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VISIONARY

vi•sion•ar•y (vizh'n-eri || -eri) adj. 1. Characterised by vision or foresight

EDDIE MY FAITHFUL COMPANION

from the Labrador Guide Dog
Foundation in Poland

HAPPY 10TH ANNIVERSARY . . . AND MORE!

Taiwan Guide Dog Association has
now been established for 10 years



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

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Jane Thornton – C.O.O

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind

The International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) is a leader in our industry and is recognised internationally for its excellence in setting and maintaining the highest standards in order to provide innovative solutions to global issues related to guide dogs.

The culmination of our people sharing ideas is what makes us successful. It is with great pleasure that I welcome three newly elected members to the Board of Directors of

world. There are so many industrious and enthusiastic volunteers serving on our committees, and we are indebted to the guide dog organisations that are prepared to share their staff members with the IGDF. Through this we are able to share and dispense invaluable experience and knowledge, whilst learning directly from each other in order to grow and further strengthen our work on a global scale.

Another seminar has come and gone and the commitment of the International Guide Dog Federation remains unwavering. The 2012 seminar was a wonderful and monumental event and I would like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to the French Federation of Guide Dog Associations and all of their volunteers for hosting the 2012 IGDF Seminar in Paris, France in May in such a professional, patient and friendly manner. As a previous seminar host with Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind (2010), I can personally vouch for the significant amount of work, time and energy devoted to ensuring its effectiveness and success.

Finally, I would like to wish Japan Guide Dog Association every success as they prepare to host the next IGDF Seminar in 2014. I look forward to working with you all.

I close with very best regards to all of our members.

Another seminar has come and gone and the commitment of the International Guide Dog Federation remains unwavering.

the International Guide Dog Federation: Paul Metcalf (New Zealand); Mike Holt (UK); and Naohiko Teshigawara (Japan). They join Jim Kutsch (USA), Hans Damm (France), John Gosling (Australia) and myself (Canada) to form what will truly be a widespread international representation of our services around the world.

As always, however, the introduction of new Board members is only possible due to the fact that previous members are leaving; I wish, therefore, to take this opportunity to recognise and thank Ellen Greve (Netherlands), Christine Baroni-Pretsch (Switzerland) and Takatoshi Nakano (Japan) for all of their efforts, commitment and contribution to the IGDF during their term in office. It was truly a pleasure and privilege to work with each of them during their time on the Board.

The guide dog movement continues to lead the way in providing independence for blind and partially sighted individuals from around the

Jane Thornton
IGDF Chair

IGDF Assessments

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

- Centro Regionale Helen Keller della Unione Italiana Ciechi Scuola Cani Guida, Italy
- East Japan Guide Dog Association, Japan
- Ecole Mediterranee de Chiens-Guides d'Aveugles, France
- Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, Australia
- Guide Dogs Queensland, Australia
- Hokkaido Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Japan
- Kansai Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Japan
- Nakovammaisten Keskusliitto ry:n, Finland
- Osterreichische Schule für Blindenfuhrhunde, Austria
- Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind, New Zealand
- Taiwan Guide Dog Association, Taiwan

The following schools have been accepted for applicant status:

- Guide Dogs Association of the Blind Limited, Singapore
- Helen Keller Guide Dog School, Brazil
- Lara Guide Dog School Hellas, Greece
- Psi pomocniki, Slovenia

Please note that there are additional organisations being processed.



K94U2C Reality

In Australia, most teens searching for freedom and independence want their driver's licence and a new car, motorbike or scooter to boot!

Jessica Hamilton – PR Coordinator

The Royal Society for the Blind Guide Dog Service, Adelaide, South Australia

But what mobility options are available for teens living with blindness or low vision?

The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) Guide Dog Service K94U2C Camp provides teens who are blind or vision impaired with the opportunity to test-drive a guide dog for the weekend.

“It’s like Big Brother - reality TV for guide dogs! We put four young people together with four RSB Guide Dogs for the weekend and the fun really starts” said RSB Guide Dog Service Manager, Chris Muldoon.

A South Australian first, the camp helps teens to determine whether an RSB Guide Dog could be the answer to independence in adulthood.

“The teens get a chance to work intensely close with the RSB Guide Dogs for the weekend. They participate in the whole experience of guide dog ownership, from toileting, feeding and grooming, to basic and guiding commands, handling positioning and, of course, travelling independently,” said Chris.

Held annually at the Adelaide Shores Holiday Units in West Beach Adelaide, the camp, now in its fourth year, has seen 18 teens aged 14 to 18, experience the joy of working with a guide dog.

