

vi•sion•ar•y (vizh'n-eri || -erri) adj. 1. Characterised by vision or foresight

Visionary

Edition **44**
March
2021

John Gosling AM
A True Guide Dogs
Icon

"Forward!"
Despite the Pandemic
at the Israel
Guide Dog Centre



International Guide Dog Federation
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First and foremost, membership of the IGDF enables Guide Dog Schools around the world to join a community dedicated to serving the visually impaired. That community needs and wants to share its knowledge and the IGDF facilitates that.

The map below outlines the contributing countries for this edition of Visionary – **Argentina, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Israel, Netherlands, Poland, UK, USA**



Cover Photo

Blonde Labrador standing holding a chew toy in it's mouth.

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Message From The Chair

Bill Thornton | Chief Executive Officer
BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, Canada

I would like to welcome you to the new revamped, first issue of our new look Visionary.

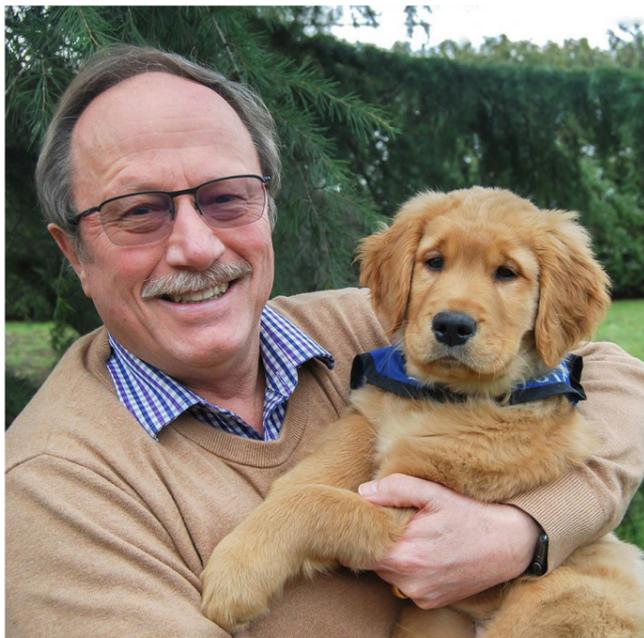
My thanks to Communications Chair Christine Turc assisted by committee members Karen Hayes and Kazu Oda. There will also be a Visionary Podcast stewarded by John Welsman (Guide Dogs UK). This will be another first and great addition to our level of communication to the members and the world at large. Congratulations to everyone involved and many thanks.

Speaking of communications, the Communications Committee has been forging forward with the development of our new website. We expect the launch to take place in April. The feed-back I am getting is very exciting and I look forward to the communications committee pressing the launch button for us all to see and enjoy. After the launch there will be continuous updating and new content added. Our goal is to drive you, the members to the website, so that we can communicate in real time and make the website more of a hub for us all.

The Education Committee, lead by Christine Baroni-Pretsch and Tim Stafford, has been working tirelessly, literally day and night. They have been reviewing the GDMI curriculum and will soon be reaching out for further input from members on training materials. The task taken on, is a monumental task

continued

Message From The Chair



and will of course always need reviewing and further developing. I am very excited about this new standing committee and the wonderful opportunities of added value they will provide to the membership moving forward.

The Board is under-taking a strategic Review led by Karen Hayes and working with Space2BE based in the UK. We expect to have a special E-News published on this topic and also present a webinar in April. The final new strategy will be presented in July.

Finally, the very important project of developing ISO standards. Chair of the ISO Committee, Paul Metcalf, and Wells Jones have been speaking with ADI over the last three years and keeping them apprised of our work with NEN. Once we had completed Form 1 in December, we were advised by NEN to submit ISO Form 1. The rationale was to avoid holding up the

work that has been going on for a number of years in Europe, with the development of European Assistance Dog standards under the CEN project. Our submission of ISO Form 1 was not well received by ADI and they are taking the position of opposing ISO standards.

This is, of course, a very disappointing situation and not one IGDF wanted. The international ballot is now underway on ISO Form 1 and the result of the global vote indicating if ISO would support a new Assistance Dog standard will be released April 8th. Once the result is out, subject to it not being a no, IGDF will consider the result and take the most appropriate steps from there. We will keep the membership informed as we know more.

Both the Accreditation Committee and the Development Committee continue to find ways to keep things going under these challenging COVID conditions. Keeping the health of our members and volunteers paramount.

As you have read, there is a large volume of complex work being done. I would like to thank our Board for all their time and dedication and also all those who volunteer to support the ongoing important and diverse work of the IGDF. All this work is co-ordinated through the office of David Maynard - many thanks to all.

Keep well and all the very best for your individual endeavours through 2021.

