



# The Rotations

July 17, 2013

SANTA ANA NORTH ROTARY 1959

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## Guide Dogs for the Blind

### PRESIDENT'S REMARKS.

Today we welcomed Richard King, who is blind and speaker for Guide Dogs of the Blind, and Jeanne Valenti, volunteer that trains guide dog puppies. Richard provided his personal experience and told us more about his guide dog and how it brings the gift of independence and mobility. Jeanne brought Elm, the most adorable guide dog puppy in training, to tell us more about raising guide puppies.

Board meeting following weekly meeting. Membership seminar July 20 at Boy Scouts Santa Ana.

### GUESTS

Richard King  
Jeanne Valenti

### BOARD REMARKS

None



*Now I go anywhere, anytime I want. He's brought balance and so much love into my life – Guide Dog Owner*



Wednesdays 12:15 PM  
Antonello Ristorante  
3800 S Plaza Drive, Santa Ana, CA

### UPCOMING SPEAKERS

**July 24** – Rob Richardson, Santa Ana School District

**July 31** – Michelle Nicholosi, Theresa Cisneros, OC Register

**August 8** – Steve Carroll, Anaheim Ducks Radio Announcer

**August 14**, Pat Buttress, So Cal Edison PR

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**July 17** – Board Meeting, 1:30 pm

**July 20** – District Membership Seminar, Boy Scout Conference Center, 1211 Dyer Road, Santa Ana. Register on District website

**Sep 7** - .Angels Game – End Polio Now

**Sep 14** – 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Discover the Taste, Heritage Museum of Orange County, 5-8pm.

# Program: Guide Dogs for the Blind

Speaker: Richard King & Jeanne Valenti

Richard King learned when he was 10 years old that he had his grandfather's hereditary eye disease and was told he would lose his eye sight. From 1967 – 2007, his life was business as usual...went to college, got married, had a child, worked in corporate America, until one day the lights went out. He experienced a major life event and financial hardships and had to approach life a bit differently. He tapped into available resources and joined a local support group that really helped him find his way to Guide Dogs for the Blind. The organization is headquarter in San Rafael where the guide dogs are trained. They also have another campus in Oregon.

Richard provided some personal stories of his training with the guide dog...one of the ones he shared was learning how to 'clean-up' after his dog's business. The dog is trained to do business on command and circle around. Richards bends down and feels the dog's back (slanted # 1, round #2). He places his foot near the dog's bottom as a marker so he knows where to pick-up.

The puppies start their training like any other training, but then head to the California or Oregon campus for the actual guide dog training. The graduation rate is 60%, the remaining 40% find good homes with children or community. The average cost for guide dog is 65,000.

Below is more information from [www. Guidedogs.com](http://www.Guidedogs.com) about the training.

Once the grown puppies return to our campuses from their puppy raising homes, the dogs are ready to learn the tools of the trade. They discover how to become not just well-behaved, meticulously socialized dogs, but professionals!

Now, they are about to embark on the career for which they've been preparing. For two to three months the dogs are taught by skilled instructors to safely guide someone through the complexities of pedestrian travel. Our Guide Dog Training program maximizes the use of positive reinforcement methods, including science based Clicker Training.

What are the unique abilities of Guide Dogs?

Our dogs are smart—very smart! In addition to learning how to lead a person safely around obstacles, Guide Dogs are also trained in "intelligence disobedience": if they are given an unsafe command, they are taught to not obey it (for example: refusing to step out into the street when there is oncoming traffic). Guide Dogs are also trained to have impeccable manners (for all those times they must visit places of public accommodation, such as restaurants, grocery stores and public transportation), and are capable of avoiding distractions (such as cats!). In addition, all Guide Dogs possess an eagerness to please and a willingness to work. They choose their profession!

Some of the skills Guide Dogs learn include:

- Leading a person in a straight line from point A to point B
- Stopping for all changes in elevation, including curbs and stairs
- Stopping for overhead obstacles, such as tree limbs
- Avoiding obstacles in their path

Two things Guide Dogs can't do:

- Determine the route to a new destination
- Read traffic signals

Guide Dogs take their cues and commands from their human partners; it's up to the person to determine the routes they take and if it is safe to cross a street. Through repetition, they may remember a routine course, but it is the blind person's job to know where they are at all times.

**What are GDB's methods of training?**

Our dogs are trained with positive reinforcement methods that use high value rewards of both food and praise. An abundance of rewards, including physical and verbal affection, builds motivation, confidence and produces a happy working Guide Dog. Positive Reinforcement methods strive to make the young dog successful and prevent them from making errors. In more advanced training, dogs are given the freedom to make errors. Instructors use verbal cues and collar cues to gain the desired response, which is followed by rewards.