“For a number of reasons, many guide dog schools choose not to train

Camp Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (back from left to right) Sam Goulden, David Bowman, Bree Muller, Chris Muldoon and Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Chris Headland with camp participants (seated front left to right) Tori Herbener-Bemold with guide dog Vince, Jackson Book with guide dog York, Lizzie D'Sylva Clark with guide dog Yeva and Karl Cranwell with guide dog Quinta



young people with guide dogs. At the RSB Guide Dog Service, we measure each person on their ability to work with an RSB Guide Dog and the success they'll have with the dog. Putting barriers in people's way seems contradictory to our philosophy of clients achieving independence," said Chris.

This year, teens Jackson Book, Karl Cranwell, Tori Herbener-Bemold and Lizzie D'Sylva Clark took part in the camp from 27-29 April.

"The camp was a great experience. Vince was a great dog; he really listened and paid attention. I'm trying to improve my mobility skills at the moment to work up to having a guide dog," said 18 year old Tori.

Tori, who is currently in her senior year at Adelaide High School, has big plans to study an IT course at the Technical and Further Education College (TAFE) next year.

"I think having a guide dog at TAFE would be really helpful, I could

definitely put my trust in a guide dog for future mobility," she said.

With a 45 per cent conversion rate, Chris says the camp has been very successful.

"My favourite part is the first walk. The kids always have big smiles on their faces because they're independently travelling, and this time with a living, breathing companion to travel the road with them."

"The camp also gives families an opportunity to make decisions for the future based on real feedback from their kids, not hypothetical scenarios."

Established in 2006, the RSB Guide Dog Service is proud to have been able to provide 41 clients with an RSB Guide Dog since its inception, and demand continues to increase with more than 40 puppies in its Puppy Education program.

The Royal Society for the Blind is the largest provider of free services to more than 12,000 people who are blind or vision impaired in South Australia.

C'est Magnifique!!!

That was the overwhelming feedback from attendees at the recent International Guide Dog Federation Seminar in Paris (10-13 May).

IGDF Board

International Guide Dog Federation

With the theme of 'Starting Up, Innovation and Best Practice', the seminar had over 250 delegates representing more than 65 guide dog schools and 25 countries from around the world - all eager to learn, share and gather experiences and new ideas. The seminar, as always, provided excellent opportunity for both formal and informal networking with colleagues old and new.

Aside from 7 plenary sessions, 16 workshop presentations and several other programme items, opportunity was also taken by the French Guide Dog User Association to present their Draft International Charter of the Rights of Guide Dog Users in which they call on decision makers throughout France and, indeed, every country in the world to Recognise, Allow, Extend, Inform and Promote equal access for guide dogs and their handlers.

It is easy, however, for us to extol the success and benefits of the seminar - it is, after all the highlight of the international guide dog calendar and also a huge relief to see months of planning and preparation come to fruition.

What would be better, perhaps, is for you to share your thoughts and experience with other IGDF members: what, for you, were the highlights of the seminar? What improvements would you like to see at future seminars?

Please do send your thoughts and comments to the IGDF office - who knows, not only will you possibly see your ideas in the next edition of *Visionary*, but you may also be helping shape the next seminar in Japan.



Eddie - My faithful companion

There are many hundreds, even thousands, of stories telling of the bond between a guide dog and their handler. Here is one such relationship, shared with all, from the Labrador Guide Dog Foundation in Poland.



Michal and Eddie

Michal Jurczyk – Guide Dog Handler
The Labrador Guide Dog Foundation, Poland

Michal Jurczyk, a man in his 40's, was trained by our instructor Pawel Zielinski with Eddie in March 2009. Michal lives in Kuznia Raciborska, south of Poland, in a small flat with his wife and daughter. He is diabetic and also very active; he likes to walk in the forest and in the mountains. Michal is, in fact, the first Polish nordic walking instructor and when not out walking, works at home using his computer. Here, in Michal's own words, is what Eddie means to him....

I would like to tell you about the relationship between Eddie and myself. Eddie is a yellow Labrador, but is not, by any means, an ordinary Labrador – he is my guide dog. Our time together began in the spring of 2009 when we met at the Labrador Guide Dog Foundation in Poland.

Eddie and I quickly came to realise that we were both on the same wavelength - understanding each other without words; only by using our body language or by my commands.

Three years on and our friendship has gone from strength to strength with Eddie proving his dedication and loyalty time and again.

We had been together for less than one month – I remember both my fear as a new guide dog handler and also the great respect I had for my 'Teddy Bear' (as we call him at home).

