Keeping it in the family
Husband bequeaths guide dog to wife

Mastering the arts
How three visually impaired people have discovered the joy of painting

Generation i
Find out how guide dog owners can utilise phone technology

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Overseas challenge
Vision for Equality
National Breeding Centre

A day in the life
Government cuts
Sighted Guiding
“My cherished friend  
— forever in my heart”

Share the memories. **Make a difference.**

Nothing can prepare you for the huge sadness of losing a beloved pet. However, many people find great comfort in adding their best friend’s name to our online Book of Remembrance – alongside our own cherished guide dogs – and creating a **personalised page in celebration of their life**.

What’s more, by making a donation of your choice in their name, you’ll be helping to create another amazing partnership – the one between a blind or partially sighted person and their guide dog.

**To find out more about remembering your pet in this special way**
please visit us now at [www.giftsinmemory.org.uk/pets](http://www.giftsinmemory.org.uk/pets)

Call 0845 603 1477 or email us at giftsinmemory@guidedogs.org.uk
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Contributions: We reserve the right to edit or refuse. Send items to Forward at the Head Office address or email forward@guidedogs.org.uk. We cannot acknowledge every item sent. Forward is available in Braille, large print, audio CD, and as an email attachment. It is also available as a PDF from our website and in a range of languages – call 0118 983 8138. For mailing enquiries, call 0118 983 8138.

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Cover:
Jenny Mitchinson with Foster
All guide dogs are special, and do an amazing job each and every day. But sometimes a dog does something so exceptional, or changes someone’s life in such a radical way, that they deserve particular recognition – and this is why we have our annual Guide Dog of the Year Awards. This year’s Guide Dog of the Year will take place in June, which is earlier than in previous years but gives us the opportunity to keep it separate from other autumnal events. The closing date for nominations is 25 March 2011.

Award categories:

**Beyond the Call of Duty** – for dogs that have performed a heroic act, or helped their owner avoid a dangerous situation.

**Life Changing** – for dogs that have transformed lives by giving their owners the mobility and confidence to take on a new challenge; for example going to work each day, trying a new hobby...or something completely different.

**Outstanding Work** – for dogs whose work is exceptional; for example, adapting to a new environment or circumstances or mastering complex skills.

Guide Dogs’ panel of judges will consider the entries carefully and select the top dog in each category, before naming the overall winner of Guide Dog of the Year 2011.

You can submit your nomination using the online form at [www.guidedogs.org.uk/awards](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/awards), or by writing (maximum 500 words) to Forward, Guide Dogs, Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, RG7 3YG or by emailing forward@guidedogs.org.uk.

Nominated dogs must be qualified guide dogs who are expected still to be working in June. Please tell us which category you are nominating the dog for, and why. Don’t forget to include your name, address and phone number, and the name of the guide dog and owner (if it is not you). If you need help completing your nomination form, please call Elaine Cobb on 0118 983 8364.

For full terms and conditions of Guide Dog of the Year 2011, please visit [www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk).

Guide Dogs at School – teaching children across the UK about sight loss

Guide Dogs at School, the annual event for school children across the UK is back – and better than ever! This year offers tailored education resources for all schools, from nursery, through primary to secondary, enabling children of all ages to learn about sight loss and guide dogs.

Schools can hold their Guide Dogs at School day at any point in the summer term, and can keep half of any funds raised during the event for their own school.

All schools that register to take part will receive a resource pack based on the national curriculum, which contains lesson plans, activity sheets and multimedia resources.

Visit [www.guidedogs.org.uk/guidedogsatschool](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/guidedogsatschool) or phone 0870 600 23 23 for more information.
Welcome to the Spring issue of Forward, which heralds the start of a very exciting year for Guide Dogs. Not only are we celebrating the 80th anniversary of the first four guide dogs being trained and qualified in the UK but we are also looking forward to the next 80 years, and beyond.

While we continue to develop the guide dog service – and you only have to read the feature on Jenny Mitchinson and guide dog Foster to understand the true value of that service – this year will see the start of other initiatives so that we can reach out to more blind and partially sighted people. Key to that is collaboration – for example we are working with Visionary, the umbrella organisation for local sight loss groups, to deliver the innovative Sighted Guide scheme. This aims to alleviate the isolation felt by many blind and partially sighted people by training volunteers as sighted guides, who will help them get out and into their local community.

Speaking of collaboration, the Vision for Equality conference in January brought together over 200 people from within the sector to focus on how we can shape and enhance inclusion, participation and independence for people with sight loss. Not only did Guide Dogs host the conference but it was my privilege to co-chair the event – and it just served to reinforce the immense importance of what the charity is aiming to achieve.

A very different occasion but the stonelaying ceremony at Guide Dogs’ new National Breeding Centre last November gave me the opportunity to meet two volunteer puppy walkers who between them have walked more than 90 puppies – an astounding figure! Their dedication and commitment, and that of all our supporters, volunteers and donors, have helped build the charity into an organisation of which we can be justly proud.

We are now entering a period of intense change as we look at ways of increasing public awareness, review our values and how we present ourselves and how we can better meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people. I am confident that we will meet those challenges and I would like to thank all of you for supporting Guide Dogs, both now and in the future.
Sighted Guiding service to counter social isolation

Thousands more blind and partially sighted people will be able to get out and about thanks to a new partnership scheme initiated by Guide Dogs.

Guide Dogs is investing £500,000 in the scheme and is working closely with Visionary, the umbrella organisation for local sight loss groups, to train volunteers to help blind and partially sighted people get out of their homes to access community activities such as shopping or attending a club and to meet new people.

The service is aimed at the most isolated blind and partially sighted people, and is designed to help them to re-engage with their community and rebuild their confidence. It is hoped that re-engaging with the community will give previously isolated blind and partially sighted people the confidence to take the next step on the journey towards independence, possibly by becoming a long cane user or a guide dog owner.

To reach as many of these people as possible, Guide Dogs is working in partnership with organisations in the vision impairment sector, to develop, endorse (including the creation of a quality standard for the training of the sighted guides) and deliver the service, which is being trialled in six areas before being rolled out nationally.

Update your Will for free

With the success of the Free Wills Month last October, Guide Dogs is offering supporters in 10 areas of the UK (Blackpool, Darlington, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, York, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Eastbourne, Twickenham and Slough), the opportunity to take part in March’s Free Wills scheme, which enables supporters to have a simple Will written or updated for free – with no obligation to include Guide Dogs. All you need to do is contact a participating solicitor during March to make an appointment and be aged over 55 to qualify.

Free Wills Month is a great opportunity to make sure that your assets will go to those you care about most. Any gift, however large or small, that you feel able to make to Guide Dogs after your loved ones are taken care of, will help us continue providing freedom and independence to thousands of blind and partially sighted people across the UK. To find a solicitor participating in the Free Wills scheme this March, please call 0845 020 4309 or visit www.freewillsmonth.org.uk.
New Director of External Affairs

With big changes ahead for Guide Dogs, Simon Malcolm, our new Director of External Affairs – responsible for communications, campaigning and marketing, joins us at an exciting time.

Simon started his career as a journalist before developing his expertise within marketing and communications. Recent roles have included Group Head of E-Commerce with Otto UK Homeshopping, Marketing Director for the Rugby Football League and Managing Director with Leeds-based communications consultancy Words&Pictures. Simon also brings invaluable skills in areas such as brand management, media relations and working with volunteers.