GDB's training employs innovative training methods such as:

- Treadmill workouts
- Clicker training
- General food rewards
- Treadmill training
- Intelligent Disobedience
- Emergency Responses for the handlers safety

#### **When is a dog paired with a blind person?**

Once the dogs have completed their training and know how to guide, they are ready to enter what we call "class training." This is when a fully-trained dog is matched with a student enrolled in one of our residential classes. We are committed to pairing the right dog with the right person. Our extensive training ensures that the team is compatible in every area from communication styles to personalities. The team spends two weeks learning to work together in a variety of real-life situations. Graduation Day marks the end of class training and a new beginning for the team as they make their way in the world. It is a special day filled with a lot of love, as puppy raisers, graduates and Guide Dogs all take the stage to celebrate their achievements.

#### **What's life like for a working Guide Dog?**

What dog wouldn't envy the life of a Guide Dog? Guide Dogs get to go everywhere and do everything their partners do and they are showered with attention. From work and school, to shopping malls, restaurants and the hiking trail, Guide Dogs lead very active lives. When the harness is on, Guide Dogs are "all business" serious about their work, and focused on the safety of the team. When the harness comes off, however, it's play time!

#### **How long is a Guide Dog in service?**

Most Guide Dogs work until they are around 8-10 years old, but this varies with individual dogs and their lifestyles. After spending a life of devoted partnership, Guide Dogs deserve to spend their senior years in comfortable (and pampered!) retirement. They may remain with their partner as a pet, return to the home where they were raised, or be placed in a loving adoptive home. In all cases, they are honored and loved.

Valerie showed off "Elm" her latest puppy in training and told us there's no cost to the volunteer except the food. All they ask is that you Raise them, Love them, and socialize them. The training last for about 15-18 months and they have 'sitters' to help those that do volunteer some relief if vacation or travel. They are always looking for volunteers and there's help groups. If interested in becoming a guide dog puppy volunteer, contact her 949-280-5464. There are usually 400 graduates a year. The formal dog training happens at the campus where they learn "intelligence obedience" – times to disobey and conduct real-life simulations with the dogs (crossing streets, traffic, etc...).



More information from [www.guidedogs.com](http://www.guidedogs.com)

## Our Mission

Guide Dogs for the Blind provide enhanced mobility to qualified individuals through partnership with dogs whose unique skills are developed and nurtured by dedicated volunteers and a professional staff.

Established in 1942, Guide Dogs for the Blind continue its dedication to quality student training services and extensive follow-up support for graduates. Our programs are made possible through the teamwork of staff, volunteers and generous donors. Services are provided to students from the United States and Canada at no cost to them.

## Our Vision

Our Vision...is to "use our Power of Partnering to improve quality of life." To fulfill this vision we will:

- Commit ourselves to continuous quality improvement in all that we do;
- Assure exceptional canine health and well-being for all our dogs;
- Create the best potential for partnerships and support them;
- Develop and support Guide Dog teams of the highest quality;
- Be sensitive to the individualized needs of students, alumni and other constituents;
- Develop and nurture long-term relationships with our alumni, other constituents and the communities we serve; and
- Optimize our use of resources.

## Our Values and Humane Policy

We will be recognized in all that we do by our:

- Kindness toward people and animals, and respect for their dignity and well-being;
- Inclusiveness and sensitivity to all, regardless of disability, ethnicity, or culture;
- Openness to innovation and change;
- Accountability for our actions and our resources;
- Teamwork and good communications;
- Supportive and trusting work environment;
- Honesty, integrity and fairness;
- Professionalism balanced with humor; and
- Continual work toward furthering the GDB mission.

## The Human/Animal Bond

As defined by the American Veterinary Medical Association:

The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and other animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both. This includes, but is not limited to, emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, other animals, and the environment.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: Where is Guide Dogs located?

A: Guide Dogs has two campuses, one in San Rafael, California, and one just outside of Portland, Oregon; but that's only part of the story. We have a group of more than 1,000 volunteers who raise and socialize puppies for us in eight Western states, and we support more than 2,000 graduates across the entire country and Canada.

**Q: Who does Guide Dogs for the Blind serve?**

A: We serve the blind and visually impaired. We help create powerful partnerships for those people interested in the Guide Dog lifestyle. We train qualified individuals from throughout the United States and Canada who are committed to making a partnership with a Guide Dog work.

**Q: Do you have to be totally blind to use a Guide Dog?**

A: No. Many of our graduates have at least some vision; you do, however, need to be legally blind. People who utilize a mobility device like a cane should evaluate whether or not a guide dog might be right for them.