One springtime day we were practicing our regular route – a route with many dangerous crossings. Eddie had his harness on and I was also using a long white cane. We stood waiting for all cars to pass when, suddenly and without warning, one of the cars turned from the main street into the side road just at the corner where we were standing. There was neither signal from the car nor drop in its speed. I had no chance to react but Eddie abruptly jumped to the side pushing me with his body so far that the car passed by not hurting us.

The driver, of course, continued driving – hurling insults as he went.

The last laugh was, however, ours as one of the people who witnessed the event knew the driver and reported him to the police.

On another occasion, I had a meeting with a student who was writing her thesis about the relationship between people and

animals based on the example of a blind person and his/her guide dog.

I was waiting for her at the railway station and, having arrived a little early, decided to go from the station's platform to the nearby lawn to let my dog do his business. I turned towards what I thought was the right direction and gave Eddie the "forward" command. Having taken about 10-20 steps, Eddie stopped. Despite me pushing "forward", Eddie started to walk in a very strange way to the side. After a few steps I decided to check what was the problem using my cane and I discovered there was a hard threshold. Thinking it was a kerb to the lawn that I didn't check correctly I pushed my dog once more "forward", but he was still dancing and doing his side steps next to the kerb. After about two more meters I checked once more the height of the kerb and was surprised to find it was too high to be a lawn curb. I thought, perhaps, construction work had been started and that there was a new ditch ahead of me.

So I checked again. I knocked against

I am very proud of Eddie. In all of these situations he was turning out to be a great success!

the wall of this "kerb", but it was more than 20cm high. Now I understood. This was the end of the platform and not a kerb! I took a wrong direction and my dog did not allow me to fall down on the railway track. Thirty seconds later, I heard the noise of a slow freight train. If not for Eddie, I would have fallen down on the track, with little chance of escape.

I assume that the train engineer did not give a warning sound signal being afraid that this may frighten me or my dog – a lesson for us all! My final example comes from one of our regular trips to Eddie's toileting area close to where we live.

Continued overleaf

Eddie - My faithful companion - Continued

To get there, we have to cross a parking lot and a sidewalk. At the entrance on the sidewalk is a deep sewerage pit. I had Teddy Bear on the leash so that, formally, he was not at work but, in his mind, he was working by avoiding cars on the parking lot, stopping before crossing the small local road and guiding me to the lawn. This day he changed our route - to make what I thought to be a short cut. I gave him a command to go to the sidewalk. He made, very reluctantly, a few small steps before turning once more toward the lawn. This made me nervous and, when he again ignored my repeated commands, I got the feeling that something was wrong. I stopped abruptly and felt with my foot the edge of the sewerage pit - the pit's cover gone.....It had been stolen!

It was so good that I had, once

Thank you, Eddie,
for being with me.

again, placed trust in my guide dog.

I could give more examples that show how Eddie has saved me in various difficult situations (e.g. on my lone walk to a forest where I got lost and the dog helped me to find my way home or when I suddenly became unwell and he took me home without any command) - stories that I'm sure many others will have because of the dedication and commitment of their dog.

I am very proud of Eddie. In all of these situations he was turning out to be a great success! It is safe to say that he saved me many times from potential disasters and, as I believe in God, I feel that Eddie has been sent by Him to become my guardian angel.

I know also that once my Teddy Bear becomes old and incompetent I will repay my gratitude by taking care of him to the end of his life. Thank you, Eddie, for being with me.



Happy 10th Anniversary . . . and more!

Founded on April 13 2002, the Taiwan Guide Dog Association (TGDA) has now been established for 10 years with offices located in Taipei and Kaohsiung - the two major cities in Taiwan.

Joyce Feng - PR Manager, I-Shan Huang - GDMI, Gloria Tsai - Office Manager

Taiwan Guide dog Association

The Kaohsiung office was established in 2008 and, whilst promoting guide dogs was difficult at the start, we are now pleased to see that people are friendlier towards guide dogs and accept them into their lives much more readily.

This change of opinion and understanding is very encouraging and setting up a third office, in the central Taiwan area, will be our next goal as we prepare to serve more visually impaired people.

In the beginning, the total numbers of guide dogs were few. Most people did not know or understand guide dogs. Rejection and discrimination were commonplace for our dogs and their handlers while working or being trained. With the persistence and hard work from staff, puppy walkers and volunteers, TGDA has been able to promote the general concept of guide



VIVA KAOHSIUNG – Guided Dogs Friendly City

Here we share some photos for you to know the lovely city – Kaohsiung, that people welcome guide dogs in various ways.

Gloria Tsai

Taiwan Guide Dog Association



dogs and support appropriate laws – all of which have enabled us to make great progress.

