

VISIONS

Volume 25 | No. 1 Autumn 2011



Preparing children for a future of independence

Thanks to your support, young clients have fun receiving educational mobility training.

For 10-year-olds Rachel Shipp and Theodore Tsolakis, who are both vision impaired, a visit to Taronga Zoo during the Christmas school holidays was more than about just getting up close and personal with a koala.

Rachel and Theodore were among 10 children with impaired vision on the trip, organised by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to combine fun and friendship with learning and developing important skills for independent mobility.

The children travelled by train and ferry to the zoo, where they undertook an orientation challenge that required them to use their canes and a tactile map of the zoo to find their way to different animal enclosures.

As Guide Dogs doesn't receive any government funding, running activities like the zoo experience free of charge for children, teenagers and young adults with impaired vision is only possible thanks to your generous donations.

Similar programs over the Christmas break included learning gymnastics, travelling to the beach for a dune tour and camel ride, and a styling workshop.

As extensions to their individual training programs, these activities are designed to further enhance each child's ability to safely, confidently and independently negotiate around their environments.



Theodore and Rachel have a close encounter with a cuddly koala on a recent trip to Taronga Zoo to learn and develop orientation and mobility skills.

An introduction to gymnastics enjoyed by (top row) Thomas Belshaw and Samuel White, (bottom row) Brianna Mareschi, Revathi Hyson and Chelsea Nagel.



In this issue ...

Preparing children for a future of independence	p 1
CEO's message	p 2
Want to lend a helping hand?	p 2
Is there anything Charlie can't do?	p 3
Lexie soldiers on to Guide Dog training	p 3
Mars Petcare helps keep Guide Dog pups healthy	p 4
Centre for Eye Health one year on	p 4
Remembering Guide Dogs in your Will	p 4
Life is smooth with Velvet	p 5
Introducing Egan	p 5
Donation form and shop products	p 6

NEWS AND EVENTS

Here are some important happenings in the Guide Dogs NSW/ACT calendar. To stay even more up-to-date, visit our website: www.guidedogs.com.au.

Wednesday 27 April
International Guide Dog Day

Friday 29 April to Sunday 1 May
Tocal Field Days

Friday 13 May to Sunday 15 May
Baby Boomers and Retirees Lifestyle Expo, Convention Centre Darling Harbour

Friday 27 May to Sunday 29 May
Canberra Retirement and Lifestyle Expo



VISIONS ...

... is published for the information of our supporters. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without written permission from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

Visions is printed on Australian paper made from sustainable forests.

You can view our privacy statement on our website at www.guidedogs.com.au.

Chief Executive Officer's message



We have just witnessed another array of terrible natural disasters throughout Australia. The floods in Queensland and Victoria, the cyclone in Northern Queensland, the bushfires in Western Australia ... we seem to be continually at the mercy of mother nature.

While it is horrifying to watch our fellow Australians lose their lives, houses and livelihood, the amazing thing about these tragedies is to witness the Australian spirit rise above adversity and to see complete strangers rally and support their neighbours.

This attitude of supporting the "underdog" and the enormous big-heartedness makes "Aussies" stand out in the world.

It is also this generosity that lies at the heart of Guide Dogs' work. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT receives no funding from the government. So, for us to be able to provide services to around 3,500 people who are blind or vision impaired every year, we are totally reliant on the kindness and donations from Australians like you.

Our work doesn't stop for fire, drought, cyclone or flood. We therefore have to ask you to continue to be generous and help us to train our amazing Guide Dogs and provide help to the ever-increasing numbers of people who have lost their sight.

Thank you.

Graeme White

Chief Executive Officer

Want to lend a helping hand?

The Central Coast support group recently received a well-deserved certificate from the Gosford City Council. The certificate rewarded the volunteers for their dedication to educating the community, and for fundraising for Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

The group is headed by Barbara Craig, who was our volunteer of the year in 2009, and raises money for Guide Dogs through raffles and stalls at shopping centres all over the Central Coast. They also collect money from over 40 Model Dogs and organise three raffles per year. The 25-strong group is always looking for more volunteers to help out.

"Guide Dogs relies on the public's generosity to provide vital free services to people who need them," Barbara Craig said. "By supporting Guide Dogs, you are helping someone who is blind or has limited vision learn how to use mobility aids like canes, electronic

devices or Guide Dogs to safely, confidently and independently get around communities."



Guide Dogs supporters at the community awards night – (from left) Lynne and Robert Lillico, Marie Carah, Barbara Craig, Mai Wallace, Norm and Angela Allen, Phil Dutch and Betty Evans.

Is there anything Charlie can't do?