**Q: How old do you have to be to train with a Guide Dog?**

A: Because it takes a level of maturity, discipline and commitment to work with a Guide Dog, the majority of our students are 16 and older. There is no upper age limit for people who have the health and stamina to work with a Guide Dog.

**Q: Does Guide Dogs train pet dogs for blind people?**

A: It's a common misperception that a Guide Dog is essentially a well-trained pet. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is one of the most highly trained working animals you'll ever meet. Several thousand hours of training have been put into this partnership. And we're proud to say that we're able to offer it free-of-charge to people admitted to our program.

**Q: What does it cost to get a guide dog from Guide Dogs for the Blind?**

A: While a blind person certainly invests a great deal of time and effort into a partnership with a guide dog, they are not asked to make financial payments of any kind for our services. Many of our alumni, however, do donate to our organization, and many more donate their time and energy toward making presentations and providing education about our program through our Speakers Bureau.

**Q: How long is Guide Dogs' training program?**

A: The "training" of the dog happens almost from birth through our on-campus socialization program. At 6-8 weeks, the pups begin to learn house manners and obedience and they are introduced to the world through our puppy raisers' efforts. At 15-18 months, they begin their formal guide dog training (which takes 2-3 months). They meet their blind partner usually when they are around 1-1/2 years old and the two train together for anywhere between two weeks to 28 days. But in reality, the training never stops. Guide Dogs maintains continuous contact with its graduates and dogs, and continue to help them adjust to all sorts of situations they may face as they go through their lives together, whether the person is moving or working in a new area, facing complex traffic situations, or wanting to learn advanced techniques.

**Q: Are Guide Dogs allowed to go everywhere a person can go?**

A: We haven't had much success teaching dogs to climb up a rope, or swing on monkey bars, but other than that they can go just about anywhere else you can. In fact, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a Guide Dog is allowed any place a person can go.

**Q: How many guide dogs are in use in the United States and Canada?**

A: Roughly 10,000 people use guide dogs in the US and Canada. We'd like to see more people become aware of their mobility options and the added benefits of the Guide Dog lifestyle. But it does take commitment to invite a living being into your home; that's an essential ingredient.

**Q: How many other places train guide dogs?**

A: There are 12 schools accredited by the International Federation of Guide Dog Schools in the United States and still more in other countries. There may be a perception that all guide dog schools are essentially the same, and nothing could be further from the truth. Many of them differ in terms of philosophy, methods of training, size and, perhaps most importantly--how well they support the dog-human partnership after the initial training is complete.

**Q: What does Guide Dogs for the Blind do differently than other schools?**

A: Guide Dogs for the Blind is recognized worldwide as a model for innovative training, unprecedented support of Guide Dog partnerships after graduation, and the success rate of its Guide Dog partnerships. There is no other guide dog school in the country that offers the level of training and the degree of hands-on support for the partnership after graduation.

**Q: Do the Guide Dogs ever get to play?**

A: Yes! When the harness is off, Guide Dogs have time to play as a family pet. In fact, play time is essential to maintaining the strength of the bond between a blind person and their guide.

**Q: Is it okay to pet a working Guide Dog?**

A: It's important for a working dog to stay focused for the safety of the team and maintenance of training standards. However, most of our graduates enjoy interacting with the public when they have the time. It's an essential courtesy to first ask for permission to pet a Guide Dog.

**Q: Is it okay for a pet dog to greet a Guide Dog?**

A: Before you consider allowing your dog to greet a Guide Dog, please understand the importance of asking permission first, so the blind person can stop if they choose and remove the dog's harness to signal play time. Your dog should be on leash and under control. Guide Dogs are not trained to be protection dogs, but they are busy guiding their partners when they are in harness.

**Q: What should drivers do when they see a guide dog in training or a blind person using a dog?**

A: We encourage drivers to be attentive, as you would with any other pedestrians, especially when turning right-on-red. Guide Dogs trains its dogs in real-world situations, so it's helpful that you continue going on about your business. Please don't stop and honk, yell out your window, or otherwise distract a blind person using a dog. The person is listening for traffic flow to determine when it is safe to give the command to go forward and cross the street.

**Q: Why does Guide Dogs for the Blind rely on kids to train its dogs?**

A: The kids you see with dogs wearing our logo are called puppy raisers. They raise our dogs to be good canine citizens and prepare them for formal training in guidework. Guide Dog training is done on our campuses by licensed Guide Dog mobility instructors. Guide Dogs also has many adult puppy raisers, too.

