, tried to do our best and gave the teams as much as we could.

We wish the new teams in Malta good luck and all the best in their lives. We hope there will be many more like them enjoying the benefits of mobility with a guide dog in Malta.
The International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) stands for the authority setting standards in the guide dog field worldwide.

Christine Baroni-Pretsch | On behalf of the board of directors
Fondation Ecole Romande Pour Chiens-Guides d’Aveugles

Dear members,

In 2005 the council decided to separate the Accreditation and Development Committee (ADC) from the elected board of directors. At the same time it was agreed to move from guidelines to standards regarding the accreditation process.

One of our core objectives, described in the five year strategy, is the development and implementation of a comprehensive set of standards relating to the breeding and training of suitable dogs for guide work and the instruction of blind or visually-impaired clients in the safe and effective use of a guide dog. As a result the board recognized a strong need to define and encourage the professional education of Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDMI) in order to generate a highly beneficial impact on the quality of the services provided for the blind population by our member organizations in many different parts of the world.

In October 2006 a GDMI Task Force was set up by the board of directors. We recognized that the initially presented GDMI Curriculum needed to be reviewed by a panel of professional specialists in order to ensure that it is global enough to apply to a varied international membership.

The outcome of the extraordinary work completed by this group of experienced professionals – chaired by Kathy Kelly, Guide Dogs for the Blind, USA – was presented to the membership at the biannual seminar in London in July 2008.

In the meantime the final version of Standard 10 has been adopted jointly by the board of directors and the ADC. We kindly invite you to consult all the relevant papers on the IGDF website. As previously announced, Standard 10 will be implemented in January 2010. This means that all member organisations will be assessed regarding all standards.

The new IGDF website will be a source of reference for educational material including Standard 10. The new IGDF website will be a source of reference for educational material. Existing resources, such as online courses, the IGDF Curriculum and textbooks and CDs or DVDs from existing educational programs are important tools for the development of individual programs by the membership. It might also create a great opportunity for working together and exchanging knowledge amongst different member schools.

Standard 10 is a challenge for all of us but it is achievable and it will provide our staff with the well deserved recognition on an international level of being highly skilled specialists in the rehabilitation of blind and visually-impaired people.

Kind regards,

Christine Baroni-Pretsch
Guide Dog Mobility Instructor Education – The Swiss Example

Switzerland does not have a very long history in training guide dogs, even if one of the very first guide dog schools in the world was established, for a few years on the lake of Geneva in the early twenties. This was the famous “Oeil qui voit” - The Seeing Eye, founded by Dorothy Eustis.

More recently four modern guide dog schools, all members of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), provide blind and visually-impaired people with guide dog mobility. Switzerland is a rather small country, divided into four distinct language regions with specific cultural backgrounds. No one school has been in existence for more than 35 years and all the schools are small organizations which train between six and 25 teams per annum. All four schools are under contract to the Swiss national disability insurance company which sets and implements outcome standards for both the fully trained guide dog and the team after completion of an initial six months of training. The financial contributions from the insurance company cover about 20 per cent of the schools’ annual needs. In 2005 the insurance company asked us to unify the Guide Dog Mobility Instructor Curriculum as a means of increasing professionalism and quality. More or less at the same time, the board of directors of the IGDF announced to its membership that a standard for GDMI educational programs will be put in place and implemented in 2010. These two factors acted as a catalyst and made the project roll. Nevertheless it was a great challenge. The Swiss schools are competitors but the common goal made us come together and sit at the same table. At the beginning we set up a working group with representatives from all four schools. We then decided to push the project forward. The fixed aim was the official recognition of the profession by the Swiss federal government. We therefore hired the services of a professional consultant. The new educational program is a diploma course composed of nine modules and a final federal exam. It contains on the dog side, assessment, training and care and on the client side, assessment, instruction and aftercare, including retiring and replacement of the guide dog. Each module is an entity on its own and the student has to complete each one by passing a written, oral and practical exam. Today we are proud to say that we have succeeded. It was quite a process and hard work, but incredibly beneficial to all participants. We still have a lot of work in front of us, but we are determined to start the first course in 2010. The course duration is three years, which means that the first federal diplomas for GDMIs will be delivered in 2013.

