Soon after, DesRoses reached out to her friends who had guide dogs to learn about life with a guide. “I remember one person telling me about his first dog. His whole face, his whole countenance just lit up. I thought, ‘Wow, this must be something special. It must be so incredible.’”

Still, it would be almost four years before she committed to the guide dog lifestyle. “I was going to work in Harvard Square, when a car didn’t stop in the crosswalk,” she recalls. “I had the right-of-way, but the car ran over my cane and broke it.”

Despite her attempts to piece the shattered bits back together, “there wasn’t anything to be done”; her cane was completely unusable. She was about eight blocks from work, and a kind bystander took her the rest of the way. A colleague drove her home that night.

It might not have been exactly that day – the day her white safety cane was run over and destroyed by a car – but it was soon after that Lorna DesRoses started thinking: “What would it be like to have a [guide] dog?”

“‘I was certainly taught how to use the cane,’” she says, “‘but for many years I battled it. It would be yet another reason to seem different.’” However, “it came to the point where I had to face myself in the mirror and say, ‘I have to use it,’ so I did.”

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A Message From Our President & CEO

We had an eventful 2018 at the Guide Dog Foundation and America’s VetDogs. We placed more than 130 guide and service dogs with individuals with disabilities; we increased our ranking with GuideStar, moving from the Silver to Gold to Platinum Seal of Transparency, their highest rating, within the span of a few months; and through our media appearances and public speaking engagements, we spread our message to millions of people – that guide and service dogs change lives.

As I reported in the December 2018 issue of The Guideway, we underwent our five-year reassessment by both the International Guide Dog Federation and Assistance Dogs International. I’m happy to relay that both the Guide Dog Foundation and America’s VetDogs have once again been reaccredited by these two independent international regulatory agencies.

In early January, the NBC “puppies with a purpose” celebrated their first birthdays at their respective home bases – Sunny, New York; Izzy, Atlanta; Camden, Baltimore; Zuma, Los Angeles; and Brady, Boston – before having a “family reunion” the following week on the set of TODAY in Manhattan, and February marked their first appearances on their local stations.

Brady, who was released for medical issues, is still involved with our mission, and the other puppies are experiencing new things and learning every day. You can follow all the pups on their Instagram pages.

Radar, our Islanders puppy with a purpose, has also been keeping busy with group puppy classes and socialization experiences with his puppy raiser. We’re planning a hockey night with Radar and Sunny in the near future.

In this issue of The Guideway, you’ll read about guide dog graduate Lorna DesRoses; meet Carol Tepper, one of our treasured volunteers and donors; and catch up on the further adventures of Sunny.

We’re excited to face the challenges of 2019, and I welcome your passion on our journey to provide guide dogs for people who are blind or have low vision. Thank you for your support.

John Miller
President & Chief Executive Officer

New Board Members

We are happy to welcome two new directors to the boards of the Guide Dog Foundation and America’s VetDogs and look forward to their contributions to the success of our missions.

Pamela Kaul

Pamela Kaul is the founder and president of Association Strategies Inc., which specializes in executive search, transition management, and organization development. For more than 30 years, Kaul has been recognized as a leader in the field of nonprofit leadership. Her passion for promoting the growth and success of nonprofit organizations and the missions they serve, and her commitment to continual learning and testing the status quo will serve the Guide Dog Foundation well during her time on our boards.

Gary Brown

Gary Brown is a native Long Islander. In high school, he played both basketball and football, and continued playing football through college. In 1994, he was drafted in the fifth round of the NFL draft, and eventually played for the Green Bay Packers, culminating in their Super Bowl win in 1997. Brown retired from professional football in 2003 after a career playing on both domestic and international teams. Since then, he has made it his mission to mentor at-risk youths, support veterans, and give back to his local community.
Carol Tepper has spent much of her life helping others, whether it was working with children with disabilities or volunteering her time for causes she believes in.

After completing her master’s degree, Tepper worked as a speech pathologist in Massachusetts. “I worked with severely disabled children,” she says, to help with their auditory comprehension issues, hearing deficits, and language comprehension. And during the time she and her husband lived in Boston, they started a local chapter of National ALS Foundation (now the ALS Association) in memory of her brother, who had died from the disease.