Charlie McConnell has walked the Kokoda Track, climbed to Everest base camp and to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, run the New York Marathon, completed six 100 km Oxfam Trailwalker challenges, and also finished the gruelling 89 kms Comrades ultra-marathon in South Africa.

And that's in his spare time! Charlie's day job is working at Australia Post monitoring service quality. On top of this, he also finds time to participate in training sessions organised by Guide Dogs for Sydney Bus operators to enhance their awareness of the needs of people with impaired vision like himself.

A cane user since his school days due to the early onset of glaucoma, Charlie has also embraced the latest technology provided by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. His talking GPS phone helps him navigate unfamiliar territory. However, Charlie confides that he usually finds his way through new places by trial and error and talking to the people he encounters along the way.

Recent hip surgery has not slowed Charlie down either. He's now planning a trip to the USA to walk through the Grand Canyon! "The training I have received from Guide Dogs has given me the confidence to take on any mobility challenge, and for this, I thank all the donors," he told us.



Charlie (left) keeps fit by running most Sunday mornings with the Sydney Achilles club.

Database upgrade

In order to minimise our administrative processes, Guide Dogs has recently undertaken a database upgrade. If you find that your details have changed in error, or that you are receiving more mail than you would like, please call our fundraising team on 9412 9300 and we will be delighted to update our records accordingly.

Lexie soldiers on to Guide Dog training

Before embarking on Guide Dog training earlier this year, Lexie had already gone through very important pre-training with her raisers Paul and Brigid Douglas.

The Douglas family had a very important mission. They taught Lexie basic obedience, commands such as "sit" and "stay" and provided lots of love and affection. The couple



also took Lexie to their workplace every day to ensure that she was well socialised. However, Lexie's daytime home wasn't an office – it was a more unusual setting. Lexie was a regular visitor to the army barracks!

This spirited pup became quite the local celebrity at Captain Paul Douglas's Randwick Barracks. There, she was involved in all facets of army life, from having the run of the Captain's office to attending physical training. She even completed a 15 km endurance march – although she was exempt from carrying the load the soldiers had to!

Lexie's high profile triggered a generous financial donation to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT by the Australia Army Howell VC Club, based in Randwick, at the end of last year. Seeing Lexie's journey had inspired the club to also support Guide Dogs' work. A big thank you to all volunteer puppy raisers, such as Paul and Brigid, and to all financial donors.

Bridgid Douglas would take Lexie to her barrack when Paul couldn't, so the lucky puppy was highly socialised.

Mars Petcare helps keep Guide Dog puppies healthy

Ever wondered what a puppy does before it goes into full-time Guide Dog training?

Ian and Eileen of Mosman in Sydney are volunteer puppy raisers who donate their time to raising future Guide Dogs during the first year of their lives.

The first year of a pup's life is instrumental to their development as future Guide Dogs. Not only do they need to be well socialised and trained, they also need to be healthy and fit.

“When we recently took Kimme (their current pup) for a vet check up, the vet asked us how we keep her in such good form. I told him we feed her Advance dog food from Mars Petcare and give her lots of exercise,” says Ian.

Mars Petcare generously donates thousands of dollars worth of Advance to the Guide Dog training centre, who distribute it to puppy raising families.

Thank you Mars Petcare for providing a nutritional start to the lives of so many Guide Dogs puppies - and thank you Ian and Eileen for all your hard work!

Kimme is the eighth puppy Ian and Eileen have brought up for Guide Dogs.



Remembering Guide Dogs in your Will



Bequest Manager Lyn Smith.

Over the years many of our friends have greatly helped our work by including a gift to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT in their Will, after providing for family and loved ones. This is a wonderful way to support us. In fact, bequests are our most important source of income and enable us to help people like Charlie McConnell and Sally Jary – who are featured in this newsletter – and many others.

For Charlie and Sally, having impaired vision is no barrier. They are now able to move about more freely and confidently, and maintain their very social and independent lifestyles. And if they ever require further training, it's always available. As Charlie remarks: “I feel the same way about Guide Dogs NSW/ACT as I do about my family. I know the instructors are there whenever I need them.”

When you create or revise your Will, would you also consider including a gift to Guide Dogs?

To those who have already done so, I'd like to express our sincere gratitude. Your gift will make a significant difference in the lives of many people in the years to come. Thank you so much!

If you would like to discuss leaving a gift to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT in your Will, or have any questions or comments, please contact Lyn Smith, Bequest Manager, on 9412 9325.

Centre for Eye Health one year on

Thanks to your support, the centre's sophisticated imaging equipment is already seen by many eye-care professionals as an extension of their own practice; more than 50% of optometrists in NSW/ACT have registered with the centre.