It's really quite amazing what these kids and their families do for us. They devote incredible time and effort, and have to go through a special course to learn how to properly raise a Guide Dog puppy. They teach the puppies obedience and socialize them to the world. Raising a Guide Dog puppy involves joining a club and participating in supervised club activities. It's a commitment that not only grows good puppies, it strengthens families and develops tomorrow's community leaders.

**Q: Are Guide Dogs puppy raisers paid?**

A: Puppy raising, like other volunteer jobs, is a labor of love, and there is no reward greater than seeing a puppy become a working guide. Raisers are paid in puppy hugs and have the pride and satisfaction of knowing they've had a profound impact on someone else's life.

**Q: What costs are covered for puppy raising?**

A: Guide Dogs provides equipment, dog transportation, training, support and basic veterinary care.

**Q: Where do you get your funding? Does Guide Dogs for the Blind receive government funding?**

A: All of Guide Dogs' funding is from private sources donations from individuals and corporations, or from bequests, matching gifts, etc. GDB receives no government funding.

**Q: How can I support Guide Dogs?**

A: There are a lot of ways to support Guide Dogs for the Blind. You can volunteer on a GDB campus, help raise puppies, become a breeding stock custodian, provide a home to a retired dog, donate funds and services, or fundraise in your community. You can help immensely by raising awareness of Guide Dogs' free services. Introduce us to your friends, and certainly, if you know anyone who is blind, please be sure to tell them about our program.

**Q: Why does Guide Dogs need an investment fund?**

A: There are three reasons, and they all relate directly to why we are the best school in the country:

Unlike any other guide dog school, GDB offers unprecedented support for animal-human partnership, free-of-charge, for as long as an alumnus is able to use a Guide Dog. This support can often mean referral to orientation and mobility training prior to acceptance into our program; retraining and recreating as many as six or seven (or even more) Guide Dog partnerships over the life of the blind person; providing consistent quality veterinary support and literally decades of personalized in-home training through follow-up visits as needed.

Guide Dogs for the Blind is constantly investing in research and development, creating new approaches and techniques in breeding, veterinary care, training and support, which is why our success rate continues to climb.

Finally, we have made the strategic decision to invest in an unprecedented outreach program that actively recruits and trains people with vision loss across all walks, and all parts of the U.S. and Canada. Our goal is to help any qualified individual who wants a Guide Dog partnership.

For more information about our investment fund and how our donors' dollars are put to work, please review our financial information.

**Q: How are Guide Dogs' alumni involved with the organization?**

A: Some of our graduates work in our Training, Outreach and Administration Departments. In addition, many serve on our Board of Directors and our Alumni Association Board of Directors. Alumni volunteer on our campuses, help us with fundraising or referrals and promote the Guide Dog lifestyle in their local communities through our Speakers Bureau.

**Q: Does having a Guide Dog have an impact on employment for someone who is blind?**

A: While statistically more of our alumni are employed than the national average, it's a striking fact that more than 70% of all blind people are unemployed or underemployed, and many live below the poverty level. Much of that has to do with people just not understanding how capable people accommodate for their lack of sight. Guide Dogs has much to offer in this regard. Through our Speakers Bureau and educational efforts, we build awareness of the realities of blindness. We inspire others in the blind community to get the skills they need to be successful, and we help connect them to available services. By creating Guide Dog partnerships, we empower capable people to fulfill their dreams. By partnering with other organizations and individuals, we strengthen communities of support for our graduates and other people who are blind. Guide Dogs is committed to being a model employer and is helping other businesses understand issues surrounding blindness and guide dogs in the workplace.

**Q: Do you train dogs for other disabled people?**

A: We are focused exclusively on working with people with vision loss, but we consult with, and donate talented career change dogs to a number of other service organizations, including those that help people with other physical disabilities.

**Q: Do you train other types of service dogs?**

A: Some of the dogs that aren't suited to become Guide Dogs will be donated to organizations that train for work with customs agents, search and rescue organizations, or supporting people with other types of disabilities. We partner with a number of different organizations that help our dogs reach their full potential.

**Q: What happens to the dog when it retires?**

A: Retirement is really a powerful and unique part of our whole program. When a dog is ready to retire, we offer our graduate the opportunity to adopt it as a pet. If they decline, the dog usually returns to its raiser family. If neither option is viable, we will find a loving adoptive home for the dog.

**Q: Do your trainers have any kind of training information for pet owners?**

A: Guide Dogs offers general training tips in its newsletters from time to time, but for specific questions, a local professional or humane society would be a better alternative.

# The Rotations

Santa Ana North Rotary  
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