After relocating back to Long Island, Tepper worked at St. Charles Hospital in Port Jefferson, dealing with adult stroke patients, as well as victims of motor vehicle accidents who suffered traumatic brain injuries. “It was challenging, but I liked being in a hospital setting.”

Eventually, she decided to become a stay-at-home mom to focus on raising her children. She became very involved with her kids’ schools and volunteered with the Rockville Centre Education Foundation. She also served on the board of the Rockville Centre Mercy League, where she concentrated on fundraising for the pediatrics and maternal care units at Mercy Medical Center.

**The Guide Dog Foundation**

It was Tepper’s uncle, Manly Hubbs, who first introduced her to the Guide Dog Foundation. “Uncle Mutt” (as he was known, because he was always bringing home strays) worked for the Foundation for 20 years after his retirement as a safety engineer for an insurance company.

Uncle Mutt was a weekend house parent during class, served meals to students, and took photos of students and their dogs. He was also instrumental in formulating the Foundation’s safety program.

In the 1980s, Carol and her husband, Steve, adopted a career-change dog from the Foundation, and while they were regular donors, she says, they weren’t actively involved otherwise.

That changed in 2000. “One day out of the blue, my son said, ‘Why don’t we raise a puppy? You could keep doing the work Uncle Mutt did.’” (Manly Hubbs had passed away in 1998.)

In December, puppy Willie, a 7-week-old Lab/Golden mix, joined the family. “We began puppy raising,” Tepper says, “and from then on, I was hooked.”

She also started volunteering in the nursery. “I kept saying to my puppy advisor that I loved the puppies, so I guess it just drew me in.”

As a nursery volunteer, Tepper participates in the bridging program, which is a structured way of interacting with puppies before they go to puppy raiser homes. For about 90 minutes once a week, she works with one litter at a time to get the pups used to different stimuli and situations.

“A lot of it seems very commonsense,” she says, “but it’s an important step of their growing and being more comfortable with various people and activities.”

**What about Willie?**

After about a year, Willie returned to the Foundation for his formal guide dog training. A couple of weeks later, Tepper recalls, she got a call asking if she could “temporarily” take another puppy because the puppy raiser was on jury duty. “I don’t know if that was true,” she laughs, “because he never went back to the other raiser.”

Willie was not suited to be a guide dog. He was released from the program and rejoined the Tepper household while they were raising puppy Barkley.

Unfortunately, Barkley was released for medical issues during his formal training, and he too was adopted by the Teppers. Together, Willie and Barkley “were wonderful pets and lifelong best friends.”

From 2009 to 2012 – in addition to her other volunteer activities – Tepper served on the boards of the Guide Dog Foundation and America’s VetDogs. “It was very interesting to see all the different aspects of such a big and growing organization,” she says.

With her puppy raising days behind her because of family commitments, Tepper was asked if she would be interested in becoming a breeder caretaker for a yellow Lab named Hobbs. “I said, ‘Let me take the dog home and see how he gets along with our dog Barkley,’” she recalls. Of course, “they were fine together, so I kept him.”

Breeder caretakers attend regular obedience classes and ensure the dogs remain strong and healthy with regular veterinary checkups. When requested, caretakers bring the dogs back to the Foundation to be bred.

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Happy Birthday!

The “Puppies with a Purpose” celebrated their first birthday with their puppy raisers on the set of TODAY!

Left to right:
Deana Stone & Camden, Baltimore;
Lauren Cobb & Izzy, Atlanta;
Olivia Poff & Sunny, New York;
Hannah Cunningham & Brady, Boston;
Sara Ell & Zuma, Los Angeles.

Happy Birthday!

26th Annual NBC4 Telemundo 44 Health & Fitness Expo

In January 2019, at the invitation of NBC4, the local NBC station in Washington, DC, Sunny and Olivia attended the 26th Annual NBC4 Telemundo 44 Health & Fitness Expo at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. The pair were morning guests on the main stage, and afterward, they staffed a table with our Virginia-area puppy raisers. About 6000 people attended the event, which offered free exercise classes, cooking demos, and health screenings.

Sunny also found time to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in remembrance of the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country.

Sunny goes over last-minute arrangements with the staff of NBC4 in Washington.