Simon explains: “We are refreshing our Guide Dogs brand as part of the overall re-shaping of the charity to meet the new challenges faced by blind and partially sighted people today. I’ve no doubt that the exciting work we are undertaking will get everyone talking about Guide Dogs again, and help us to connect with more fundraisers, volunteers and the people who matter most – our clients.”

Disabled benefit reforms could be costly

The Government is planning to reform the state benefit Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which could have a devastating impact on the lives of many disabled people, including those who are blind or partially sighted.

DLA was introduced to help disabled people meet the higher costs of living associated with health conditions and impairments. It has two components – one to help with personal care needs and the other with mobility. However, the Government is planning to cut DLA expenditure by 20 per cent and introduce a new assessment process, as well as making other changes.

Guide Dogs is working with colleagues across the visual impairment sector, including RNIB and Sense, to campaign against these proposed changes.

If you would like to get involved with our campaign, please visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigns, call 0800 284 348 or email campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk.

Guide dog Wallis helps Heather to an award

It was during the student protests in London in December that adult education tutor Heather Melandri-Street, from Norfolk, travelled to the House of Commons to receive an Institute for Learning teaching award. Wallis is her first guide dog, and only two years old, but together they negotiated the streets safely. “There were police and horses and noise but she sorted me out and never panicked,” Heather explained.
**Brothers in arms**

![Image of three German Shepherds: Guy, Griff and Harper]

**Three guide dog brothers who graduated from the same class have been paired up with their new owners.**

German shepherds Griff and Guy, and their half brother Harper were much in demand having been put through their paces by the District Team in Stokesley near Middlesborough.

But the trio, known as the Barks Brothers, have now been partnered with owners David Pickering, Hemsley Mallaby, and Ken Harris, all of whom had to say goodbye to their previous German shepherd pals in sad circumstances.

Guide Dog Mobility Instructor at Stokesley, Linda Gooding said: “We have a national waiting list for them so we were exceptionally lucky to get three for these gentlemen. It was particularly tragic because of their three previous German shepherds, one died very suddenly, one had a terminal illness and the other we discovered had epilepsy and couldn’t work, so we were delighted that these three were available.”

The brothers have settled in extremely well with David, Hemsley and Ken, and Linda said: “Griff is very laid back but Guy is more like the younger brother, bright and very vocal! Harper came to us from Belfast and is a little bit older than the other two.”

German shepherds have certain traits which mean guide dog owners frequently develop an affinity with them. Linda said: “They don’t suit everybody but those who suit a shepherd like to stick with the breed.”

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**Pups go to work**

Last year Guide Dogs’ Puppy Walking Department ran an exciting study involving staff to assess whether we can place puppies in the work place for their puppy walking. Guide Dogs’ strategic aim is to expand the guide dog service – which means more puppies and, therefore, more puppy walkers. If we can recruit volunteers who are in employment, we can increase the potential number of suitable puppy walkers, as well as giving us opportunities to promote our work and raise additional funds.

The staff involved took their puppy to work with them and, in all cases, the puppies progressed in line with others raised in home environments. As importantly, neither the staff, their colleagues or their managers felt there was an impact on their work overall, although there was some disruption in the first three months.

Puppy walking in the work place will now be rolled out to some selected external companies during 2011.

To find out more, please contact Richard Huggins on 07717 815570.

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**Facebook snowballs**

An unprecedented number of new friends joined Guide Dogs’ Facebook page during December. The trend started with the heavy outbreak of snow and lots of guide dog owners, puppy walkers and other supporters sent us photos of their pooches having fun during the cold snap. Thank you to those of you who left over 3,000 comments and ‘likes’ on our photos as they helped to spread the word about Guide Dogs’ work.

We plan on asking you for more photos on a variety of themes throughout the year – sign up to ‘like’ us at [facebook.com/guidedogsuk](http://facebook.com/guidedogsuk) to hear our latest news and find out when we’re looking for extra photos.
A New Year’s honour for Jill

Jill Allen-King MBE, from Westcliff-on-Sea, has received her second honour from the Queen. Having been a guide dog owner since 1971, Jill was appointed Member of the British Empire in 1983 for her tireless campaigning to improve access for guide dog owners.

In the recent New Year’s honours list, she was appointed OBE (Order of the British Empire) for services to blind and partially sighted people in both the UK and Europe.

Guide Dogs Fun Days

Providing an opportunity to learn more about its work and assert its plans for the future, Guide Dogs is holding a series of nine events around the country where you can meet the staff, chat to Trustees and senior management, see lots of guide dogs and even enter the go walkies challenge and help raise much needed funds.

The events vary in size with some having displays, entertainment and stalls, but all of them are totally free to attend and promise to be a great fun day out for all of the family.

For more information about an event near you, see page 31 or visit our website www.guidedogs.org.uk.

EU agrees new rights to benefit disabled and older bus passengers

Disabled people and those with mobility problems across the European Union have won important new rights to travel on buses and coaches. UK charities are celebrating this success after a strong campaign led in this country by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Sense, Age UK, Leonard Cheshire Disability, Radar, Royal National Institute of Deaf People (RNID) and Guide Dogs.

Key gains for disabled and older people include accessible travel information both before and during the journey, mandatory disability awareness training for all drivers and a right to compensation for damaged wheelchairs or other assistive equipment. In addition, information about passenger rights will become available in terminals and online.

Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg approved this regulation, which will come into force in 2013. Importantly they will apply to all journeys, including local bus services.

The European Parliament vote follows the approval of the text on 31 January 2011 by EU governments, including the UK government.

This new EU law will benefit people in the UK who use local buses and will provide access to a better service from drivers, who will now receive mandatory disability training.

Sue Sharp, Head of Public Policy and Campaigns at Guide Dogs, says: “Disabled people rely on bus services more than non-disabled people. This regulation will make a real difference by making those journeys easier and less stressful. We are delighted at the support of MEPs in helping to secure these important changes for disabled people across Europe.”

‘Guide Dogs Could Change Your Life’ DVD

Available now for both prospective guide dog owners and partner organisations, is the ‘Guide Dogs Could Change Your Life’ DVD.

Providing an overview of how to apply for a guide dog, the concise 12-minute film presents information about Guide Dogs and explains in detail the application process through a series of potential clients. It also describes the three-step process that shows how Guide Dogs works with clients in assessing their vision and mobility.

If you require further information or would like a copy of the DVD, please email hannah.vickers@guidedogs.org.uk / jackie.brookes@guidedogs.org.uk. The DVD is also available in Welsh, Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, BSL Signed and English Signed.
Online Development Manager Jenifer Davis has been working for Guide Dogs for four months, based at Head Office at Hillfields

The Online Development Manager is responsible for developing Guide Dogs digital communications through the Guide Dogs website, social media sites and the volunteer extranet.

I wake at 6am, have a cup of tea and get my daughters up and ready for school. I check my emails and the Guide Dogs Twitter and Facebook accounts for anything urgent – we often get enquiries about how to apply for a guide dog, for example.

I get to work by 8am, which is the best hour of the day to get your head down and focus on work, before many people are in.

At 9am I meet with the web editor and web coordinator to prioritise the email requests we’ve received for work on the website. It has 2,000 pages and there are always new projects coming in.

This could include the setting up of an ipadio (audio blog) link for a fundraising couple who are cycling around the world, which allows them to record their blog over the phone from anywhere on the planet or a Guide Dogs video podcast – the goal is to make the site richer by introducing more multimedia.