Bill

“To have tried and failed is better than to not have tried at all”

Introducing John Welsman & the new Visionary Podcast

IGDF is delighted to announce an exciting new development; the launch of a regular podcast based on Visionary magazine. Starting with this issue, all content published in Visionary will also be used to produce a podcast episode so that all the international guide dog news is as fully accessible as possible.

The Communications Committee would like to thank two people who have made this possible: Bracha Ben-Avraham of the Israel Guide Dog Center, a regular contributor to Visionary, who first suggested the idea, and John Welsman of Guide Dogs UK, an experienced broadcaster who has kindly volunteered to produce the podcasts.

For any readers who don't know John, here he introduces himself in his own words:

“From my days at school in the UK's West Country, where Bill Thornton first encouraged me to think about having a guide dog, to my current role at Guide Dogs UK working with Tim Stafford in Canine Affairs, I have been a keen advocate for the mobility and social benefits of guide dog partnership.



Part of my job as Access and Standards Lead Professional is to use my long-standing broadcasting background to produce podcasts which support the organisation and its work, as an alternative to written communication.

From end user feedback, Guide Dogs UK knows the value of audio for a vision impaired population, and as equally relevant, today's explosion and appeal of podcasts in the general population. Therefore, for IGDF to have an audio representation of its work, starting with Visionary, it has the potential to engage with a far larger audience.

With your help, I will be editing and producing an audio version of Visionary, which I hope over time will encourage you all to actively participate with your own voices. But never fear, if you don't want to read your contribution, I am sure I can find some friendly voices to do it for you.

I look forward to working with you all to produce audio content, which is engaging, informative and entertaining, which I hope the audio version of Visionary will be over time.”

IGDF is immensely grateful to John and to Guide Dogs UK for enabling us to produce this podcast. John has many exciting ideas for the development of this podcast, but if you have any suggestions, please do let us know.

The podcast will be published on the IGDF website. Please do share it via your networks and social media.

IGDF Assessments

Update from **IGDF Office, UK**

Due to the continuing restrictions on international travel, assessment visits are still suspended. There are therefore no new members or assessments to report. A working group, comprising IGDF Assessors, is currently working to develop detailed proposals for carrying out assessments using digital technology.

Several applications for IGDF membership have been received in recent months, which is very encouraging in these challenging times. The Board and AC will prioritise scheduling assessments for these organisations once assessments resume.

All organisations due to be assessed during 2021 have been contacted with further details.

Congratulations to the following organisation which has been accepted as a new Affiliate Member of the IGDF:

- Deutsche Blindenführhunde e.V (Germany)

Congratulations to the following organisation which has been accepted as a new Enquiring Organisation:

- APRI Onlus (Italy)

Congratulations to the following organisation which has moved from Enquiring Organisation to Applicant Organisation status:

- Institute Magnus (Brazil)

Our best wishes go to the following organisation which has left the IGDF:

- Dogs for Georgia

John Gosling AM – A True Guide Dogs Icon

Often referred to as the Elder Statesman of Guide Dogs Victoria, Guide Dog Trainer John Gosling AM was recently included as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) “for significant service to people who are blind or have low vision” as part of the 2021 Australia Day Honours List.

Three days later, John was joined by family, friends, Clients and colleagues as he celebrated another monumental milestone – 50 years of service with Guide Dogs Victoria.

Making the dream a reality

At the age of 16, John decided he would spend his life working with Guide Dogs but had to wait six long years before he met the minimum age requirement to apply. In the meantime, he was called up for national service and, at the age of 20, set off for Vietnam.

While he hadn't imagined he would be spending his 21st birthday in the mountains of Vietnam, John remained focused on his future and making it home by 22, at which



John Gosling commands the attention of a group of aspiring Guide Dogs outside the GDV Training Kennels circa 1970s.



John takes to the street circa 1980s for a training session with just one of the many dogs he has worked with over the decades.

point he hoped to make his dream job a reality.

Upon his arrival back in Melbourne, John applied for a role at Guide Dogs Victoria. Discharged from the Australian Army on the last Friday of January 1971, he arrived at Guide Dogs Victoria for his first day as a Guide Dog Instructor just four days later on Tuesday 2nd February 1971.

Always one to find the light even in the darkest times, John says his experiences in Vietnam were harrowing but would also prove a positive influence on his work.

Karen Hayes
**Guide Dogs
Victoria, Australia**

“For a person to lose their sight and move through the unknown physical and emotional environment is absolutely fearful. I had felt and understood fear so could share a genuine empathy with my Clients and shape my instructions to build confidence and for self and mutual belief with their Guide Dog and their Instructor.”

Reflecting on his legacy, John also takes great pride in the dedicated Guide Dog and Orientation and Mobility Instructors he has trained and inspired through their careers. “These people are now making a difference all around the world, from the UK, Asia, and Scandinavia to the USA and here in Australia,” John says.