The Guide Dog Foundation was well-represented at the health expo.
Sunny in New York

Sunny is a busy boy. He works with his puppy raiser and trainer Olivia Poff every day in Manhattan, which includes visiting many different locations so he will feel comfortable no matter where he and his future handler will go.

In November last year, Sunny visited the 9/11 Memorial & Museum in lower Manhattan. They made sure to stop at the Dogs of 9/11 exhibit.

When guide dog students train in Manhattan, Lighthouse Guild International allows us to use a meeting room at its headquarters at 64th Street and West End Avenue. As part of our partnership, we offer guide dog lifestyle workshops to the staff and clients. After our presentation, participants go on a test walk with a “demo” dog around the streets of Manhattan, which allows them to experience the independence a guide dog brings.
Changing careers, changing mobility

For many years, DesRoses taught English as a Second Language. “I fell into [the job] because a friend of mine had a program and needed volunteers.”

Although he told her she’d be great at it, the former English major was unconvinced. He invited her to watch him teach, “and, little by little, I found myself in the classroom,” DesRoses says. “Then, I loved it so much that I went and got my master’s teaching ESL. I met and worked with so many wonderful students.” A component of teaching language, she maintains, is “helping to interpret the new culture,” and she loved helping her students find their footing.

Although she never worked it explicitly into a lesson, DesRoses also used her blindness for teaching moments. “It made me think out of the box because teaching and learning language are very visual things.” She would develop work-arounds and freely answer questions about why she did things certain ways.

DesRoses was happy teaching. The only way she could see herself leaving was for “something that I would find interesting and fulfilling,” not because she was burnt out.

That’s exactly what happened when she was recommended for a job with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. “It was absolutely unexpected,” she declares. “If you would have told me this is what I would be doing 20 years ago, I would have laughed at you.”

For the past 14 years, DesRoses has served as the evangelization consultant for black Catholics. “I work with the various black Catholic communities within the Archdiocese of Boston. There are approximately 100 parishes that have ethnic or cultural communities, and so the team that I work with – we are there to serve the parishes and those particular communities to help them feel and be a part of the archdiocese as well as their parish.”

It was this job change that prompted DesRoses to seriously consider getting a guide dog. Her new job would require visiting different parishes and sites throughout the archdiocese; no longer would she be in a classroom all day, traveling one fixed route to her office. “I wanted to be as independent as possible.”

Guide dog lifestyle

DesRoses researched a number of guide dog schools, but it was her interactions with the Consumer Services Office that convinced her to choose the Guide Dog Foundation. “I probably called up with all sorts of silly questions and nervous questions,” she says, “but they were patient; they were kind. I found them really helpful.”

So when she got the call that the Foundation had a dog for her, she thought, “Yes, OK. Let’s do this.”

DesRoses trained with her first dog, a Labrador/Golden Retriever cross named Shamrock, in February 2005. They were a successful team for almost six years, but during the last year of their partnership, Shamrock started getting very shy about taking the train, and DesRoses noticed a general hesitancy in her work.

Her field representative came to Boston to evaluate the team. “We did a portion of a route, and he said, ‘Your instincts are right. I want you to consider what you’re going to do next.’”

What to do next was to retire Shamrock, “for her sake and our safety.” It was, she says, “the hardest thing to do, but it was the thing I needed to do.”

Shamrock lived with DesRoses and her husband for about a year, before relocating to his mother’s home in New Jersey, where she lived until her death in 2014.

In March 2011, DesRoses returned to the Foundation for her second dog, Betty Lou. “If Shamrock was the princess, Betty Lou was the ‘beer and nuts’ dog,” she laughs. “She was like, ‘Whatever, let’s do this; I’m OK.’ She was ready to go, whatever you threw at her.”

Betty Lou and DesRoses worked together for seven years, but then the dog started to have hip issues and worsening allergies for which medication wasn’t working. DesRoses had another difficult decision: it was time to retire Betty Lou. (Betty Lou now lives with friends in Rhode Island.)

She partnered with Aster, her third dog, in November 2017. “It was exciting,” she says. “Each time you go for training, class is a combination of reviewing what you learned before and adding new skills. We were learning new training methods that were really different and interesting.”

Aster and DesRoses have been together for about 15 months. “It’s an amazing partnership,” she enthuses. The team even traveled to Dublin in February 2018. “It was freeing – I had my dog with me, and I didn’t have to depend on another person.”