Maria, a long time supporter of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, recently experienced another side of the organisation's services when she was referred to CFEH by her optometrist after detecting a predisposition to macular degeneration. Through early detection, Maria's condition can now be appropriately managed to help minimise loss of vision in the future.

After realising the connection between CFEH and Guide Dogs, Maria said she was even happier that she has supported Guide Dogs over the years, especially now that she faced a serious eye disease herself.

Life is smooth with Velvet

At the tender age of 73, Sally Jary lives a full and independent life with the help of her beautiful Guide Dog, Velvet. Sally was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa at age 36. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has assisted Sally for a number of years now, providing cane training before matching her with Velvet five years ago.

“Velvet has given me a whole new measure of independence, plus she is a wonderful companion,” said Sally, who travels regularly across the mid-North Coast to give talks about her experiences as part of her role as PR Speaker for Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

As well as being an inspirational speaker, Sally is an active member of her local council’s Access Advisory Committee and has won a couple of awards in short story competitions. Sally enjoys long walks on the beach with her husband and Velvet who she said “loves to race around getting wet in the sea and rolling in the sand.”

Thanks to the generosity of Guide Dogs supporters like you, Sally has been able to maintain her independence.



Don't forget our free and very informative Speaker program!

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has a Speaker program that covers the Sydney metropolitan area, as well as many regional centres. Guide Dog users talk to audiences in schools, community groups, clubs and retirement villages.

Our speakers not only share their inspirational stories, but also provide some very important general information on vision impairment, they and talk about appropriate behaviour when encountering someone with a cane or a Guide Dog.

If you would like to know more, or to book a speaker, please call Robin Woodward-Brown on (02) 9412 9300.

Introducing ... Egan!



Egan is one of our handsome Guide Dog recruits. At four months old, he's got lots of energy to burn and a natural curiosity. These two qualities have certainly amused his puppy raisers!

At the moment Egan is pretty proud - he's mastered the important puppy commands “sit” and “stay” and he's also fully toilet trained. Egan adores his new family, and has taken a particular shining to his raiser's pet chickens. Some days he'll sit and watch them for hours on end! When Egan is bored with the chickens, he's always keen to wrestle and play with his raisers who have three young children. Once he's settled down for the afternoon, Egan's just as happy to snuggle up in the loungeroom and have a well-deserved snooze.

Are you interested in learning more about puppies like Egan, and all the happenings at the Guide Dogs Centre? You might like to join our Puppy Pals program. You can sign up using the coupon on page 6 of this newsletter, or on our website www.guidedogs.com.au.

Egan loves nothing more than a good run around the family backyard!

I would like to help Guide Dogs ...

Contact name _____
(Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other)

Address _____

State _____ Postcode _____

Phone () _____

Fax () _____

Email _____

- I would like information about:
- leaving a gift in my will to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT
 - fundraising
 - services for the vision impaired

Our Privacy Policy is available at www.guidedogs.com.au. To help our fundraising, we may make our list available to like-minded organizations. If you prefer us not to share this information, please tick this box .

I am sending a **single gift** of:
 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____ (my chosen amount) Or

I would like to be a Puppy Pal by donating a **fixed monthly gift** of:
 \$15 \$20 \$30 \$ _____ (my chosen amount)

Please find enclosed a (**for single gifts only**):
 cheque money order (payable to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT)

Please debit this card:
 MasterCard Visa Amex

Card number:
□ □

Expiry date: □ □ / □ □

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

Complete this form and return in an envelope (no postage needed) to:
Guide Dogs NSW/ACT
PO Box 496
North Sydney NSW 2059

All donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible. Credit card donations can be made by phone (02) 9412 9300 or online at www.guidedogs.com.au. **Thank you.**

Guide Dogs merchandise - great products, delivered to your home

To order, phone 1300 362 922 or visit www.guidedogs.com.au/shop.
Many more quality products are available!

Guide Dogs Collection new design, 100% terry towelling tea towels



Labrador barking puppet



21cm tall and suitable for children aged 3 years and over.

'Playful Pups' fleecy polyester throw rug with 'Whisper' cushion

rug: 160x130cm
cushion: 35x35cm



Kids Colouring Competition Results



Congratulations to 7-year-old Sarah, the winner of the colouring competition which was included in our 2011 Kids Calendar! Sarah is the lucky winner of a Puppy Pals membership. Congratulations also to our five runners up – Kellie (11), Teileah (9), Ellie (3), Charlotte (9) and Jeusika (10) – they all won prizes from the shop.

A big thank you to all of the children who entered the competition – all the entries received were fabulous and we had a very tough time picking our winners! Last but not least, a big thank you to the supporters who purchased the calendars – your support is greatly appreciated.