John has made an invaluable contribution to the Guide Dog movement globally, and indeed to IGDF as a three-time IGDF Board Member and recipient of the 2018 Ken Lord Award for exceptional services to the International Guide Dog Movement. Congratulations John Gosling AM – you are a true Guide Dogs icon.

Guide Dogs Victoria CEO Karen Hayes AM DSJ and Board Chair Iain Edwards present John with a certificate of recognition for 50 years of service to GDV



“Forward!” Despite The Pandemic

Bracha
Ben-Avraham
Israel Guide Dog
Centre, Israel



Client and instructor at a cross walk

2020 was one of the most challenging years that the Israel Guide Dog Center has experienced since its founding in 1991. Despite the numerous limitations of the pandemic the center met – and even exceeded – its goals for the year 2020: 120 puppies were born, 38 new guide dog partnerships were created, five PTSD service dogs were provided to IDF veterans, and 42 companion dogs were adopted by families with special needs.

Eli Ben Boher, who is in charge of puppy raisers, explained that the lockdowns have had significant retroactive effects on the puppies that were raised during 2020 because they spent less time outdoors. “The most significant problem during the first lockdown was that people were afraid to leave home, and the puppies were therefore less exposed to outdoor urban environments and public transport.

Many of our puppy raisers are university students, and during lockdowns the puppies missed out on sitting in class.”

During visits Eli was unable to enter the puppy raisers’ homes, so visits took place outdoors. It was difficult to let dogs outside to release energy, so Eli offered puppy raisers suggestions for occupying dogs indoors such as obedience lessons, challenging toys, and games.

Zoom meetings replaced face-to-face interviews for screening potential puppy raisers and instructing them before they received their puppies. A blind client gave a Zoom lecture that inspired puppy raisers and reminded them of the reason for their hard work. The traditional meetings between puppy raisers and the end clients who received guide dogs, PTSD dogs, or special needs dogs were also conducted using Zoom.

Netanel Elbaz, a guide dog mobility instructor and O.&M. specialist, described the challenges confronting trainers and instructors. “Luckily most of our training and instruction takes place outdoors. Government regulations classify our work as “essential”, but during lockdowns we were often stopped and questioned by the police or municipal inspectors about what we were doing outside.” Netanel also noted that streets, shopping malls, and busses were relatively empty, and he was unable to expose guide dogs in training to crowds and congested areas.

Many changes were implemented during the last instruction course that took place at the center in December of 2020. Netanel emphasized that the six participants received full instruction, including home visits at the end of the course. However, because of the need for social distancing the participants were limited to contact only with their instructors and the kitchen staff.

Ami Toren, director of the training department, feels that the greatest difficulty during the pandemic was trying to plan training and instruction courses when regulations were constantly being changed. Clients’ daily routines were also severely disrupted.

“We taught clients the routes to their workplace, but many people suddenly found themselves unemployed or had to work from home, and the routes that we taught them were no longer relevant.”

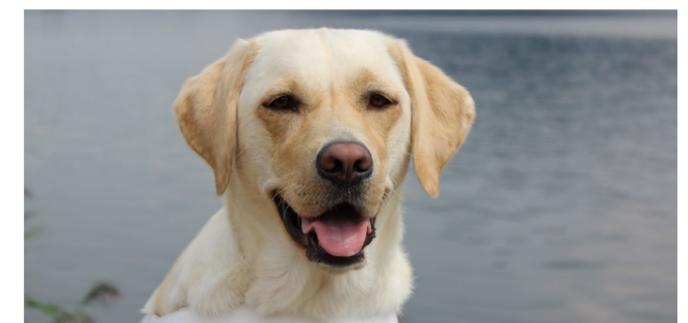
Yael Columbus, a senior trainer and instructor, conducts annual follow-up visits to clients throughout the country, but she avoids traveling to cities and towns where the infection rate is high. “Visits were often postponed because clients were ill or quarantined, or because I had to remain at

home with my own children when school was canceled due to lockdowns.”

Ami, Netanel, and Yael all spoke about the discomfort of wearing a mask while walking in the heat for hours. Netanel noted that masks prevented him from reading clients’ facial expressions while he was instructing them. Ami explained: “I was driving the vehicle during a traffic exercise and was watching Netanel teach a client how to cross the road safely. I couldn’t read his facial expression because his face was totally obscured by his mask, sunglasses, and broad-brimmed hat!” Eli quipped:

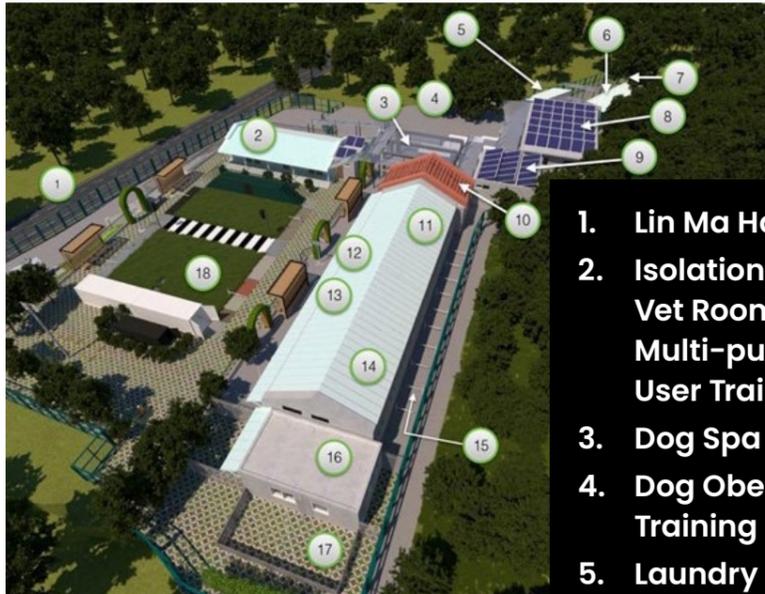
“Only one question remains to be answered: What do our dogs think when they see all of us wearing masks?”

Noach Braun, co-founder and director of the Israel Guide Dog Center, feels that the center has been able to continue its work thanks to the great dedication and discipline of the staff. “We have a dedicated staff who were not afraid to come to work even during lockdown. Everyone adhered to the guidelines and the staff remained healthy. Fortunately we have many friends and donors who continue to support us during this difficult time. We wish everyone good health and hope that in the coming year the pandemic will be behind us. We look forward to seeing our friends, supporters, and colleagues in the Federation again!”



The First Seeing Eye Dog Training School Of Hong Kong To Be In Service In 300 Days By November 2021

Raymond Cheung
Hong Kong Seeing Eye Dogs, Hong Kong



Floor Plan of the HKSEDS Training School

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Lin Ma Hang Road | 9. Public Toilet |
| 2. Isolation Room, Vet Room, Multi-purpose Room, User Training Rooms | 10. Pantry & Store Room |
| 3. Dog Spa | 11. Hall |
| 4. Dog Obedience Training Ground | 12. Reception |
| 5. Laundry & Grooming | 13. Meeting Room |
| 6. Storage, Dog Food Preparation Room | 14. Administrative Office |
| 7. Exercise Area | 15. Obstacles Training Ground |
| 8. Kennel Block | 16. Breeding Block |
| | 17. Puppy Play Plan |
| | 18. Outdoor Training Ground |

Founded in 2012, the Hong Kong Seeing Eye Dog Services (HKSEDS) was registered to be the charitable organization recognised by the government in the same year. Last year, under the policy of the Funding Schemes to Support the Use of Vacant Government Sites of the Lands Department and with the support of all villagers under the leadership of the Ta Kwu Ling District Rural Committee, in addition to the signature support of over 20,000 citizens, it was approved to renovate the Former Sam Wo Public School (North) on Li Ma Hang Road of Ta Kwu Ling to be a local seeing eye dog school. The Seeing Eye Dog School will have been completed by November 2021, turning to be the first seeing eye dog training school in Hong Kong.

Facilities of the School incorporate needs of the local community and those of the users of the seeing eye dogs. HKSEDS will

put quality at the top priority instead of quantity when the seeing eye dog service is in place. A variety of facilities include outdoor training ground, veterinary room, kennel, dog spa, breeding zone, public education, resource centre, etc. merging the three major areas, conservation cum preservation, sustainable development, and public education into one. The School will also set up solar and wind power generation facilities as well as the sewage treatment recycling system which reuses the treated water for irrigation of plants on the campus. With a hope to continuously promote the public education, the School will organise guided tours to bring home the message of operations of the seeing eye dog services.

“Passing the Torch” is one of the important aspects of the Hong Kong Seeing Eye Training Dog Services. The set-up of the School is going to lay a strong foundation for the future seeing eye dog services. The school can enrich the Hong Kong seeing eye dog service system and support, making everything run more systematically and providing a place of harmony for everyone.

It is our sincerest wish for the successful completion of the renovation project of the Seeing Eye Dog School in 300 days. The completion of this new facility will provide seeing eye dogs for people of Hong Kong, in accordance with the highest international standards.

Escuela de Perros Guía Argentinos (EPGA) In Times Of Covid

Ignacio Carlos Hugo Botindari
Escuela de Perros Guia Argentinos (EPGA), Argentina

When, in March 2020, we were surprised by the COVID-19 pandemic, all our plans changed entirely. Three guide dogs were in the middle of their program, with seven months of work to go before graduation. During the lockdown, only maintenance and cleaning work in the kennels continued, but most of the staff remained in quarantine.