Before lunch I’ll upload the latest Taking the Lead blog – www.guidedogs.org.uk/blog. Guide Dogs’ Chief Executive Richard Leaman wrote the first and it’s a really exciting project.

Lunch is usually a sandwich at my desk, catching up on emails – they never stop!

At 1pm I may have a suppliers’ meeting to discuss reorganising the online image library. It’s a great resource, and we’re exploring how the whole organisation can get the best out of it.

I also attend our regular strategy meetings which ensure the communications team as a whole is on the same page – and because digital communication is vital across the organisation, I’ll attend other departments’ meetings too!

I leave work at 4.30pm to pick my girls up from the childminder. After I’ve made them dinner and taken them to swimming club, I log back on to check on Facebook and Twitter – if someone wants to volunteer or get information it’s important to put them in touch with the right people as quickly as possible.

In the evenings I spend time with the family and do some work for a charity I volunteer with. Arcaid works to relieve poverty overseas, and we’ve already helped provide an African hospital with clean water and put many Indian children through school.

I’m usually in bed by 11.30pm, after another challenging but positive day. It’s an exciting time for Guide Dogs, and I’m enjoying being part of the drive towards creating a richer online experience for our users.
Getting ready for the next 80 years

80 years ago two British women succeeded in delivering a novel and curious concept from abroad. They had heard about so-called “seeing eye” dogs who were able to guide a blind person safely while they were out and about. Thanks to the tenacity and dedication of these two women, the first four guide dogs were fully trained in 1931 and ready to take their owners where they needed to be.

When Miss Muriel Crooke and Mrs Rosamund Bond first chanced upon the idea I am sure they would never have dared to hope for the success story that Guide Dogs in the UK has become. 80 years on from those first four partnerships more than 21,000 blind and partially sighted people in the UK have got outside and played a full part in society thanks to their guide dogs. We have a breeding and dog welfare programme which is the envy of the world. We have dedicated and skilled staff and determined and generous volunteers. Miss Crooke and Mrs Bond would be overwhelmed by what they would see at Guide Dogs today.

The legacy they have left us is a precious one that must continue to grow and prosper. Having the power to help blind and partially sighted people achieve the same freedom of movement as everyone else is an incredible privilege and, not surprisingly, we are hungry to do more.

Breeding centre

We are investing in our guide dogs with a state-of-the-art breeding centre which means we can produce more puppies and achieve our goal of hundreds more partnerships over the next decade. But this is not enough and we need to do something else to help blind and partially sighted people get out and about.

Miss Crooke and Mrs Bond started a revolution for blind people in the UK and now, in our 80th anniversary year, we are going to start to grow our service to include new and evolving services to help people get moving.

I am incredibly excited by the Sighted Guide service which should help thousands of people get out into their community and we are working with partners like Google to develop innovative technology which will guide people as they walk around a city’s streets – something that may have been laughed off as science fiction whimsy in 1931.

The future holds some exciting opportunities for us – some we know about and some we can’t even imagine. We need to adapt so we can survive and thrive for at least another 80 years and grasp these opportunities as they come along – or even make them happen.

I have created a new team at Guide Dogs whose job is to make sure we are fit for the future. Over the next two years you will encounter some challenges to the way we do our job but the one constant will be our continued dedication to offering quality services to blind and partially sighted people to help them get mobile.

Guide Dogs’ Fun Days

I would be delighted to see you at a series of events we are holding, starting in May, which gives me and my colleagues a chance to tell you about the exciting changes we have planned for Guide Dogs. I look forward to meeting you all (see page 31 for details of the events) and explaining how we will be continuing the excellent work started by Miss Crooke and Mrs Bond all those years ago.

Richard’s message

Cheif Executive Richard Leaman and guide dog puppy Bailey
Workshop sessions generated lively debate

Delegates heard presentations from leaders in the visually impaired sector and had a chance to have their say during workshops on employment, transport, and children and young people.

Guide Dogs’ Chief Executive, Richard Leaman co-chaired the conference and said: “The Vision for Equality conference was a great success and we made real progress in identifying what needs to be done to improve inclusivity and access for people with sight loss.

“However, gathering together experts and organisations to discuss these issues was only the beginning. We will now build on the excellent collaborative work started at the conference to take real action to drive forward the changes needed.”

For more information about the Vision for Equality conference and for full transcripts of the speeches, please visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/visionforequality.
“Getting to Westminster for 9am meant travelling overnight on the sleeper train from Aberdeen – a considerable challenge for my guide dog Campbell’s bladder! I’m happy to report that he rose to the challenge but still would not ‘go’ in the concrete pen provided and had to relieve himself on the grass. This was against the rules but was the only paw he put wrong during the entire day.

“And what a day! The speakers all spoke with conviction, advocating services which empower blind and partially sighted people of all ages to assert their rights and challenge inadequate services, be they employment, education, social or emotional. They also spoke of the need for a more collective approach to ensure access to public transport and the pedestrian and built environment.

“The lunch break offered the opportunity to view the exhibitors’ stalls. I am not often able to access these but on this occasion the layout was simple and I was able to move from one to the other with ease. I have already received publications by Living Paintings and will be able to introduce their ‘sight and sound’ books to our local book group and children’s group at Grampian Society for the Blind. I’m also hoping this blind grandmother will at last be able to ‘read’ to her grandchildren and share the illustrations!

“The afternoon session was a series of workshops about children and young people, employment and life chances, and transport and access. These generated lively exchanges of views and participants had ample opportunity to discuss the issues raised.

“I had to leave before Richard Leaman’s closing remarks but Campbell did an amazing job and got me speedily to Victoria. The onward journey was pleasant and I was helped by a couple from Harrogate whose friends have a retired guide dog called Venice, who I knew when he was with his owner. Small world isn’t it – and testimony to the strength of the Guide Dogs family!

“I came away feeling that I had made a great many valuable contacts, which will enhance the lives of many guide dog owners in my District Team, as well as local visually impaired people. I feel better informed on all issues raised and well prepared to be a more effective influence for change. I was particularly encouraged that the ideals we strive for in our local area are so cohesively in line with what Guide Dogs is promoting nationally. I am delighted to be part of our ongoing vision for equality.”

Mary Rasmussen, District Client Representative for East Scotland, describes her experience of the day:
Breeding success for the future

Guide Dogs is investing in its world-leading breeding facility in Warwickshire to meet future requirements and to ensure the continued success of the breeding programme.

The new Guide Dogs National Breeding Centre in Bishops Tachbrook will mean we can produce more guide dogs but also presents some real opportunities for visitors, supporters and volunteers.

Construction work started in February last year on a site neighbouring Tollgate and the centre should be up and running this summer.

For the first time we will be able to cater for large groups of visitors at our breeding centre and show them where life begins for a guide dog. The current breeding centre, based around Tollgate House, is more than 40 years old and is housed in several different buildings, some of which have not been purpose-built.

Providing modern facilities will enhance dog and staff welfare and provide much better facilities for our volunteers. It will also mean Guide Dogs continues to lead the way internationally for breeding and welfare standards.

The new centre is a crucial part of the Extraordinary Partnerships Strategy, with a central aim to increase the number of guide dog partnerships. The centre will allow Guide Dogs to increase the number of puppies bred each year so we can provide guide dogs for an extra 800 people over the next five years.

Providing facilities for visitors has been a central part of the design because we are proud of what we do and want to show the world how it’s done. But it will also be easier for everyone else to visit, because, as a leading disability charity, we should make sure our buildings are as easy to get round as possible.