Many member organizations, and especially the smaller ones, might think that Standard 10 is a huge challenge. That’s certainly true, but it is achievable, even for the smallest organisation. There are many ways of being successful and it will encourage us to be creative and to explore new paths.

From my perspective, Standard 10 definitely provides the opportunity for us to grow together and to optimise the services we offer to the blind and visually impaired across the world.
Guide Dog Handler Bereavement

John Gosling | Guide Dog Mobility Instructor
Guide Dogs Victoria, Australia

Guide dog handler bereavement
Feelings of sadness brought on by a guide dog handler’s loss of their guide dog can be quite profound. We have probably all heard clients describe the enormity of this loss as being akin to ‘the death of a spouse or close friend’. Bereavement is entirely a personal experience and a handler’s response to the loss of a guide dog is neither right nor wrong; it just is.

The Kubler-Ross five stages of grieving - (i) shock and denial, (ii) anger, (iii) depression and detachment, (iv) bargaining and dialogue, (v) acceptance and a return to normal life – can be observed more or less and in no particular order when a handler is experiencing the loss of their guide dog, working partner and loyal companion.

The loss of a guide dog does not always refer to the death of the dog but can also depict the loss experienced when the guide dog is withdrawn from active work, retired prematurely due to poor health or retired after a full and rewarding working life.

Withdrawal of a guide dog
Handlers sometimes describe the withdrawal of their guide dog as a personal, organizational or community failure. The handler can feel that they should have tried harder and that they have let down the dog, instructor or the school. They can express frustration that they were not listened to by their school, which they feel should have provided more direct assistance through after-care, or that the school had made the wrong person/dog match. Handlers can be very angry and feel ‘let down’ by the local community. Take the situation, for example, where a mismanaged dog, which the handler had previously reported to the authorities, attacks their guide dog, causing it to become distracted enough to compromise their travel safety.

Withdrawal is in some ways more difficult to deal with than death. Death is a natural loss and is inevitable.

While the handler may be grieving that the guide dog team can no longer continue working together, they can also feel a sense of relief that the difficult experience is now closed and they have the opportunity for a new beginning.

If failures/withdrawals are successive, however, handlers can begin to question their own suitability for a guide dog or capacity to withstand the reoccurring pain of broken relationships.

Premature retirement due to the dog’s poor health
As with the withdrawal of a guide dog, handlers can experience grief when their dog is injured, suddenly becomes seriously ill or suffers from a chronic degenerative disease and is prematurely retired. The handler must be included in the decision to retire the dog as would be the veterinarian, instructor and school. The handler needs to feel empowered that they have a say because they have their dog’s ‘best interests at heart’. If the handler does not have a mature and meaningful role in an inclusive retirement process, personal closure can be elusive.

Guide dog retirement after a full working life
This is the most acceptable end to a working partnership, particularly if the dog remains with the handler as family pet.

However, even with this reasonable expectation of an end to a working life, the handler may still experience loss due to the fundamental change in the relationship between old partners.

As the new guide dog (or as colleague, Judy Campbell, Leader Dogs for the Blind, USA, better coins the phrase: the ‘successor dog’ rather than ‘replacement dog’) takes on the daily guiding role, the handler can initially experience feelings of guilt for transferring loyalty as they leave ‘an old faithful friend’ behind.

Instructors can reassure the handler that aged dogs are mostly glad to be retired and although they may rouse themselves when the harness is presented in their early days of retirement, they soon give this notion of duty away to lie in front of a welcoming fire.

Instructors can also reassure the handler that younger dogs are generally respectful of the status of the older dog and the dogs will get on well together.

Some handlers’ sustained feelings of grief may defer retraining until the retired older dog dies, whereas many handlers will have a practical need to retrain as early as a suitable match is available. There is no right or wrong; it just is.