Activities swapped to virtual communication via videoconferencing between colleagues in different locations. It was hard to reorganize our work, but we managed to set goals in order to keep on moving. Local authorities recognized our work as essential and gave us permits to continue to use public roads, always following the protocols to avoid contagion.

The changes we had to implement led us to transfer all client training from our campus to their homes. We are proud to announce that we were able to deliver three dogs in December 2020. The three guide dog teams formed are Cesar & Feli, Rodrigo & Shailo and Magalí & Mila.



Client and guide dog in Buenos Aires



An instructor and guide dog beside an EPGA vehicle

Collaboration Proves Crucial During COVID-19

Gemma Hillis
Guide Dogs
Victoria, Australia

There is no doubt that 2020 was one of the most challenging years any of us have faced. It was especially challenging for those in Melbourne, Australia when at the end of July, instead of easing restrictions as planned, the Premier of Victoria announced Melbourne would enter Stage 4 lockdown. This included a strict curfew, time and distance limits for outdoor activity, school closures, and only four allowable reasons to leave home. Voted the World's Most Liveable City seven years in a row, Melbourne was suddenly a ghost town.

As Guide Dogs Victoria (GDV) staff adjusted to a prolonged period of remote working – while juggling children who were now home schooling – GDV Clients were being confronted with an extended period of isolation, a lack of ‘in person’ support services, and delays for those waiting to be matched with a Guide Dog. Telehealth practices (offering Client consultations via phone or video call) went a long way towards supporting those who needed us the most – but what about our dogs? After all, they still needed to graduate on time so they could go on to make a vital difference in the lives of people with low vision or blindness. But COVID-19 restrictions had drastically limited the number of Guide Dog Trainers allowed on the GDV site and this was one group of students who couldn't be home schooled.

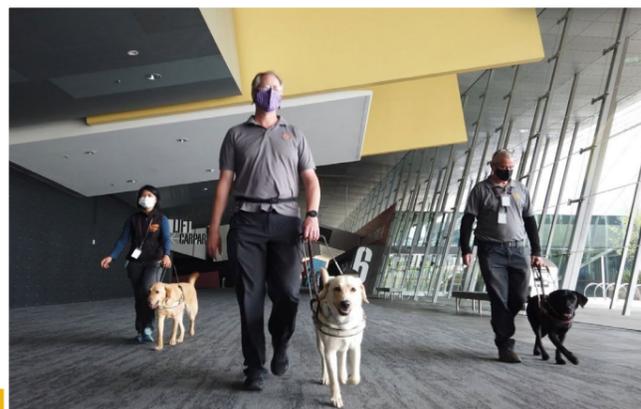
That's when the true spirit of collaboration and innovation shared by Guide Dogs organisations and their communities around the globe really kicked into high gear. After hearing GDV CEO Karen Hayes

on Light FM, a listener contacted the radio station to see how they could help. This listener connected GDV with the General Manager of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC), an iconic Melbourne venue that was closed to the public during lockdown, and before long a partnership was struck between GDV and MCEC.

Through this initiative, MCEC provided an environment that was safe, contained, accessible and free of charge for GDV to continue indoor and outdoor training with pups and Handlers, in keeping with government restrictions. GDV's Guide Dog Mobility Instructors and Clients began training at MCEC in September, and will continue using the venue as a training space while the space is not in use.

Karen Hayes said the collaboration with MCEC had made a significant difference to GDV being able to continue delivering Guide Dog services during these challenging times.

[Three of Guide Dogs Victoria's Guide Dog Trainers utilising the empty event space at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre to take dogs through training and assessment](#)



Dogs in training also got the opportunity to get used to various surfaces including ramps, stairs and escalators

“Thanks to Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Guide Dogs Victoria has been able to continue to provide essential services to Clients and train life-changing Guide Dogs during this lockdown. It is fabulous to have a space like MCEC where Clients and our dogs we can still train ‘real world’ experiences. They can practice navigating escalators, elevators, stairs, and chairs to name a few examples, but in an environment that is safely contained and controlled.”

MCEC Chief Executive, Peter King said the venue shares GDV's commitment to creating welcoming and inclusive spaces for people with low vision or blindness.

“We have an environment that is accessible and safe for GDV to provide their training and essential services and in these unpredictable times we need to pull together as a community and be resourceful to help those who need our support.”

As well as the invaluable support of the team at MCEC, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT (GDN) also stepped in to help our pups progress. Six pups in training were driven up to GDN in August 2020 where they were greeted by Guide Dog Trainer, Gina Chik. Zadek, Zenda,

Zosh, Carla, Watson and Volku quickly settled into their new home where they would spend the next three months being cared for – and of course put through their paces – by Gina and the GDN team.

