Part of the early mission of the Guide Dog Foundation was to provide guide dogs at no charge to blind veterans who had returned from World War II. Today, through our sister organization, America’s VetDogs, we work with disabled veterans of all eras, the military, and first responders to provide a variety of assistance dogs. We train guide dogs for veterans who are blind; service dogs for those with disabilities other than blindness; hearing dogs for veterans who face hearing loss later in life; seizure response dogs; PTSD service dogs; facility dogs to work in military and VA hospitals; and combat operational stress control dogs to be deployed with the military.

Thanks to its innovative training techniques, the Guide Dog Foundation has been accredited by both the International Guide Dog Federation and Assistance Dogs International. We were the first assistance dog school in the United States to be certified by both organizations.

CFC #11157

The Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Inc.® is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation founded in 1946 to provide guide dogs free of charge to people who are blind or visually impaired. Your contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. For a copy of our latest annual report, our registration in your state, or other financial information, please contact us at 800-548-4337.

Cover photo by Richard Joseph Gordon

How You Can Help...

The Guide Dog Foundation is a not-for-profit organization and relies on voluntary public contributions. Every donation is essential to help us fulfill our mission. With your help, the Foundation can continue to provide the gift of enhanced mobility and independence.

Here’s What You Can Do:

• Spread the word to people who are blind about our free services.
• Make a financial contribution and encourage others to support us; sponsor a future guide or service dog; make a gift in memory or honor of your friends and loved ones.
• Include the Foundation in your bequests, legacies, and planned gifts.
• Invite a speaker to your next meeting or event.
• Participate in a Foundation special event.
• Join our thriving volunteer community. Learn about all our volunteer opportunities on our website.

Live Without Boundaries
Live Without Boundaries

We all aspire to live active and productive lives. But people who are visually impaired or who have other disabilities face additional challenges every day in their desire to live independently. Since 1946, the Guide Dog Foundation has provided guide and service dogs, free of charge, to qualified people who seek the increased freedom, mobility, and companionship these dogs bring. Thanks to the Guide Dog Foundation, when a person who is blind, has low vision, or other disabilities is teamed with an assistance dog, they can live without boundaries.

From Generation to Generation

Sound temperament, intelligence, good health, and compatibility are among the exemplary qualities that make the dogs bred at the Guide Dog Foundation ideal for their jobs. We use purebred Labrador and Golden Retrievers, and first-generation Lab/Golden crosses. On a limited basis, we train Standard Poodles for people with documented allergies.

It Starts with a Puppy

Volunteers called “puppy raisers” welcome our puppies into their homes for about a year. We provide training and support to the puppy raiser as they teach basic obedience and social skills while exposing the pup to many different situations. All this attention helps it grow up to be a confident dog.

When the dog is between 14 and 16 months old, it returns to the Guide Dog Foundation’s Smithtown, New York, campus for its advanced training as a guide or service dog. During training, our certified instructors and trainers evaluate each dog to determine where it will best serve a person with disabilities.

A New Beginning

As they work with their guide dogs, students are taught how to navigate all types of situations: escalators and revolving doors; mass transportation such as trains, buses, or subways; airport terminals; stores and restaurants.

Building a Team

Our students come from all backgrounds and all geographical locations. Applicants for guide dogs must be at least high school age, legally blind, and in need of the dog for enhanced independence and increased mobility. We strive to match each student with the dog that’s right for their lifestyle and personality, among other factors.

Our goal is to provide a training experience that will best meet an individual’s needs while being mindful of their time and other obligations. Over the course of the training, the student and dog bond and learn to work together as a team.

Personalized Training

We offer a two-week in-residence training program at our 10-acre campus in Smithtown, New York, with a 2:1 student/instructor to ensure plenty of personalized attention for each student and their dog. While most of our students will train on campus, for others, training in their home community might be the appropriate venue. Our instructors will determine where someone will be best served while trying to accommodate their preferences. We have an extensive field service staff that is able to meet the needs of our students away from our campus.

Advocacy

The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law in 1990 to prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities and ensure that they have the same opportunities as people without disabilities. Under the ADA, an individual with a guide or service dog must be allowed in any area that is open to the public.

The Guide Dog Foundation takes a leading role in advocating for the rights of people with disabilities to protect these rights. If our graduates experience any issues of discrimination, we will work with them and all parties involved to resolve the issue and provide education and training.

A Long-Term Relationship

When the team returns home, we follow up with them to determine if they need any help or additional training as they adjust to their home environment and daily routine. To ensure our graduates receive a lifetime of aftercare, we maintain regular contact with each team.

Capable Canine®

Capable Canine is the Guide Dog Foundation program that trains dogs for people with disabilities other than blindness. These dogs may be trained specifically for assistance tasks, such as providing balance and stability using a special harness; fetching and retrieving dropped items; responding to an alarm; or working alongside wheelchairs or motorized vehicles.