Compared with some nations that may have been developing guide dog programmes for longer periods, TGDA have been lucky enough to have benefited from sufficient and complete legislation covering the training and work needs of our guide dogs. Since 2002, TGDA has successfully trained 40 guide dogs and, in 2008, started its own breeding and training program where over 60 puppies have now been born. We are now at the point where we can not only able to satisfy the domestic demands here in Taiwan, but also look to repay some of the generosity of other schools who helped us achieve our goals during our development.

Through our 10 years of fundamental development, we have successfully introduced the concept of guide dogs to the Taiwanese society.

While we have seen great developments in our 'software' (the breeding and training of our puppies and dogs), our next challenge is in creating the appropriate 'hardware'; we are now looking at how we can achieve the next part of our dream – a 'fully loaded' guide dog training centre.

Another current challenge we face here in Taiwan is in the shortage of puppy walkers. Like most schools around the world, we aim to have volunteer puppy walkers who will, with the support of their families, look after our puppies within a 'normal' household environment. Education is an important part of our recruitment process as, compared to pet dogs, raising a guide dog puppy carries a much heavier social responsibility because of their future role. It has been changing little by little over the past 10 years that the recognition and encouragement for puppy walkers are increasing, so each puppy is able to grow up in a family full of love and trust. TGDA has promised to provide the best support for puppy walkers.

The puppy programme has been extended to central Taiwan and we now have 13 puppy families, 1 Guide Dog Trainer and 1 Guide Dog Mobility Instructor working in the area.

We would like to thank all of our loyal and generous supporters for accompanying TGDA on our journey over the past 10 years and, as we move ahead from here, we look forward to new opportunities and greater success together - let us be faithful and strong to holding on and moving forward!

2011 Railway Festival for the Division of Kaohsiung Transportation, TGDA and McDonalds cooperate with each other in a drama play to teach people how to recognise guide dogs in case they meet them in a station.



Fine Arts Division students of Kaohsiung Municipal Gushan Senior High School who are sketching guide dogs in class so they know how they are gentle, steady and willing to be close to people as well.



Radio Stations in Kaohsiung area that invited PW, Guide dog instructor and user to discuss Guide dog related issues on the air.

Guide Dogs For Uruguay

Foundation for Support and Promotion of the Assistance Dog (FUNDAPPAS) is the only organization in Uruguay to lead a Project that seeks to cover the needs of visually impaired people in South America.



Mariana Paredes Bardanca – Communication Manager and volunteer

FUNDAPPAS, Uruguay

In 2011, the International Guide Dog Federation supported our formal enquiry, thereby strengthening our conviction to keep on working towards our main goal: to build the first Assistance Dog School in Uruguay.

FUNDAPPAS was created in 2006 by Alberto Calcagno, the first Guide Dog Owner in Uruguay who, after losing his sight at the age of 57, decided that he wanted a guide dog to lead him through life.

In 2009, Alberto got his first guide dog (Sunnee) from Leader Dogs for the Blind, in Rochester, USA. Since then, Alberto and his team of volunteers have worked non-stop towards fulfilling his new dream - to offer visually impaired people in Uruguay the gift of independence and unconditional partnership that a guide dog can bring.

During the last few years, we have achieved significant advances in our work – all of which are making a difference within the social development culture of Uruguay; national authorities are now committed to make radical changes in the social welfare systems for the disabled. One major step was the promotion of Laws that protect the rights of blind and partially sighted people. Laws 18471 and 18651 approved the work of Assistance Dogs on behalf

of the disabled in national territory and without exceptions. State authorities permitted Guide Dog Owners the access to public transport in our capital city.

In 2010, the Uruguayan government submitted a subsidy that helped us finance the arrival of experienced instructors Alberto Álvarez Campos and Jane Kefford, from PAAT Association (Assistance Dogs and Therapy Animals) in Spain; who unselfishly agreed to train three new Guide Dogs for FUNDAPPAS, taking care of our most urgent technical needs. Thanks to that enormous effort, three visually impaired people traveled to Spain in March 2011 to be trained with their Guide Dogs with great success.

By training Assistance Dogs, FUNDAPPAS offers alternatives to blind and partially sighted people, or people with different / additional disabilities such as autism, diabetes and deafness. Our Program, “Guide Dogs for Uruguay”, has been declared to be of Public Interest by the Social Development and Public Health Ministries. This gives us confidence that our line of work can establish Uruguay as a referent regarding social development and research in this field. Fortunately, our country is overseeing and improving social and health politics, which indicates long term decisions are being made in favor of equality, access, and social inclusion.