In November 2020, five of the pups had taken the next steps towards their new careers with two placed as Therapy Dogs in NSW, and three returning to GDV, ready for their final assessment to become fully qualified Guide Dogs. (While enthusiastic and loveable, the sixth pup Zadek didn't quite have the skills needed to become a working dog and was reclassified and placed into a new home as a beloved pet.)

This was a huge achievement, not only for our Trainers across both states, but for the volunteer Puppy Raisers who had opened their homes and hearts to these pups who then faced an uncertain future once COVID-19 restrictions tightened.

Most importantly, the trust placed in us by MCEC and the strong bond we share with other Guide Dogs organisations – both nationally and internationally – led to improved outcomes for our Clients amidst some of the toughest times we have experienced as an organisation, and as a community.

Dogs vs COVID Stress

Irena Semmler
**Labrador Guide Dog
Foundation, Poland**



Doctor Maciej Naskręt and Denver

Labrador, the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind based in Poznan (Poland) has been training guide dogs for the visually impaired for 18 years. Up to now, 60 dogs have been trained and handed over to those in need. We are the only IGDF member organisation in Poland.

In the autumn of 2019 a unique, for Poland, project was initiated, called Alert Dog, which aims at training assistance dogs for people with diagnosed diabetes (detecting hypoglycaemia) as well as for those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Within the frame of the project, the Foundation acquired four labrador retrievers which as potential assistance and medical response dogs (the name recognised by Polish legislation), would

support people in need. Unfortunately, the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic meant a lot of changes including that in the plans of the Foundation. The pandemic has been exerting a great impact on everyone's lives. However, those who have been especially effected are medical services personnel.

The substantial number of infections often accompanied by an acute course of the disease has turned out to be a great challenge for medical staff working in direct contact with COVID-19 patients.

The character of work at isolation wards, the risk of infection and the stress caused by working with the most seriously ill resulted in a large group of medical personnel suffering from mental strain manifested by depressive states, sleep disorder as well as symptoms typical for PTSD. Inspired by reports from foreign, mainly American, press, we decided to support medical staff using one of our trained dogs.

The invaluable assistance in carrying out the entire undertaking has been provided by Foundation's Medical Consultant, doctor Maciej Naskręt, who is also the project's main executor. Maciej Naskręt, MD, specialist in anesthesiology and intensive care, got involved with the foundation in 2019.

While taking part in our workshops, he decided to have a go at becoming our weekend voluntary. He took in his temporary care a labrador named Denver, one of the four dogs trained to serve as medical response dogs.

In October and November of 2020, amidst the biggest increase of the pandemic in Poland, he took on an especially demanding task.

As the Head of the Ward of Anaesthesiology and Intensive care at County Hospital in Jarocin, he decided to convince its Board of Management that a dog might offer support for medical staff working with COVID-19 patients.

What seemed impossible, thanks to Doctor Naskręt, became viable. He was allowed to bring the dog in the hospital and let him stay there. On behalf of the Foundation, he also became Denver's official guardian. The hospital defined sanitary procedures connected with the dog's presence there and the Foundation provided relevant equipment as well as subjected the animal to thorough medical-veterinary examination.

Denver began his work on December 25th 2020, accompanying the doctor during his duty hours.

The positive effect of the dog's presence was already noticed on the very first day. One of the hospital's staff was a nurse who had got an acute case of COVID-19. She was too weak to touch the dog. When the doctor put her hand on Denver's head a smile came up on her face, the first time since the beginning of her illness.

Initially, Denver had only contact with the personnel of the ward of anaesthesiology and intensive care, a few days later, however, members of

staff of other hospital wards were keen on meeting him. Denver's guardian speaks of the dog's presence in hospital:

"Until recently, I had been putting together a rota for medical staff, now I do it for Denver as well, so that the therapy dog could help all those who need such support."

Another member of hospital staff said in an interview:

"When I get back home from work I no longer talk about diseases and the hardship of my working day but I keep telling my family about the dog, what he was doing and how wonderful he is. Denver's presence allows us, for a moment, to get away from the difficult reality and to think of something else."

Our Foundation is really happy to be able to support medical staff fighting the pandemic, thanks to the presence of the dog we have trained.

We also hope this idea will inspire others; both doctors of medicine and managers of medical facilities.