The centre will be state-of-the-art in other ways as well, with a hi-tech cryogenic storage facility and carbon reduction technology, including rainwater harvest, a bio-fuel burner and natural ventilation.

Carol Warner, Operations Project Manager for Guide Dogs, said: “Guide Dogs is rightly proud of its position as a world leader in the breeding of working dogs.

“It is really exciting to think the new centre will give our supporters the opportunity to see that side of our work first-hand.”

There has already been one major event at the

““It is really exciting to think the new centre will give our supporters the opportunity to see that side of our work first-hand.””
new site, with a stone laying ceremony in November. The ceremony honoured two of our longest standing volunteers, Alison and Betty Brown, and Derek Freeman, the founder of Guide Dogs’ puppy walking scheme and breeding programme, who had stone plaques dedicated to them.

Mr Freeman founded the puppy walking scheme in 1956, placing puppies with volunteers so they could introduce young dogs to the sights, sounds and smells of a world in which they will play such an important part. He founded the breeding programme in 1960 and managed it until his retirement in 1987.

The Brown sisters, both in their eighties, have puppy walked more than 90 puppies between them and raised thousands of pounds since they began volunteering for Guide Dogs more than 40 years ago.

Their amazing story really captured the imagination of the media near their home in Scotland.

Richard Leaman, Guide Dogs’ Chief Executive, said: “Without the generosity of people like Alison and Betty, Guide Dogs would not exist. Without the foresight of Derek Freeman we would not have the successful breeding programme we do today.

“It is fitting in the run up to our 80th anniversary that we reflect on the amazing contributions people like this have made. It is all the more fitting to mark their contribution at a site which is part of our future.”

The existing buildings, with the exception of Tollgate House itself and a bungalow on the site, will be demolished and the land returned to green fields.
Mastering the arts

Picking up a brush to paint a picture could understandably be the last thing any blind or partially sighted person might think of doing. But it seems plenty of guide dog owners are not afraid to create beautiful works of art and enjoy success from their efforts.

Annie Fennymore has been longlisted for the Helen Keller International Award, a multi-media art competition open to both professional and amateur artists. Entries must explore the senses and challenge perceptions of deafblindness, and Annie’s entry will be exhibited alongside others at Glasgow Caledonian University in May.

Annie’s sight problems started in her late twenties with a severe allergic reaction to medication. She then developed bilateral cataracts and later, a fall down a flight of stairs left her with a detached retina and rendered her blind by the time she was 47.

The grandmother-of-five, whose guide dog is called Amber, has no formal art training and depends on her memory for colours and shapes.

Annie said: “My husband, John, has always supported me with my artwork. He gives me detailed descriptions of colour, saying ‘citrus yellow’, instead of just ‘yellow’.”

She uses quick-drying DIY putty to create an outline of her subject, followed by sawdust, sand, wood filler and 3D artist paste to smooth on with a palette knife to create a tactile background she can follow using her fingertips to tap on colours. To identify the paints, she uses a speaking labeller, known as a Penfriend, to read the colour out loud from a small barcode label on the paint tube.

Annie, who regularly attends charity Clacton Art Group near her home in St Osis, Essex, said: “Being longlisted for the Helen Keller award is surreal, it’s a touch and a step away.

“I love my art, but I had no idea anyone else would be that interested in what I do.”

Annie’s website, www.blindalleyart.co.uk, showcases her work.

Guide dog owner Barrie Goodfellow has created a website called Low Vision Art, designed to help people with any degree of sight loss to enjoy art. Barrie, who was born with bilateral glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, acute myopia and a hearing loss...

Annie with her guide dog, Amber

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defect, holds workshops and talks at a variety of art clubs, blind groups and schools both near and far from his home in Exeter. Barrie said: “Painting improves with practice and experience and I would encourage anyone, even those with little sight, to take up this wonderful pastime. It is very therapeutic and relaxing and a great way of enjoying our natural environment.”

His passion has so far helped youngsters at the West of England School and College, for young people with little or no sight, to raise £2,500 for art materials. He used his influence with a local gallery to get the youngsters’ work exhibited and auctioned off.

Barrie, who is 60 and has two daughters, said: “My art gives me great satisfaction. I’ve got to have a purpose to get up in the morning and I have to do something to make the day count. If that’s helping a visually impaired person to discover art, then that’s great.” Log on to www.lowvisionart.org to view Barrie’s paintings.

Matthew Rhodes started painting only 18 months ago after an accident while he was serving with the Devonshire and Dorset regiment. Matthew had served in Germany, Canada and Bosnia before he was left with two blood clots in the centre of his brain. The clots affected Matthew’s memory and emotions, paralysing him down his left-hand side and giving him very limited sight.

Matthew is helped by and volunteers for a charity for blind ex-servicemen, called St Dunstan’s. It was a fellow St Dunstan’s volunteer who suggested Matthew pick up a brush, and the rest is history.

Matthew, a father-of-four who lives with wife Michelle, in East Sussex, said: “I get a thrill from painting. It’s a form of excitement for me. When I finish a painting, I’m chuffed. If other people like my paintings, that’s just the icing on the cake.”

The 36-year-old, who has guide dog Karlo and a terrier called Bobby, added: “I was a physical training instructor in the Army and was always very physically active, so I’d never even dreamed of doing something like painting before.”

It was through volunteering through St Dunstan’s at a celebration of WWII in New Haven that Matthew got talking to two volunteers from the Dame Vera Lynn Trust for Children with Cerebral Palsy. Now, Matthew will have his painting of the singing heroine signed by her to be auctioned for her charity’s 10th anniversary celebration in April. Visit Matthew’s website at www.matthew-rhodes.blogspot.com.

“ My art gives me great satisfaction. I’ve got to have a purpose to get up in the morning and I have to do something to make the day count. If that’s helping a visually impaired person to discover art, then that’s great.”

Picture 1 Annie’s painting, called Guide Dog Amber: Woof
Picture 2 Matthew’s painting of Dame Vera Lynn, which will be signed by the dame and auctioned at her charity’s 10th anniversary celebration
Picture 3 Barrie’s painting, called Low Tide, acrylic on canvas
Picture 4 Matthew’s painting, Elephants On The Run, which hangs in his young son’s bedroom
Picture 5 Barrie’s painting, called Moonlight, acrylic on canvas
Picture 6 Annie’s painting, Poppies
Ryan decided to raise funds for Guide Dogs because his younger sister, Ella, is visually impaired and was partnered with her first guide dog, Wendy, last year. They also wanted to raise money for The Amos Trust, a venture that was set up by a family friend of Rebecca’s, which works with and supports community projects around the world.

The couple, who are both accountants, had originally hoped to complete their epic task in time for the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand in September, though they now estimate that they will reach the Antipodean islands in October.

Ryan, 25 and from Henley-on-Thames, said: “Our motivation for the trip is to experience different cultures and meet different people across the world, as well as having a challenging adventure. A bicycle is the perfect mode of transport to achieve this – slow enough to witness the world unfold gradually yet fast enough to cover continents – given enough time!”

Long days

Cycling through countryside and villages as well as the larger cities leads to countless interesting exchanges and provides the chance to meet all sorts of interesting people. Rebecca, who is 27 and from Cambridge remarked: “We’ve definitely adapted to spending long hours on the bikes. In a typical day, we’ll be in the saddle for five hours, but including food/toilet/map-reading stops that usually ends up being an eight-hour day. The ‘interestingness’ of the road makes a massive difference – if there’s great scenery, hills or villages, the time flies by. But if we’re stuck on a flat, straight main road, it can really drag. We usually try to absorb the sounds and sights, but for the really tough moments, a bit of music is a great morale booster.”