While our efforts on consolidating

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fundraising sources continue, PRONADIS (the National Program for the Disabled of the Social Development Ministry) has decided to offer us a building which holds the necessary conditions for the proper functioning of our future School. However, collaboration from the international Guide Dog community is crucial at this time of the process, as we need to begin our breeding program, as well as the training of our first Guide Dog trainers. The kind welcoming of the Guide Dog community during the last IGDF Seminar gave us hope to believe that our dreamed Project has real chances to become a reality, which also allows us to encourage other Organisations like ours to continue their efforts.



Katie with her 6 pups. Our "O" litter - born on 10/2/2012.

About the "Six"

Sun Yang – Apprentice
Taiwan Guide Dog Association

It has been almost 4 years since Taiwan Guide Dog Association started our own breeding program, and we would like to share this pleasant news with you all that 3 of our breeding bitches have successfully given birth to 18 adorable puppies during February and March, 2012. It was only 10 due days apart for the first two bitches, which was a great challenge to me considering I am fairly new in this field.

Puppies were settled and socialised after 7 weeks. When the settlement of the first 2 litters was finally complete, the 3rd new mum was going into labour.

Once again the puppies were born, settled and socialised after 7 weeks. Although it all seemed hectic at the time, it ended perfectly with lots of happy, healthy mums and pups.

The interesting part is that there are 6 puppies in each litter – in Chinese culture, the number "6" represents good. I personally believe it was an indication that we would eventually conquer this great challenge.

It is fair to say that the whole adventure to date has been tiring but over and above all of the effort, very exciting for all of us.



Learning to safely cross a street during AMP training

Leader Dogs for the Blind Receives 2012 AFB Access Award

Rachelle Kniffen – Director of
Communications & Marketing
Leader Dogs for the Blind

The mission of the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) is to remove barriers, create solutions and expand possibilities so people with vision loss can achieve their full potential. Leader Dogs for the Blind's mission parallels AFB's, but with a more singular focus—empowering people with vision loss by removing barriers to independent travel.

Because of the similar missions, the 2012 AFB Access Award that Leader Dogs received for their Accelerated Mobility Program (AMP) held an extremely high level of importance to the organisation.

"Our Accelerated Mobility Program created a more efficient option for the delivery of orientation and mobility (O&M)

services in the U.S.," says Susan Daniels, Leader Dogs for the Blind President and CEO. "We condensed the curriculum into a week of training at Leader Dogs which lets people improve their cane travel skills and quickly return to their families and work. People who live in rural areas, or areas that lack sufficient O&M services, often have trouble obtaining the training they need to travel independently and safely—we remove that barrier."

Chosen annually, the Access Awards honor individuals, corporations and organisations that create new standards of accessibility and a better quality of life for people who are blind or visually impaired. Previous award recipients include Apple, Inc., Google, the CBS Television Network and Walt Disney Parks & Resorts.

Guide Dogs New South Wales / Australian Capital Territory in Australia serves up lesson in access rights

An Australian guide dog owner's Easter holiday plans were ruined when he and his young family were turned away from the motel they'd booked on the Central Coast of New South Wales in Australia, about two hours north of Sydney. The motel's manager said dogs, including guide dogs, were not allowed.

Sally Edgar

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

As is likely the case in many other countries, it has been illegal for over 30 years in New South Wales and 20 years across Australia for venues and transport operators to refuse entry to a person with their guide dog.

Sadly though, the Easter incident is not a one-off occurrence. In February, another guide dog owner, who has represented Australia at two Paralympics, was denied entry to three separate venues in the same rural New South Wales town on the same day. Also in February, a guide dog owner and his family were refused access to a restaurant in Sydney.

A survey of guide dog owners found that between 2009 and 2010, one in three guide dog users across New South Wales had similar experiences.

To gauge public awareness of the guide dog access laws, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT also conducted a survey of the community. It confirmed that there is low public awareness of the laws, with 42% of the public unaware that guide dogs could legally enter a restaurant and 36% unaware they could legally enter hotels and clubs.

The overwhelming feedback from guide dog owners is that whether they are questioned about bringing their guide dog into a café or downright refused entry, the experience is humiliating and distressing.

To address this recurring issue, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT created Guide Dog Awareness Week around International Guide Dog Day 2012 and re-launched its 'Guide Dogs Welcome Here' campaign.

New South Wales Government Minister for Disabilities Andrew Constance and Federal Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes AM, who is himself blind and a

guide dog user, launched the campaign at New South Wales Parliament House to metropolitan and regional media.