Hospital staff are interviewed on Polish TV



ISO Standards: An International Journey

Paul Metcalf
**Guide Dogs
Victoria, Australia**

Laura Mout
**Royal Dutch
Standardisation
Institute (NEN),
Netherlands**



Paul Metcalf, Chair
of IGDF ISO Project
Team & Immediate
Past Chair of IGDF

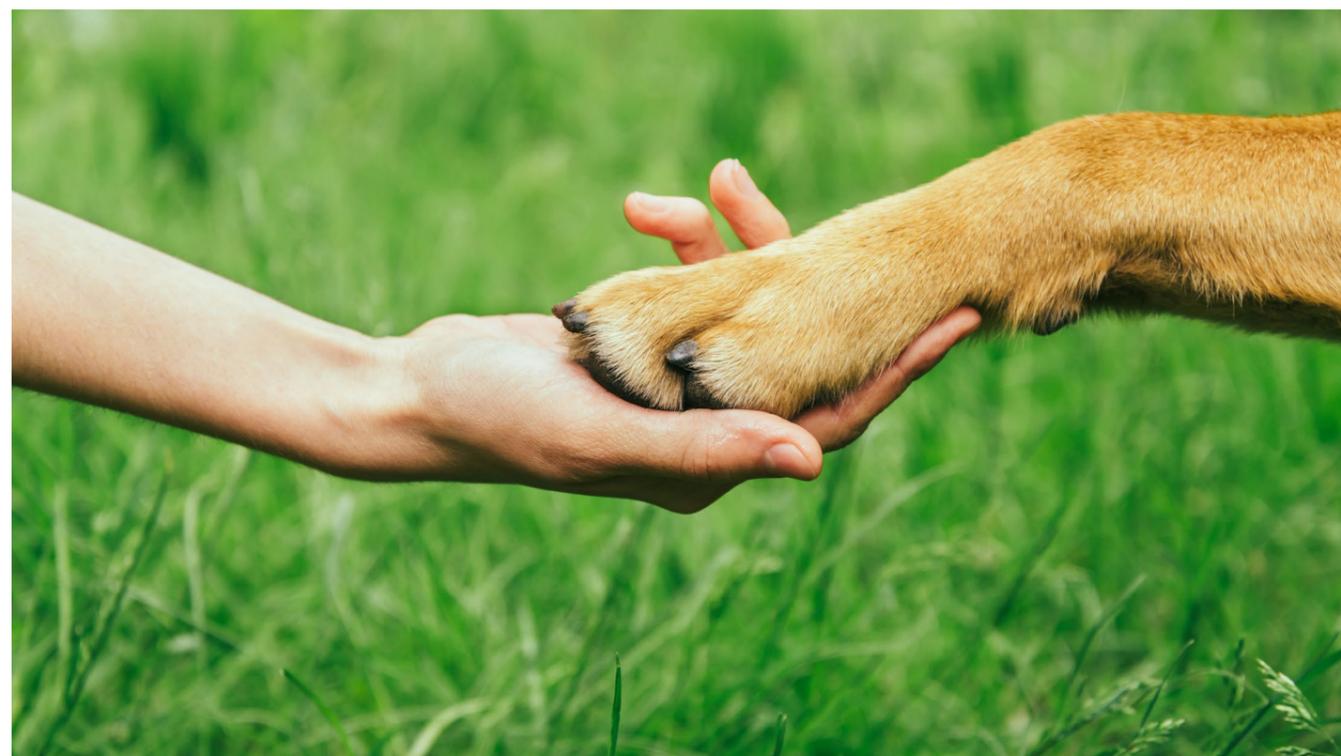


Laura Mout, Senior
Consultant, NEN

This proposal was sent to the International Organization for Standardization. ISO Central Secretariat shared 'Form 1' with the proposal for the establishment of a new ISO Technical Committee on assistance dogs to all national ISO member bodies as a formal 12-week ballot.

This means that 'Form 1', as developed by the IGDF/ISO Project Team, is now available to 165 national standards bodies around the globe. Within their respective country, a national standards body will consult potential stakeholders (e.g. providers of guide and assistance dogs, governments, clients) to ask for feedback on 'Form 1'. If the vote succeeds, then the process of establishing ISO standards can start.

In early 2021, the internal IGDF/ISO Project Team completed the first formal step in the proposed development of International Standards for assistance dogs (the preparation of 'Form 1').



Assistance dogs

Using the umbrella term 'assistance dogs' for these future ISO standards, it is anticipated that the final outcome will cover all dogs that are specifically trained to perform tasks to both increase the independence of, and mitigate limitations for a person with a disability. It is proposed to exclude:

- dogs that offer only emotional support and / or comfort (i.e. emotional support dogs);
- dog-assisted interventions such as facility dogs or dog-assisted therapy;
- other kinds of working dogs such as herding dogs, police dogs and search & rescue dogs.

The ISO standards in the field of assistance dogs will focus on, but are not limited to:

- terminology,
- health and welfare,
- breeding and puppy development,
- training,
- client services,
- assistance dog professionals,
- conformity assessment,
- and accessibility.

Accessibility

Assistance dogs and their users are frequently denied access to public spaces, transportation and private accommodations; ISO standards are a

way of addressing accessibility issues on a global level. They also provide stakeholders with information about recognising formally trained assistance dogs and a greater understanding about how they have been trained.