Handlers training with a successor dog mostly benefit from the acknowledgement of their working experience with their previous guide dog. This can be done personally or in a group setting in which handlers training with successor dogs are given the opportunity to share some of their memories about their previous guide.

In retirement – finding another home
Some handlers prefer to find a retirement home for their guide dog if they are unable to retain it at home. They can be comforted by knowing the dog is in a known, happy and loving home and, if appropriate, can accommodate their wish to retain contact.

Other handlers who need to return the old dog to school for re-homing may feel bereaved and that they are abandoning the dog. This can be distressing, with feelings expressed that after the old dog has given a lifetime of loyalty they are cutting the dog from their lives. As always with grief, sensitive understanding and meaningful listening can assist the handler during these sad times. Handlers need to know that their feelings are considered and valued and, if appropriate, they are kept informed.

Some handlers will want to know details of where the old dog went and how it has settled in. Of course mutual confidentiality and privacy must be respected.

On the other hand, some handlers want a complete break so that they can focus on the new dog. Again this is neither right nor wrong; it just is.
Guidedog euthanasia
The handler must have a clear understanding of the reasons why euthanasia is required. A sensitive, open and accurate discussion between the veterinarian, handler and the guide dog instructor is needed. If the handler does not want to be involved in discussions with the veterinarian, the guide dog instructor needs to give a clear lay understanding of the dog’s condition.

It is important for the handler to feel that by having the best professional advice, they are empowered to be centrally involved in the decision. This will help them begin the process of closure.

The instructor and/or counselor and the handler discuss where, when and who are present at the time of euthanasia. This is totally personal and is the handler’s choice. It may be at the handler’s home, a selected location such as the training centre, or at the veterinary surgery. The guide dog instructor can explain the options but without presenting a bias. In all cases the environment needs to be quiet, unhurried and private.

The question needs to be asked: Does the handler and/or family want to be present? Would they like the guide dog instructor to be present?

The veterinarian is best placed to explain the euthanasia process and ask if the handler wants to give their dog a goodbye cuddle and be in contact with the dog while the veterinarian administers the injection. Does the handler want to check the absence of heartbeat and spend private time with the dog?

Opportunity should be offered to the handler (and their family if appropriate) to talk about their departed dog and their life together. They will need to have discussed what they want to do with the dog’s body. Some prefer to take the dog home to a favorite location for burial or the veterinary practice can offer body disposal and cremation. Does the handler want to receive their dog’s ashes?

Rituals and memorial recognition such as a grave or a storing of or spreading of ashes can be important aspects of the bereavement process. Some schools assist with this ritualizing experience with the provision and maintenance of an honour garden or memorial wall. Some schools or instructors like to send the handler a condolence letter or card. This can assist the healing process.

In some cases, where the handler is locked down with profound grief, a referral to a grief counselor, either within the school or community, can be beneficial.

Moving forward
The timing for moving on is best managed by the handler. The need to retain independent mobility often causes the handler to want to apply for training with a successor dog at the earliest opportunity. The initiation and re-application for training does not replace grief but these processes can occur simultaneously.

Bereavement and associated loss are totally personal feelings and any supportive approach must be fully non-judgmental. Grief is a natural life experience as is the joy when the handler meets their guide dog for the very first time.

“Guidedog euthanasia

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“Guidedog euthanasia

The handler must have a clear understanding of the reasons why euthanasia is required. A sensitive, open and accurate discussion between the veterinarian, handler and the guide dog instructor is needed. If the handler does not want to be involved in discussions with the veterinarian, the guide dog instructor needs to give a clear lay understanding of the dog’s condition.

It is important for the handler to feel that by having the best professional advice, they are empowered to be centrally involved in the decision. This will help them begin the process of closure.

The instructor and/or counselor and the handler discuss where, when and who are present at the time of euthanasia. This is totally personal and is the handler’s choice. It may be at the handler’s home, a selected location such as the training centre, or at the veterinary surgery. The guide dog instructor can explain the options but without presenting a bias. In all cases the environment needs to be quiet, unhurried and private.