Minister Constance sent a strong message to the public, declaring that as well as being illegal, refusing entry to a person with a guide dog is a 'gutless act', and reminded venue operators of the fines they face if they break the law.

The campaign, which was initially launched in 2009 in response to the aforementioned survey of guide dog owners, encourages representatives of the fast-turnover and culturally diverse hospitality industry and for the general public to sit up and take notice of guide dog access laws. Hospitality staff are urged to stay informed and be prepared to assist customers with vision loss.

Campaign resources include an educational DVD for hospitality staff, a fact sheet and a 'Guide Dogs Welcome Here' window sticker that business owners are encouraged to place in their front window.

Underpinned by a media relations strategy which showed the reality of discrimination via a series of personal case studies including the Easter story, the campaign generated widespread, high-profile media coverage across Australia.

To further drive the message home, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is rolling out 'Guide Dog Awareness Days' in areas where incidents of discrimination have occurred. It will also work more closely with local authorities, including police and council rangers who enforce the laws and fines.

Various accommodation outlets, clubs and associations have requested the free training that Guide Dogs NSW/ACT provides on the guide dog access laws and how to assist customers with vision loss.

While this campaign has targeted the hospitality industry, Guide Dogs

NSW/ACT actively works with other industry groups to make it easier for people with impaired vision to access and get around their communities safely and independently.

Since 2000, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT's Community Education team has been providing free training on a regular basis to the taxi, bus and rail industries across New South Wales, to ensure that their frontline staff know how to assist passengers with impaired vision.

In addition, as a result of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT's advocacy and educational work in this area, access rights for people with impaired vision are now included in national training programs for the security, transport and hospitality industries.

To find out more about 'Guide Dogs Welcome Here' campaign, please visit: www.guidedogs.com.au/IGDD2012.html

To further drive the message home, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is rolling out 'Guide Dog Awareness Days' in areas where incidents of discrimination have occurred. It will also work more closely with local authorities, including police and council rangers who enforce the laws and fines



Country In Transition, Humanity Left Behind

The Association of the Blind of Serbia was founded on 14th July 1946.

Dragana Latinovic – Manager of Centre for Dog Training

COP KIKINDA, Kikinda, Serbia

The Association is organized on territorial principle and it is composed of 44 municipal, inter-municipal, and city organizations, of which 30 are in Central Serbia, 3 in Kosovo and 11 in Vojvodina. In addition, within the Republic organization also operates the Association of the Blind of Vojvodina

Currently there are about 12,000 blind and visually impaired persons in Serbia, from a total population of 7,120,666 – a number that surprised me as, in my 32 year-old life, I have almost never met a blind person on the street. That is until the moment when, two years ago, I began to explore the possibility of training guide dogs for the blind.

So, what has caused blind people in Serbia to make themselves invisible; why have they appeared to lock themselves up in their homes?

The political situation in Serbia has, since the '90s, been very unstable; starting with hyperinflation and the economic decline of standards since then, social crisis and the loss of national identity, quality of life of Serbian citizens has decreased considerably.

Serbia is now on the road to democracy, but is still going through a turbulent phase of transition; its success depends not only on the politics of the new ruling parties, but also on the awareness of the general society.

Whilst there are several independent blindness associations centred around Serbia's capital, Belgrade, the Association of the Blind is now a conglomerate of associations that are



Ilija Latnovic in 1978

involved in fundraising for their own purposes. The members of these associations write fundraising projects themselves (e.g. for learning to walk with a white cane, for printing books in Braille, for making the public web sites audible, for setting up audible traffic signalisation and auxiliary lanes to move over pedestrian crossings, for personal assistance, etc), with funding coming mainly from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and by foreign grants with programs for the promotion of civil society and European integrations.

In exercising their basic rights, only the most persistent blind people achieve success - most of them, due to

the difficult financial situation or continued social misunderstanding, tend to stay at home with their families or caregivers.

There are also several independent associations in Serbia centred in its capital Belgrade; I would like to single out the Association of the Blind HOMER from Belgrade and commitment of its founder and director Branislav 'Bane' Matic in all fields of social, humanitarian and cultural work when it comes to the rights of the blind.

Bane had been gradually losing sight from early childhood, becoming completely blind by the age of 15, yet he successfully completed high school and enrolled in the Faculty of

Philosophy. Unfortunately he had to leave the faculty, because of sudden illness, with only four exams left until graduation. His interests in philosophy, science and art did not stop there. He continued to read with the help of many friends and to self-educate. Bane was, however, also a successful radio journalist for many years. On his own initiative Bane founded, in 1995, a non-governmental, non-profit, humanitarian organisation, (the Association Homer) and carried out many cultural and educational activities, and also promoted humanitarian aid for the blind with the lowest standard of living.

