



New canine heroes!

Guide Dogs team up with Southern Support School

Guide Dogs Tasmania is excited to announce that a new partnership with Hobart's Southern Support School has resulted in new canine heroes! Through the "Southern Hero Program", two Guide Dogs in Training, Taylor and Archie, have been visiting the purpose-built school on a fortnightly basis, much to the delight of the staff and students.

The Program is designed to give students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience with calm, well-behaved dogs, and is allowing them to develop skills that will help them contribute to their local community. Kate Wilson, Principal of Southern Support School, is excited about the partnership and the longer term benefits she hopes it will have.



"Seventy per cent of our students are living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, which can make interacting with other children very challenging," Kate said.

"Dogs have such a wonderful effect on people and make a significant difference to children with a disability through their calming influence and ability to facilitate social interactions."

A win-win situation.

At Guide Dogs Tasmania, this is a fantastic opportunity for our Guide Dogs in Training to develop their socialisation skills, so they can adapt to a wide variety of situations once they're placed with a client.

This is also important for our dogs that, for a range of different reasons, are unsuitable for guiding work and are reclassified as Therapy or Companion Dogs.

We're excited to see how the Program continues to benefit both the School and Guide Dogs Tasmania. In the meantime, you can read more about it here: guidedogstas.com.au/new-canine-hero



Above: Taylor meets students at Southern Support School.

Left: Archie makes a new friend in Darcy.

Image credit: Ron Franks

The Guide

Taking the lead

Puppy Raising: the glass half full approach

“I could never raise a Guide Dog Pup. I just wouldn’t be able to hand it back.”

There’s no doubt that Puppy Raising is a challenging role. As well as the time and commitment involved, there’s the strong emotional attachment to the pup that, for up to 18 months, is a huge part of its Puppy Raiser’s life.

But along with the hard times, and the prospect of “handing it back”, there are amazing experiences that come with this unique volunteering position.

Take Ian Hay and his family, who in 2010 decided to take the “glass half full” approach to Puppy Raising and focus on the benefits it would bring... many of which were totally unexpected.

First there was Pedro...

Ian, his wife Fiona and their children, John and Alison, welcomed boisterous eight-week-old Labrador, Pedro, into their life seven years ago. Over the next 18 months, the Hays prepared the little black pup for his formal training as a Guide Dog. They taught him basic obedience, and socialised him in a wide range of different environments and situations.

“There’s no single reason why we decided to puppy raise, but collectively, we hoped that we were going to do something of significant benefit for someone else.” - Ian Hay.

There was, however, one unique reason for the Hays decision to apply to become Puppy Raisers. Their son John lives with a disability which limits his communication, and Ian and Fiona were hopeful that having a dog around would encourage him to speak more. They didn’t want to commit to a pet dog, in case it didn’t work out in the longer term.

What happened between them was something quite special, and unexpected.

“In addition to some spoken commands, John started using hand signals with Pedro – things like ‘sit’, ‘stay’ and ‘down’. And Pedro would respond,” Ian said.



10 month old Benji, relaxing at the beach with John.



John adores the dogs, especially the puppies!



The Guide

Taking the lead



A special moment between pup and Puppy Raiser.

There was a strong bond between John and Pedro; a bond that continues to this day. Only two months into his formal training, Pedro was withdrawn due to an ongoing skin condition, and the Hays were asked if they would like to adopt him as a family pet. The decision wasn't as easy as you might think.

"The motivation is really to produce a Guide Dog, so we were disappointed when Pedro wasn't successful," Ian said. "But the unexpected result is that we have a wonderful pet dog that is truly part of the family."

Then along came Jerry... followed by Benji!

After Pedro's career change, the Hays were still motivated to raise another Guide Dog Pup. In April 2015, another black Lab called Jerry (currently in formal training) entered the scene, followed by their current pup Benji in 2016, now ten months old.

So what made them want to do it again, and again?

"Besides hoping to see one of our pups out helping someone who is vision impaired, it's been a very rewarding experience," Ian said. "At the end of the day, the pups are a lovely companion to have around the house."

So where to from here?

Once Benji has "flown the coop", the Hays hope to continue being involved with Puppy Raising. The support received from staff throughout the whole process, and the cohort of people they've met along the way, has made the experience far easier and more enjoyable than they'd first imagined.

"We've become good friends with other Puppy Raisers and met people we otherwise wouldn't have, all because of the pups," Ian said. "They're a great barrier breaker, giving people a reason to enter into conversation."

So if you've been unsure about taking the first step to becoming a Puppy Raiser, because you thought it was just too hard, why not think about taking the "glass half full approach"? Just like the Hays, you might end up experiencing a multitude of benefits you never imagined.

For information on becoming a Puppy Raiser or Boarder for Guide Dogs Tasmania, call **1800 484 333** or visit the volunteering page on our website: guidedogstas.com.au/how-to-help-us/volunteer



Benji as a pup. Adorable.



Ian and pup Jerry.

The Guide News

Would you like to “test drive” a Guide Dog?

Our very first “**Test Drive a Guide Dog**” program will be held at the Tailrace Centre in Riverside, Launceston, on October 3.

Designed for 14 - 21 year old clients, this free, full-day event will give participants the opportunity to learn about working with a Guide Dog. It will also provide them with hands-on experience in dog handling, leadership, grooming and health care.



Nicole, test driving Taylor.

“Test driving” Taylor.

Nicole McKillop of Hobart took Guide Dog in Training, Taylor, on a “test drive” recently, to prepare her for the possibility of one day applying for her own Guide Dog. Already a competent white cane user, the 21-year-old wanted to work on her leadership and dog handling skills. She was able to practice things like putting the harness on Taylor, approaching doorways, stopping at kerbs, and general commands to instruct him along the way.

“Working with a dog like Taylor made me improve my overall confidence, independence and mobility,” Nicole said. “It’s definitely a big step up from a cane, as it will encourage me to be more community orientated.”

Register your interest for the program here: guidedogstas.com.au/event/test-drive-guide-dog-day

A new face in our northern team!

We are excited to announce that Jodi Prentice has come on board as a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor. Based from our Launceston office, Jodi is one of only two Guide Dog Instructors in the state, providing services to clients and training dogs in the north. She is currently training Jacob and Phoebe.



Jodi, with training dog Jacob.

This is great news for GDT, and is a direct result of fundraising from the community. It means that we can train more Guide Dogs in Tasmania, for Tasmanians, and ultimately change more lives with our amazing dogs. THANK YOU!



‘Puppy Love’ Regular Giving: join the club!

You can make a **big** difference when you join our Puppy Love program as a regular donor or sponsor.

Puppy Love members can follow the “Labradorable” journey with regular updates and have opportunities to attend exclusive activities and events.

Visit puppylove.com.au or give us a call on **1800 484 333** during office hours.