The question needs to be asked: Does the handler and/or family want to be present? Would they like the guide dog instructor to be present?

The veterinarian is best placed to explain the euthanasia process and ask if the handler wants to give their dog a goodbye cuddle and be in contact with the dog while the veterinarian administers the injection. Does the handler want to check the absence of heartbeat and spend private time with the dog?

Opportunity should be offered to the handler (and their family if appropriate) to talk about their departed dog and their life together. They will need to have discussed what they want to do with the dog’s body. Some prefer to take the dog home to a favorite location for burial or the veterinary practice can offer body disposal and cremation. Does the handler want to receive their dog’s ashes?

Rituals and memorial recognition such as a grave or a storing of or spreading of ashes can be important aspects of the bereavement process. Some schools assist with this ritualizing experience with the provision and maintenance of an honour garden or memorial wall. Some schools or instructors like to send the handler a condoleance letter or card. This can assist the healing process.

In some cases, where the handler is locked down with profound grief, a referral to a grief counselor, either within the school or community, can be beneficial.

Moving forward
The timing for moving on is best managed by the handler. The need to retain independent mobility often causes the handler to want to apply for training with a successor dog at the earliest opportunity. The initiation and re-application for training does not replace grief but these processes can occur simultaneously.

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Hello and greetings from the only guide dog school in the Middle East. Hopefully we will have new neighbours in the Mediterranean region soon, as we have heard recently about a new initiative to open a guide dog school in Greece. We wanted to share with our colleagues around the globe some recent international connections that we have been lucky enough to make.

In keeping with the ‘world is getting smaller’ theme, we extend a global ‘thank you’ to the Canadian Guide Dogs, who recently gave us two puppies to be paired with our blind graduates. Our friends at Guide Dogs UK and Guiding Eyes in Yorktown, US have provided us with two puppies, of which one has gone on to become a brood bitch here in Israel and the other is currently being raised by an adoptive family in the UK.

As an organisation we are changing too. Not getting smaller, but rather growing. We have grown and expanded in many ways over the last few years and are trying to keep up with the need for partnerships.

One of our goals is to increase the number of guide dogs we can graduate from 30 to 40 per year. In keeping with this, some of our staff have travelled abroad to learn more about how our sister organisations go about such a transformation. In April 2009, Orna Braun, Puppy Raising and Kennel Manager, travelled to the Foundation Swiss School for Guide Dogs for the Blind and to the Guide Dog UK’s Tolvigate Breeding Centre to learn more about kennel logistics and expansion programmes.

Another staff member, Guide Dog Mobility Instructor Ami Toren, is currently learning ‘Clicker Training Techniques’ for two months in a professional educational exchange programme at the Guide Dogs for the Blind in San Rafael, California. It is our hope that the knowledge Ami gains from the experts in San Rafael will be imported to our school here in Israel and used to reduce the training time for dogs and increase the number of dogs who succeed in our training programme.

We have benefited so much from the support and help of our many friends around the world and we, of course, would like to give back as well – in the way of professional and breeding exchanges, for example. We would love to help our Greek colleagues when and if they need it.

Thanks to all of you, all over the world, who work together and share information and resources. A special thanks to all of those who have helped us in the past; if we have forgotten to thank anyone, please forgive us!
European federation scores big victory with Petra’s Law

Bridget War
UK Guide Dogs, United Kingdom

Campaigners have secured a major lobbying victory in the European Parliament. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have voted to instruct Member States of the European Union to introduce a variety of disability rights, including access, guide dog and assistance dog provisions. Campaigners must persuade the 27 Member State governments to adopt the law next.

Guide Dogs UK staff Gail Stewardson, Alan Brooks and Tim Arnold supported Tom Pey as President of the European Guide Dog Federation (EGDF) to press for the changes. The charity developed an integrated communications strategy, using both the international relations and media departments, aimed at lobbying in public to persuade in private. They called the proposals ‘Petra’s Law’, after a 15-year-old blind Romanian singer whom they invited to Brussels to brief parliamentarians.