In his own words, “many issues of people with visual impairments, including education, professional rehabilitation, adequate medical care, employment, social security, have not been adequately addressed in the last 25 years”, Bane describes the problems faced by blind individuals in Serbia.

Some of the actions carried out by the Association Homer:

- Action We Are With You, a humanitarian action for helping the blind refugees, food assistance, clothing, medical equipment and aids for individuals with physical disabilities. In the above action assistance was also given to 2000 blind persons from the Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- Also, the association initiated the installation of audible traffic signalisation in Belgrade. This project was funded by the City Council of Belgrade.

- Another completed project was Computerised Library for the Blind. The Library has a school for teaching the blind individuals to work on computers in which about 100 people have trained so far, and numerous other projects. This article would probably never end if

“many issues of people with visual impairments, including education, professional rehabilitation, adequate medical care, employment, social security, have not been adequately addressed in the last 25 years”

I wrote in detail about all the achievements of associations of the blind in Serbia and I hope to have the opportunity to write about other events later.

The main reason for singling out the Association Homer within this article is the initiative they took on establishing a training centre for guide dogs. Bane started this action in 1999 by contacting the relevant authorities and by organizing media campaigns. He managed to reach agreement with the Belgrade Waterworks and Sewerage, and also with the Assembly of the City of Belgrade for the assignment of the land on which the centre is to be built.

During 2005, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs took on the initiative to commence building the centre and terrain for training of guide dogs – unfortunately, the lack of funds and dedicated dog trainers mean that this work is yet to be completed.

Bane now devotes himself to dubbing (audio describing) movies for the blind and organising the unique festival of films for the blind in Europe. In the last 8 years he has successfully dubbed over 50 films which are currently being broadcasted on national television RTS 2.

While reading articles about the growing needs of blind people for guide

dogs in Serbia, my father and I decided that we understood enough about dogs to take on the task of providing guide dogs – accepting that we must first undergo our own training to become specialised guide dog trainers.

Our centre for dog training COP KIKINDA was officially registered on June 2011 with Ilija Latinovic, (professional dog breeder and trainer) taking a lead role based on his skills and interests (the life of dogs, dog behaviour and dog communication). This knowledge in theory and practice enabled Ilija to approach the training as communicating with dogs through their innate instincts and we are currently working on completing and releasing some of his scientific research.

Having spent time studying within my own area of interest (the arts, media & communications), I returned to my hometown Kikinda so that I can help my father in organising activities related to the kennel. In 2010, we started an initiative together to open a training centre for guide dogs for the blind.

Whilst both the state and Serbian authorities did not stop our initiative their own engagement is unfortunately slow due to the current unstable economic conditions.

It is very encouraging, however, that on 4th April 2012 the daily journal Politika released an article in which it was announced that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has established a fund for the purchase of guide dogs. A dog now has the status of an aid and a companion, and it is also allowed to enter with dogs in some public vehicles and public places. All of these are major steps forward for the state of Serbia in raising awareness of society and fighting against discrimination of blind people.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge, with our gratitude, the IGDF for their support in our development to date; for the provision of information and knowledge about the standards required for the establishment of the centre and the training of guide dogs. I am very pleased that there is such an organisation as IGDF, which takes into account the quality and the regularity of operations of all sectors and organisations necessary for the training of guide dogs for the blind and for helping the blind people.



Dragana Latinovic



Ilija Latinovic during the training;
Images from private archive

Greetings from the Development Committee (DC)

Ian Cox – Chair, IGDF Development Committee

Vision Australia, Seeing Eye Dog and Mobility Division

The Development Committee (DC) has been operating for approximately 18 months now and continues to work on an expanding number of initiatives to support members, Applicant Status Organisations and New Enquiry Guide Dog Organisations. During the past six months work has included:

1. SURVEY – SUPPORT YOUR ORGANISATION CAN PROVIDE:

Our very important survey was sent out to the CEOs of member organisations on the 8th June 2012. The DC asks all Members to remember how difficult it was to “get started” in the early days of your organisation and let us know how and where you feel you can provide support to fellow Members, Applicant Guide Dog Organisations (AGDOs) and Enquiry Guide Dog Organisations (EGDOs).

2. DC SUPPORT ACTIVITY:

These past 6 months have been a busy, exciting and fruitful time supporting 1 member, 7 AGDO's and 8 EGDO's as well as fielding expressions of interest from 15 other emerging groups and individuals from around the globe.