In line with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, whereby accessibility is seen to be a fundamental right for all persons, the development of independent ISO standards can aid governments and other legislators in the development and enforcement of regulations to enable individuals with appropriately trained assistance dogs in ensuring the independence they rightly deserve.

Next steps

Assuming the proposal for the establishment of a new ISO Technical Committee on assistance dogs (Form 1) will receive the required level of support from the international ballot, new work streams will open up through which the ISO standards will develop. We are very fortunate that colleagues and peers from the European assistance dog field have already worked tirelessly on the development towards European Standards in CEN/TC 452 'Assistance dogs'. From this solid foundation, we can both support their efforts and take the development of standards to a global level and, thereby, remove many more barriers to access. IGDF is committed to supporting this process and will take every opportunity to consult with, and update members and other key stakeholders.

North American Neighbors Working Together

Leslie Hoskins
Leader Dogs for
the Blind, USA

Keeping things moving during the pandemic has been tough for all our organizations, but for a young organization like the Canadian National Institute for the Blind Guide Dogs (CNIB) that is just an assessment away from IGDF membership, the pandemic created a difficult situation.



A great photo opportunity couldn't be passed up as the CNIB van and the LDB van are parked next to each other for the dog transfer

In November 2020, CNIB found itself facing a critical shortage of dogs to train for their clients because their supply of puppies dwindled dramatically. So CNIB Guide Dogs President Diane Bergeron picked up the phone and called Leader Dogs for the Blind (LDB) for help. Bergeron called LDB for several reasons, first because their location in Michigan was just one bridge crossing from Canada, and because she was familiar with the quality of their dogs having personally received several from LDB.

The staff at Leader Dog identified six dogs that would fit CNIB's needs. On November 17, staff members from CNIB and LDB met in Port Huron, Michigan to transfer the dogs.

"We have high regard for the CNIB Guide Dogs team and were happy to partner with them," said LDB Chief Operating Office Lorene Suidan. "We took a good look at our dogs in training and those being raised and we realized that we could send several dogs to Canada and still maintain our ability to serve our clients."

Another part of the cross-border partnership includes CNIB instructors assisting LDB by conducting follow-up visits with LDB clients who live in Canada. This cooperative association allows both CNIB and LDB to help more people who are visually impaired to travel independently and safely with a guide dog.

In an article printed in the Canadian press about the partnership, Bergeron said,

"This is the thing about the guide dog world: We called, they helped. They called, we helped. It's a combination of everyone pulling together. It's not, 'Your dog, my dog.' Instead it's, 'This person needs their independence and their freedom. What can we do to provide it to them?'"

Four of the six dogs that LDB donated to CNIB rest together in CNIB's "Canine Campus" in Carleton Place, Ontario



2021 Seminar Cancellation – Refunds

Update from the IGDF Finance Committee

Since the difficult but unavoidable decision to cancel the 2021 Seminar in Prague, the IGDF Board has been working closely with Mathilda Guide Dogs to ensure that all delegates receive a full refund.

Due to delays in recovering the substantial deposit already paid to the venue hotel, this has taken much longer than anticipated.

Thanks to the hard work and commitment of Mathilda Guide Dogs, the process of refunding credit card payments has now begun. Many of you will have already received an email from Mathilda to notify you that your payment has been refunded. This process is continuing, so if you have not yet received this email, please monitor your inbox. Please note that payments and refunds are priced in Czech Crowns. Therefore, because of exchange rate fluctuations, the amount refunded may

not exactly match the amount paid in your local currency.

Due to banking regulations, it is only possible to automatically refund card payments that have been made since December 2019. Any bookings made before this date cannot be automatically refunded to the purchasing card. **Therefore, these refunds will have to be issued by bank transfer or cheque. Once all possible card refunds have been made, the IGDF Office will contact the effected delegates/organisations to arrange a full refund.**

The IGDF Board has agreed to underwrite all non-refundable costs incurred by Mathilda Guide Dogs in relation to the cancelled Seminar, and guarantees that all delegates will receive a refund.

Unfortunately, the refund process is complicated, and is taking much longer than we had hoped. Please continue to bear with us, and thank you for your patience.

Thank you to Kees Tinga

The IGDF Board and Accreditation Committee would like to say a huge thank you to Kees Tinga of KNGF Geleidehonden (the Netherlands) for his contribution to the work of the Accreditation Committee over the past year. Kees has worked tirelessly on the revision of the IGDF Standards and on the development of new processes for conducting remote assessments. Changes

in circumstances mean Kees no longer felt able to commit the time needed to IGDF, and his contribution and dedication will be greatly missed. Everyone at IGDF wishes Kees well and hopes he may be able to volunteer his expertise again in the future.