Campaigners wrote an emotional and powerful speech for Petra Pintelei, which visibly moved the MEPs, drawing attention to the every day discrimination and barriers which blind and partially-sighted people face across the European Union. She told them: “In three year’s time, I will be an adult. I hope that by then, you will have torn down my Berlin Wall. And then - and only then - will I be free.”

Dr Tom Pey, Director of External Affairs for Guide Dogs UK, says: “We also got valuable, high profile coverage on national and international radio and television, despite the G20 summit – probably the first time the national media has mentioned the EGDF. I am delighted with the way everyone co-operated to make a demonstrable difference to the campaign. Now national governments will have to agree to the new law, too, before putting the provisions into law in their own way – another potential hurdle before we achieve true equality of movement. We’ll be watching!”

The following is the historic text of Petra Pintelei’s speech to Members of the European Parliament

Most of you have, probably, already made the crucial decisions in your life. What you want to do with your career, who you want to marry, and where you want to live.

I’m 15 – so I am in the amazing, and sometimes terrifying, position of being on the edge of making some of those life-defining decisions. I’m sure you can remember when you were 15. What’s different about you and me, though, is not just our ages. Put simply, you can get on a plane and fly to any European capital. You can get a job, in theory, anywhere from Spain to Slovenia.

You are free Europeans. I am not. Let me explain. Before I was born, President Reagan had already called for an end to communism. He famously said: “Mr Gorbachev – let my people go.” We still learn about that in school in Romania today.

Later, of course, the evil symbol of communism, the Berlin Wall, came tumbling down. That’s another important thing we learn at school. We also are taught that it takes longer to make things than to break them. So understanding the benefits of being free is taking quite a time in countries like mine. But we’re doing our best.

Now that Romania’s a member of the European Union – my generation has the most exciting hope…we’ll ever have …of leaving behind the terrible memories of Nicolae Ceausescu. And I want to be a part of that. But I can’t. Why? Because there is still a barrier in Europe, bigger, even, than the Berlin Wall. It’s called disability. I am imprisoned. Not by my impairment, but by people’s attitudes. I have to constantly battle with the way that other people see those of us with disabilities.

Well, I’ve got that sorted. I’ve appeared on TV in my native Romania, I enjoy singing in public, and I think that people can take me as they find me. I hope to go to university, and study languages. And then get a guide dog. In that order. I think that might be possible. But the second problem is much more difficult to handle. I will face a mountain of rules and regulations, bigger than the Berlin Wall, every day of my adult life. And the most complex and confusing are the ones which affect guide dog users who want to travel. Will I have to muzzle my dog? Will this airline allow my animal to travel in the passenger compartment with me? Will the inoculations that it receives in Romania be recognised in Rome?

My English teacher tells me that the British have a phrase for this kind of nightmare. It’s apparently called red tape. Red tape that is different from country to country, region to region. And it is a barrier that daunts me. It is the biggest single threat to my freedom - and independence - as an adult. But it doesn’t have to be this way. With one concerted action, you leaders – here, in Brussels, today, have the power to make me free. Just vote to tear up the red tape. And make one rule for Europe.

Let me, and people like me, have what everyone else takes for granted: a legal right of access. The right to go into any public place, accompanied by my dog. Is that too much to ask? Like you, I want to get on a bus, or a plane, or a train – and travel from Slovenia to Spain. Or even Bruges to Birmingham. Or Amsterdam to Zagreb. Without hindrance - knowing that I’ll get the same treatment wherever I go. President Reagan also said: “Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall.”

Well, in three year’s time, I will be an adult. I hope that by then, you will have torn down my Berlin Wall. And then… and only then… will I be free.”

“Well, in three year’s time, I will be an adult. I hope that by then, you will have torn down my Berlin Wall. And then… and only then… will I be free.”
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.