The two are constant companions when DesRoses meets with pastors, local church staff, and community leaders during her outreach visits.

Because she deals with people from different cultures,
There are two international bodies that certify guide and service dog schools on a voluntary basis: the International Guide Dog Federation and Assistance Dogs International. The IGDF is a coalition of more than 84 guide dog schools located around the world that supports its members in their mission to provide guide dogs for people who are blind or visually impaired.

The Guide Dog Foundation was among the first guide dog schools in the United States to recognize the benefit of joining this international community. We underwent our first IGDF appraisal in 1998, and we have been recertified every five years since.

ADI was created in 2007; its membership comprises schools with guide, hearing, and service dog programs. While ADI recognizes IGDF accreditation of guide dog schools, we made it our goal to achieve ADI accreditation for our service dog programs. We underwent our first ADI assessment in 2008 and have been accredited by the organization every subsequent five years.

In late 2018, we underwent our latest assessments by IGDF and ADI, and received notification in January 2019 that we had once again been accredited by both organizations. This accreditation lets our donors and consumers know that our guide and service dog programs consistently follow the highest standards for the humane and ethical treatment of the dogs in our programs, maintain educational benchmarks for trainers and apprentices, and have procedures in place for consumers during the application and acceptance process.

Lorna DesRoses

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“I have had to learn how to navigate the spaces where people aren’t used to seeing a guide dog,” she says.

She is able to draw on her experience as an ESL teacher and use these interactions as teaching moments. “For me, it’s given me the opportunities to share with people who probably have not the opportunity to ask questions about what a guide dog does,” she says. “If that helps that person to look at someone else who’s blind or with another disability in a more favorable light, then that will have been worth it.”

DesRoses has loved every one of her dogs for what they have brought to her life. “Your first dog teaches you that you can do this, that you can be confident and build this partnership with the dog; it’s amazing. Your second dog keeps you humble, and then there’s your third dog,” she laughs.

“Each of my dogs has just given me a unique perspective on who they are, who we are as a team, and on myself and the way in which we travel and interact with the world.”

Lorna and Aster
Carol Tepper: Serving Others  
(continued from page 3)

Hobbs was an active breeder for five years until he retired in 2018.

Puppy Sponsors

After years of regular giving, Carol and Steve Tepper decided to take the next step and become puppy sponsors. “It was a progression,” she says. Puppy sponsorship was more specific, and I was intrigued. I thought it would be a gratifying thing to do.”

Since 2006, the Teppers have sponsored seven dogs, two of which have graduated as service dogs for disabled veterans.

Their first, Benjamin, became the service dog for Joseph Worley, a Navy veteran, in 2008. Worley was a member of the first on-campus service dog class of America’s VetDogs, the Foundation’s sister organization.

Carol and Steve attended the luncheon celebration. “It was very moving,” she recalls. “I was so in awe of their stories and what they’d been through.”

In the nine years they were a team, Worley and Benjamin made many media appearances and represented America’s VetDogs at conventions, fundraisers, and other speaking events. (Benjamin retired in 2017 to live with the Worley family, and Worley trained with a new service dog.)

Tepper says that knowing she had played “a small part of letting [Joe] have a much better life” exemplifies why she loves to sponsor puppies.

Connected Threads

In addition to puppy raiser, nursery volunteer, breeder caretaker, and board member, Tepper has also been a member of the Foundation’s speakers bureau, whether informally as a puppy raiser, or with ambassador dog Hobbs. Speakers attend special events, speak to schools or other groups, or speak with the media to educate the public about assistance dogs.

She downplays her dedication to the Foundation and its mission, instead choosing to laud the dedication and passion of the staff and her fellow volunteers. “Everyone wants to be doing what they’re doing,” she says. “They believe in it strongly.”

For herself, “The thing I think I like the most is the camaraderie. I like the staff I’ve been able to work with, I like the volunteers I’ve been able to work with. I love being physically involved with the puppies and the dogs. I think it’s the perfect mix. Everything about it makes me feel like I’m doing something important.”

And how long does she think she’ll keep volunteering? “Oh, I’ll keep going. I hope I’ll be coming for a long time,” she declares. ✨