When Forward went to press, the couple had arrived in Tabriz in Iran and were on their way to Tehran, having cycled 3,800 miles in four-and-a-half months. They followed the Rhine and Danube rivers through Europe, cycled along the coast of the Black Sea, before crossing the snowy mountains in east Turkey during winter to reach the Iranian border.

Ryan said: “We wanted to see the world but also to do something a little different to the standard backpacking trip through the classic destinations. It is great seeing such a wide variety of places. We still see the cities that we would’ve seen had we travelled by bus, but we also get to see the countryside change as we move across the world.”

Challenges

Despite the breathtaking scenery, the couple have also had some low points, including Rebecca’s knee injury in the first week, which threatened to end the trip. There was also a close encounter with some growling animals close to their tent while they camped in woods in Austria but fortunately, after a few scary minutes spent holding their breath, the mystery animals moved on.

The couple say that the highlights so far include reaching Istanbul, “a real milestone”, the start of the more exotic regions, and the end of their first continent. Ryan added: “Crossing our first 2,000 metre-high mountain pass in the winter in minus 25 degree temperatures was really exciting. It was great to realise we could actually do it, after being told many times that cycling through the mountains in the winter was a bad idea.” The spirit of human kindness has also touched the pair’s trip, as they have often been invited into a family’s home for dinner or to sleep. Ryan said: “The amount of generosity we have been shown has been incredible, and never fails to amaze me.”

To see their route, read their blog posts, view their photos and videos and to donate to Guide Dogs, visit their website: www.worldcyclingtour.wordpress.com.
Picture 1 – Ryan and Rebecca reaching Erzurum (in the eastern Anatolia region of Turkey) • Picture 2 – Crossing the Anatolian mountain range in Turkey • Picture 3 – Burghausen Castle, Upper Bavaria • Picture 4 – Ryan and Rebecca. • Picture 5 – Ryan planning the next day’s route • Picture 6 – A view across Budapest
Improved mobility may be the primary benefit of a guide dog, but it’s far from the only one. They also increase confidence, bring companionship, give a fresh outlook on life and create new opportunities – and not just for owners but their families also.

This is certainly true for Jenny Mitchinson. When her husband, Mike, died of cancer last summer, it was no great surprise that she couldn’t face being parted from his guide dog, Foster. The six-year-old black Labrador-retriever cross had been Mike’s faithful companion since the dog was two years old, and Jenny was delighted when her request to keep this much-loved family member as a pet was granted.

But Foster soon proved he could offer practical as well as emotional help during this difficult time – as a guide dog once again. Jenny is herself partially sighted, and in November last year Foster became the first guide dog in the UK to have been paired with both a husband and wife.

“After Mike’s death I didn’t want to lose Foster, so I was delighted and relieved when Guide Dogs allowed him to stay on with me,” explains Jenny, 71, from Weston in Bath.

Her own eyesight was getting worse as a result of uveitis, an inflammation of the nerve endings at the back of the eyes, and it soon became apparent that what she needed was not a pet but a guide dog of her own. Foster – willing, familiar and already living under her roof – seemed like the perfect candidate.

And to Jenny’s surprise, Guide Dogs agreed once again; she would be allowed to retrain with him, her first guide dog for 30 years. “They wouldn’t have sent him out to anyone else, but because he’s been with us all his working life he knows me as well as he knew Mike.”

“Mike and Foster were a great illustration of our work while they were together, and when I heard that Jenny was interested in keeping Foster not just as her companion but also as her guide, I was excited to see if it might be possible,” says Alun Gwerman-Jones, District Team Manager for Bristol. “I had never heard of this happening before, but couldn’t be more pleased with the result.”

Any colour, as long it’s black

Black Labradors are a firm Mitchinson favourite – since getting his first of six guide dogs in 1962, Mike had only ever had one yellow; Jenny’s first, Ebony, whom she got in 1970, was a black Lab, as was her second, Nookie. (“You can imagine the ribald commentary I got, calling out for her in parks around Bath!”) It would be another three decades before she was paired with Foster – so why such a long inter-canine wait?

Because the uveitis to which Jenny lost the majority of her useful sight aged 20 has been far from consistent. Generally she perceives the world as if through a thick fog, with extremes of light and dark making it particularly difficult to see, but over the years her vision has been better and worse.

The 30-year-gap between guide dogs was brought about, strangely, by the birth of Mike and Jenny’s second daughter, Tessa, in 1973 (their first, Carol, now has a daughter of her own, one-year-old Martha). Whether because of hormonal changes or the physical exertion of labour, Jenny’s sight underwent
a gradual change for the better, and 15 months after Tessa’s arrival she could see double yellow lines on the road. With the return of some useful peripheral vision, when Nookie retired she decided not to reapply.

“Things were fairly stable until three years ago,” Jenny says, “when my sight began to deteriorate again. I lost clarity around the edges, and that’s when I began to think I might need another guide dog – though I never dreamt it would be Foster.”

**Losing a loved one**

Jenny and Mike first met in London, where they were both working for the Post Office. Based in St Martin’s le Grand, in the City of London, Mike worked on one side of the postal area and Jenny on the other, but the young couple used to meet at office parties, hit it off and, as Jenny puts it, “it went from there!”

They married in 1971 and would have been celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary this year. Sadly Mike fell ill with bowel cancer in June 2009, and in August had an operation to remove a tumour. While he initially responded well to chemotherapy, by Easter 2010 doctors discovered the cancer had spread.
“We were able to have a little 39th wedding anniversary celebration at the beginning of June last year, which Mike was able to enjoy, and he died at the end of that month,” says Jenny.

Mike worked Foster right up until his health began to fail. The dog was re-homed for a few weeks at the start of the summer, while Jenny and her family cared for Mike at home, before returning to Weston.

“It must have been a confusing time for him,” says Jenny. “I expect he was looking for Mike when he first came back. I don’t know how long he continued looking for him, but he’s accepted life as it is now.”

Setting the standard

And life as it is now means a new (albeit familiar) hand on his harness, but the same high quality of work from this truly professional pooch. Instructors and mobility workers agree, however, that things might have been different were it not for Mike’s exemplary standards as a guide dog owner.

It was his to-the-book working that made the partnership possible – as Jenny says: “The fact he kept Foster’s discipline up made all the difference to him working for me.” From that perspective, Foster could be considered something of a final gift from Mike, and it’s certain he would be delighted with how things turned out.

Mike’s amazing mobility capabilities stemmed from the fact that he was completely blind, having developed glaucoma at an early age and had both eyes removed. Jenny is convinced that this made his bond with his guide dogs stronger than most, allowing him to place himself completely in the paws of Foster and his other guides, trusting their training, intelligence and instincts.

“Mike had absolutely no vision at all, which made him even more fantastic mobility-wise,” says Jenny with great pride. “His strength was that even if he got lost or in a situation he wasn’t sure about he could put his faith in his dogs, and they would always get him out of it. They have always been excellent workers. If you ask a lot of them they really rise to the occasion.”

A family’s best friend

It’s certainly true of Foster, who last year was relishing the opportunity to get back into guiding. Retraining kicked off in November with a visit from Guide Dog Mobility Instructor Emma Yard – she knew the pair were old friends, but how would Foster and Jenny work together?