3. NEW RESOURCE DOCUMENTS FOR MEMBERS AND APPLICANTS:

We have completed new resource documents that are part of the materials sent to applicant and inquiry guide dog organisations. The Action and Financial plan covers key points identified by colleagues with many years of experience in starting and helping others start successful guide dog organisations. Member organisations may also find these a useful reference point. Both documents can be found in the members section of the IGDF website.

4. EDUCATION WEB RESOURCE PROJECT:

We are just beginning a new project for Members called the Education Web Resource Project. Kathy Kelly (Guide Dogs for the Blind, USA) and

Jane Russenberger (Guiding Eyes for the Blind, USA) will co-lead the project. Accessed from the members extranet in the IGDF website, it will provide search capability for educational and reference materials.

There will be 2 sections:

- 1) Board approved “Best Practices” in the Guide Dog Field
- 2) Ideas from the Guide Dog Field.

Our first priority is to update and post the excellent material created by the IGDF Education Task Force (Kathy Kelly and Marc Gillard - Guide Dogs for the Blind USA, Paul Harbord - Vision Australia/Seeing Eye Dogs Australia, Linda Cooper and Lyn Owen - Guide Dogs for the Blind Association UK and Lukas Franck, - The Seeing Eye Inc USA) including a GDMI Course Curriculum; Syllabus; Academic Integrity Statement and Glossary of Terms.

This will be a multi-year project which will continue building over time as additional educational material is developed and gathered from our Members and committees.

The DC would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board for its ongoing encouragement and support and to all the delegates that attended the Plenary session presentation at the 2012 IGDF seminar for their positive feedback.

The DC is always keen to hear from members about any issues they have and is committed to providing development to member organisations who request it. If you have any areas requiring development assistance please do not hesitate to contact the IGDF office who will put you in touch with the DC.



Guide Dog Parade in Shibuya

'Guide Dog Parade in Shibuya' held on International Guide Dog Day 2012!!

Yuko Inoue

The Japan Guide Dog Association

2012 marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Assistance Dogs for Persons with Physical Disabilities Act in Japan and the Japan Guide Dog Association (JGDA) is actively promoting a society that will 'Welcome Guide Dogs Anywhere!'

The Assistance Dogs for Persons with Physical Disabilities Act (2002) was established in Japan as a way of guaranteeing fair and equal access for those who live with and rely upon assistance dogs in order to live an independent lifestyle. This law provides that public facilities, stores and transportation should not refuse entry of persons with an assistance dog. In reality, however, many guide dog teams still experience refusal at facilities and stores and this continues to limit their field of activity.

The main reason for the refusal of guide dogs is that many people don't fully understand - they often don't recognize the difference between pets and assistance dogs; nor are they aware of the existence of this law. To help address this, JGDA continues its promotional activity to spread information of the laws existence and also the wider understanding of guide dogs.

This year, on International Guide Dog Day (Wednesday, April 25th), a parade took place in Shibuya city, Tokyo. With the help of the local community and Shibuya Concierge, we proudly promoted our message . . . 'Welcome Guide Dogs Anywhere!'

A total of 24 guide dogs and guide dogs in training walked along with 160

participants including our President (Yukihiko Inoue), staff members, local community members and volunteers. Lead by police vehicles, our line stretched over 100 metres; the guide dogs even got to walk on the road where they are not used to walking! Throughout the parade, guide dogs behaved impeccably, completing their job to a very high standard - keeping to the left side of the street and stopping at curbs to ensure the safety of their handlers.

As we entered the huge "scramble crosswalk" right in front of the Shibuya station (where the original 'HACHI' statue from the Hollywood movie is situated), all movement froze - it was as if the whole world was watching our guide dog teams.

With bright smiles from our guide dog users and loud supportive cheers from the crowds gathering on the sidewalks, our parade reached a great peak.

Lasting over 1 hour and following a 2km route, our parade attracted great interest - with many media sources broadcasting the event. Formal guide dog demonstration sessions, with an opportunity for the public to 'have a go' followed the parade. A new chapter in the history of Japanese guide dogs had started!

Guide dog users that participated in the event said that they were able to walk with good spirits and that they want to take part in similar events in the future to promote the law. Our hope is that our continued promotion of the needs of guide dog users will send a powerful message from Tokyo throughout all of Japan and also the rest of the world.



Guide Dog Parade walking past major shopping mall, Shibuya 109



Our banner, 'Shibuya Guide Dog Parade - Welcome Guide Dogs Anywhere!'



A girl wears blindfold to experience walking with guide dog

the future of the VISIONARY

The deadlines
for Visionary
submissions
are **May 31st**
& **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
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