Perfectly, as it turned out. Foster’s talents and Jenny’s previous guide dog experience made their classes a walk in the park – or rather around the streets of Weston and Bath, local routes they both already knew. The only initial adaptation was to slow Foster down from the fast pace he was used to with Mike. Within a few weeks they were a perfect team.

It was an emotional journey; Emma says: “Jenny was grieving for Mike but at the same time dedicated to the training and determined to honour him by maintaining the standards he had set with Foster.

“I feel privileged to have worked with such a willing, gentle dog and such a brave, humbling lady.” Emma adds: “I have no doubt that this new partnership will provide a well-respected legacy that her husband would be very proud of.”

Shopping in Bath is now back on the cards for Jenny, as are the walking holidays the Mitchinsons so loved taking together, all made possible by the guide dog her husband worked so assiduously over the years. She is impressed and grateful that Guide Dogs – “a marvellous organisation” – allowed her to retrain with Foster: “I know what a difference he made to Mike’s life, and now to mine. It’s wonderful to have him still here with me, a true part of the family.”

Jenny out in Bath with Foster
For most of us, our daily routine just falls in to place. We barely take time to notice the world around us, let alone think about all the gadgets and labour-saving devices that aid us in all our daily tasks, like our washing machine, TV remote control, power drill, and of course mobile phone.

In 1990, 12.4 million people worldwide had a mobile phone contract; twenty years later this had increased 370 times to 4.6 billion. Mobile phones have evolved from simply being a convenient two-way voice-to-voice communication tool to being an integral part of our everyday lives. They are now phones, alarm clocks, music players, calculators, photo albums, TVs, GPS navigation systems, web browsers and so much more. On top of that they allow us constant contact with our friends and family via texts, instant messaging and Facebook. But what if you were suddenly faced with a life-changing disability, how would you be able to adapt to all the devices and appliances at your disposal?

For thirty six years Alan Fletcher was an engineering manager for BMW/Rover, travelling daily to his work place and leading an active life. At the age of 47, his eyesight started to worsen – he was diagnosed with retinal dystrophy – and ten years later, he was registered blind and had to take early retirement.

Even with the support of family, friends and specialist charities, visually impaired people quickly become isolated from everyday life. The prejudices and inaccessibilities of modern life become a reality. Alan explains: “It was devastating to be faced with a life-changing disability. I was scared and felt like a helpless child. It was such a great sense of loss, like losing a loved one, and only when the grieving process is over can you start to accept it and move on with your life.”

Alan applied for a guide dog and was paired with...
Joy, a black Labrador who is now six-and-a-half years old. “She definitely lives up to her name,” Alan comments. “She has transformed my life – she has become a close friend, my eyes and my life-guide.” Alan’s new joie de vivre has motivated him to want to help other people in similar circumstances and as such, he has recently taken up the voluntary position of chair of Swindon Branch for Guide Dogs.

Part of his role as chair of the local branch has been to help promote and organise go walkies for Guide Dogs events. They are fun and social sponsored dog walks where people and their dogs come together and meet others for a good cause, while also keeping fit.

Of course, it would be hard for Alan to undertake his duties without the aid of technology. Communicating with supporters, event organisers and the local community is crucial in helping to raise awareness of the work of Guide Dogs. Assistive technology functions such as a screen reader and speech recognition software, and text-to-speech software ensure that the PC packages can be used to create letters, spreadsheets and presentations.

About four months ago, Alan decided to purchase an iPhone. “Previously I had used a number of different types of phone; however, accessibility features were not standard and it became increasingly frustrating to have to send them away to be enhanced with speech software.” With the iPhone, however, Alan has been able to master all the features without any additional upgrades. He, and many like him, believe that Apple devices including the iPhone, iPad and iTouch, with their associated functionalities like voiceover technology, are a major driving force in making modern life more accessible for people who are blind or partially sighted. For some, they are simply ‘the guide dogs of the digital world.’

Guide Dogs has led the way in embracing these advances in technology and has recently launched a free and fully accessible mobile phone app called ‘go walkies.’ The app is available on iPhone and android devices and is aimed at anyone who has a dog, as well as people who just generally like to go walking. It shows new routes for walking and activates the smartphone’s built-in GPS functionality to allow users to log and share their favourite walks. It also provides weekly care-tips for your pooch from celebrity vet Marc Abraham – currently the resident vet on Sky One’s ‘My Pet Shame’, as well as ITV’s ‘This Morning’ and BBC ‘Breakfast News’. For serious dog-lovers there is a doggie picture gallery where users will be able to view cute dog pictures as well as make their own dog famous by uploading images.

Alan believes the app to be particularly useful in helping to find alternative, interesting routes to walk with Joy, as well as generally being a vital tool for promoting the work and benefits of Guide Dogs and go walkies. There are surprisingly few free apps in the UK offering dog owners the ability to find new walks and very few apps that take a social need and link it with a lifestyle choice.

Technological advances are allowing us to move towards a society in which blind and partially sighted people enjoy the same freedom of movement as everyone else. As Alan summarises: “Becoming blind in middle age was particularly difficult for both me and my family. My world was turned upside down even though I had 10 years getting used to my gradual loss of vision. However, both Joy and the iPhone have allowed me to rediscover my life and accept my situation with a new-found confidence and focus.”

Nine-year-old Lucy Oliver organised a cake sale at her school, Boxgrove Primary School in Guildford. Her headteacher was so impressed by her initiative and determination that he agreed to a whole-school non-uniform day, which raised nearly £600. Lucy’s mum, Jane, said: “I am very proud of my little girl for organising this and I am very proud of all her friends and her school for pulling together and raising such a fantastic amount.”

Watford Branch raised £700 at a cabaret night run by the Metropolitan Police Sports Club in Bushey, Hertfordshire. The audience danced the night away to live music from 60/70s chart toppers, Vanity Fare, and the night turned out to be the branch’s most successful fundraising event of last year.

The Ebbsfleet Branch raised £150 at the Longfield Festival last summer. Puppy walkers from the surrounding areas including Medway, Tonbridge and Maidstone joined in the fun, putting on a display in the main arena. The branch also collected more than £1,000 at a garden centre during Guide Dog Week. Image 1

Youngsters at Stanford Primary School in Essex collected coins to decorate the silhouette of a guide dog and raised £250, which was presented to the Thurrock Branch. Image 2

It was a bittersweet moment for the secretary of the Tenby and Pembrokeshire Branch, Eva Rich, when she accepted a cheque for £7,807. That’s because it was the last official engagement for her fifth guide dog, Angie, before she retired at the age of 12, after 10 years’ service. Eva and Angie were presented with the donation from a team of eight local men who climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa and completed the annual Pembrokeshire Charity Bike Ride in July last year. Eva’s new guide dog is called Oyster. Image 3

Crawling through dark, wet and muddy tunnels and climbing over 10-foot walls were just some of the ways that a team of fitness instructors from Gloucestershire raised £800 for Guide Dogs. A 16-strong team completed 18 challenges in 2.5 hours at an assault course in Bristol at the end of September. The team chose to donate to Guide Dogs because one of the participants, John Bowles, is blind. To experience what it was like to complete the endeavour without sight, fellow team member, Ian Doyle, did the course blindfolded. Image 4

A decade of making handmade quilts, chutneys and conserves has helped Hazel Dent to collect an impressive sum for Guide Dogs and the special care baby unit at Wansbeck Hospital. She has raised more than £3,000 for Guide Dogs by holding a Coffee
and Quilts Day each year for the last 10 years at her home in North Seaton Village in Ashington, Northumberland.

**Kidderminster and District Branch** hosted a stall at Bewdley Carnival last year where £95 was raised through trading items and a game. And there was special help from twins Lily and Madeleine Speller, from Bewdley, who emptied bags of their pocket money into the Guide Dogs collection box. Image 5

Four years of fundraising by **Witney Spartan Rangers Football Club**, including a weekly lottery draw and plenty of street collecting, was rewarded with a guide dog puppy being named Ranger. Ian Harris, Chairman of the club, in Oxfordshire, presented Ranger’s puppy walker, Gail Saunders, with a cheque for £5,000, which was passed on to the Oxford and District Branch. Image 6

A go walkies event at **Coate Water Country Park** in Swindon saw around 30 dogs and nearly 60 people raise £600. They followed chairman of the Swindon Branch, Alan Fletcher, and his guide dog, Joy, around the 1.7-mile course. Image 7

Volunteer speaker Ann Wilson and her husband, Ronnie, held a **Let’s Get Dunking** day at their home in Cramlington, Northumberland, raising £300. Image 8

**Patricia Thorpe** from Norwich has organised a coffee morning every October for the last 10 years in aid of Guide Dogs in memory of her mother, raising an overall total of £2,911. Image 9

Puppy walker **Lydia Martin** organised a fundraising effort over five days in the last week of October at Aberdeen Airport, collecting more than £2,000. Image 10

**Shirley and Alan Curtis** celebrated their golden wedding and in lieu of presents, family and friends donated £288.

Lynne Bakker-Collier, chairwoman of the **Stafford & Stone Branch**, raised £875 through a fundraising party at Oulton Village Hall near Stone to celebrate 35 years as a professional dog trainer.

**Thames Valley Branch** volunteers ran six events during November and December, raising £2,923.

Members of the **Southend on Sea Branch** accepted £650 from their local Waitrose after the supermarket chose Guide Dogs as one of the charities to benefit from its Community Matters fundraising scheme for August.

A two-day collection by the **Bath Branch** saw 34 collectors and their puppies in training, guide dogs and retired guide dogs raise £2,690.
International opera superstar, Andrea Bocelli, has given Guide Dogs a boost by allowing volunteers to collect at one of his British concerts.

Brood bitch holder Sandra Hoffman has nurtured a relationship with the Italian tenor, who has had sight problems since birth and went completely blind aged 12, over the last three years. A massive fan, Sandra has slowly earned the confidence of Andrea’s team, even being lucky enough to be invited to Andrea’s private home in Italy.

Guide Dogs now has Andrea’s ongoing support and he has given Sandra and her team permission to collect for Guide Dogs at his future UK concerts. Sandra was part of a 14-strong team collecting at the UK leg of his 2010 tour at the Manchester Evening News (MEN) Arena on Friday, 26 November 2010.

Sandra said: “This particular event was covered by both Tollgate and Coventry Fundraising Branches and extra support was given by Manchester volunteers – it is the support and dedication shown by the many guide dog volunteers and fundraisers that allows us to continue to provide our services to blind and partially sighted people. A big thank you to them all.”

The memory of a loved one lives on through charity work for one family whose son died in a tragic accident.

The Tennant family, from Castleford near Leeds, have named a guide dog puppy Gig in memory of their son, Richard. Richard was only 24 when he died in January 2008 after he fell down the stairs at the family home, and he was due to marry fiancée, Julieann Peniston, that year.

His mum Jennifer, dad Ray, brothers Andrew and Shaun, sister Rebecca and Julieann have since set up a charitable trust in his name, all helping causes that Richard was passionate about. So far, nearly £54,000 has been collected through a series of events including golf and ten pin bowling tournaments around Richard’s birthday in July, comedy nights and a host of races from York Half Marathon to the London Marathon.

And they have also helped Dogs for the Disabled, part-funded a minibus for a local school and built 10 aviaries at a local bird garden.

The puppy they have named is called Gig, as it was Richard’s nickname – coined when Rebecca could not say his name properly when she was young.

Andrew said: “Richard was the life and soul of the party, everyone else came first with him and he would drop everything to help someone out. To lose such a vibrant person was really hard.

“This fundraising gives us a way of keeping his name and memory alive and also, it puts something back into the community. To be able to help people with different disabilities and across a range of ages through things Richard would have loved is great.”

Raised: £11,000

Raised: £9,600

The memory of a loved one lives on through charity work for one family whose son died in a tragic accident.
SPRING is about to be well and truly sprung, so leave the long, cold winter months behind and celebrate the new season with a chance to win gardening goodies!

Just answer the spring-themed questions below and the winning entry will receive an allotment starter kit from John Lewis.

Send your answers to Forward Competition, Guide Dogs, Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading RG7 3YG or email forward@guidedogs.org.uk

Entries must reach us by April 25. Congratulations to Ian Hill from Birstall, West Yorkshire, who wins a Helensgate waisted vase.

**Competition rules**

The competitions are open to anyone resident in the UK, except employees of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, their families and anyone connected with the competition. No purchase necessary. Proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. No responsibility can be accepted for entries delayed, damaged or mislaid or wrongly delivered. Illegible entries will be disqualified. Only one original entry is allowed per envelope. The winners will be notified by either post or telephone and the results will be published in the next issue of the magazine. The winners must agree to the publication of their names, photographs and any publicity, if requested. In all matters concerning the competitions the Editor’s decision is final. No correspondence can be entered into. Entry implies acceptance of the rules. The closing date for these competitions is 25 April 2011.

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1. William Wordsworth wrote a famous poem about which flower? occurs on March 20 or 21 in the northern hemisphere?

2. How many feet of earthworms can a young robin eat in a day?

3. Spring is represented by which precious stone?

4. The movie ‘Easter Parade’, starring Fred Astaire and Judy Garland, immortalizes the grand Easter Sunday stroll down which famous street?

5. Which event usually occurs on March 20 or 21 in the northern hemisphere?

6. Who is famous for creating the most decorated and expensive Easter eggs?

7. Which flower is the most popular spring flower of all time?

8. Which patron saint is celebrated on March 17?

9. Which celestial body determines the date of Easter?


**Caption competition**

Thank you to Oxford District Fundraising Manager Tracy Bracher, who sent in this photo of guide dog puppy Taylor saying hello to police horse Titan outside Oxford United’s Kassam Stadium.

**Can you think of a caption?**

To enter, please write your answer on a postcard and send it to Forward Competition, Guide Dogs, Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading RG7 3YG. You can also email forward@guidedogs.org.uk

Entries must reach us by April 25 2011. The prize is a £10 Marks & Spencer voucher.

**Congratulations**

The Winter caption competition winner was Ian Noble from Hertford.

Mr Noble wins a £10 Marks & Spencer voucher.

Winning caption: “I’m the pick of the litter.”
Former Home Secretary David Blunkett is backing a waste management company’s efforts to raise Guide Dogs cash while helping the environment.

The Sheffield MP and his guide dog, Sadie, are behind Veolia Environmental Services’ campaign to recycle used inkjet cartridges at one of the city’s five Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Each year, over 60 million inkjet printer cartridges are thrown away when they could be turned into cash for charity, and cartridge remanufacturer, Environmental Business Products, is also on board with the campaign.

Mr Blunkett said: “This is an excellent scheme that combines recycling with a fantastic contribution to the mobility, dignity and independence of blind people. The initiative of recycling print cartridges is painless for those taking the trouble to contribute but extremely valuable in raising the necessary funds for guide dog training.

“As my own dog, Sadie, will be retiring, this is very close to my heart.

“I commend all of those who have been involved in the previous scheme to recycle unwanted mobile phones, which raised £5,000. I hope we can do even better with this new initiative.”

Uncovering hidden talents was the key to a PR agency’s 10th anniversary fundraising efforts.

Staff at Mosaic Publicity, in Colchester, Essex, marked the firm’s first decade by holding a series of events throughout last year including a hidden talent variety show.

Staff invited business people from across the town to demonstrate their skills outside the office, with the show featuring an opera singer, a dog agility show and a bed of nails act, among many more.

There was also a clothes swap in January, a media training master class for local business people in February and a masked ball in April.

The team smashed its £10,000 target and went on to raise more than £11,000, enough to name two guide dog puppies, Maximus (Max) and Boadicea, known as Beau. Gemma Rawlinson, PA and Event Manager, said: “The hidden talent show was a fantastic night and people couldn’t believe the level of talent.”

“She added: “Our CEO, Karen Ainley, decided to support Guide Dogs after seeing the local team doing a demonstration at a Colchester shopping centre.

“We decided to give the guide dog puppies Roman names because both Colchester and our company have strong Roman links. We’re all dog lovers here and we’re delighted to have been involved in providing guide dogs for the future.”
Key events for Spring 2011

10-13 March – Crufts
With nearly 28,000 healthy, happy dogs enjoying the thrills and excitement of Best in Show with their owners, there’s no better place than Dfs Crufts to experience and learn about the wonderful world of dogs. Tickets for dfs Crufts 2011 are now available to purchase online at www.crufts.org.uk/ticket-office.

9 April – Wellsgreen Golf Academy, Kirkcaldy, Fife
The Scottish Disability Golf Partnership (SDGP) is proud to announce its first PGA supervised Golf Training and Tuition Day for 2011.

Running from 09:30 through to 16:00, there are initially places for fifty disabled golfers and their coaches, guides or carers.

The SDGP are providing a golf lesson, use of practice facilities, catering and golf on the adjacent course for each person. A £20 entry deposit, which will be refunded on attendance, is the only requirement for attendees. Anyone of any age or golfing standard, who has a disability, serious health problem or mobility issue that interferes with the playing of the game and their coaches, guides or carers can attend. For more information or to apply, please go to www.sdgp.co.uk or email info@sdgp.co.uk.

10 April – Brighton Marathon
The UK’s newest 26 miler offers a great alternative to London. Run for a good cause, at the same time of year. For more information go to www.brightonmarathon.co.uk.

17 April – London Virgin Marathon
Now in its 31st year, head to the capital to watch and support those running for Guide Dogs on the streets of London. Check out the marathon guide available at www.virginlondonmarathon.co.uk which will tell you what time you can expect each group of runners to reach the mile markers.

2 May – Belfast Marathon
The Deep RiverRock Belfast City Marathon is celebrating its 30th year. Support the Belfast District Team who have set a fundraising target of £1,000. You can also make a donation at www.justgiving.com/guidedogsgals. For more information on the race go to www.belfastcitymarathon.com

June 9 from 12:00pm South West Disability Show, Westpoint, Exeter
The UK’s first Wheelchair Challenge will take place at Westpoint in Exeter. The challenge will be hosted by Toby Anstis and takes place at the South West Disability Show. This is the largest of its type in the South West focussing on providers of independent living and mobility solutions for all forms of physical, sensory and learning disabilities and mental health impairments. For more information go to www.ukwheelchairchallenge.co.uk.

14 May - 24 September Guide Dogs Fun Days
Nine fun day events are taking place around the country this summer. There will be the opportunity to meet senior management and Trustees, and each event will host a go walkies. There will also be added entertainment such as displays and trade stands. Please support your local event in any way you can. For more information visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/opendays.

14th May – Newcastle Billquay Farm

4th June – Redbridge Training School

11th June – Perth Upper Springlands

18th June – Belfast Malone House

25th June – Leamington Pump Room Gardens

2nd July – Cardiff Tredegar House

30th July – Bangor Penryhn Castle

4th September – Atherton Training School

24th September – Exeter Racecourse
We’ll never forget

If you would like to pay tribute to a guide dog you have known, please send your tribute (up to a maximum of 25 words) to forward@guidedogs.org.uk or to Forward at Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, RG7 3YG.

We are sorry that we do not have space to print all of the tributes that we have received and so we will include those who have passed away most recently in a future edition of Forward.

Angie 20.1.97 – 7.9.10
Wonderful and faithful to the end. My Angie baby, I will always love and remember you.
Reunited with Dad. Margaret, Pammy, Billy & Ferret

Baxter 1.6.97 – 24.7.10
Fourth guide to Derek Child. Trained by Emma Robinson, retired to Mike Franklin and Betty Hutchinson. He was a superb guide and lovely faithful friend.
Bless his memory.

Beattie 13.11.98 – 6.9.10
Happily retired to Mr and Mrs Saunders and guide to Sheila Rutherford.
“Love, trust, devotion, that’s what you gave to me. I will always love you, Beattie run free!”

Becky 24.9.96 – 3.8.10
My wonderful guide dog Becky guided me for 10 years cheerfully and in an excellent manner. A happy and adorable dog. She is greatly missed.

Bella 11.7.96 – 18.8.10
Puppy walked in Bridgewater. Wonderful companion who continued to give independence to Carole Brown.
Forever in our thoughts.

Campbell 23.4.97 – 14.9.10
With character and independent nature he sired many puppies. In retirement a loving pet who will be greatly missed.
Your spirit lives on – sleep well.

Chadd 18.6.97 – 15.7.10
A brave gentle giant who brought us such fun and happiness. We can’t believe you’ve gone.
We’ll never forget you my lovely boy – Mike and Val.

Connie 14.3.97 – 11.10.10
Second guide dog to Susan Harrison, puppy walked by Anne Thompson. Connie was very faithful, loving and friendly.
Loved and missed by all the family and friends.

Dee 7.2.02 – 3.9.10
Much loved friend and guide to Alison Trelfa. Put to sleep suddenly at only eight and a half.
Good night, God bless, gentle dinky Dee, my little goody four paws.

Doris 16.3.97 – 26.7.10
Owned by Sandra Heaton and puppy walked by Sid and Marion Hill of Chorley. We shall all miss her very much.
Rest in peace my little dotty Doris, good night.

Ellie 11.2.01 – 7.11.10
Find your softest pillow lord, to place her head upon, put a kiss upon her head, and tell her who it’s from.
She was my best friend.

Elsa 17.2.00 – 23.7.10
Loving mum to 42 pups. A fun girl who loved her toys and balls. Suddenly cancer took her from us.
So loved by the Burgess family.

Floss 25.2.96 – 1.9.10
Floppadoppa forever in all our hearts.

Herbie 5.5.97 – 21.11.10
Rehomed, aged one, with Moira and Mike. A real ‘character’. wonderful and loyal companion.
Loved by all who knew him.

Hooper 15.6.99 – 1.10.10
Beloved soulmate, you guided me and my family, teaching us joy,
patience and love. You live on in our hearts.

*God bless: till we meet again...*

**Isabel 3.11.97 – 12.10.10**
Loved by Peter and Kate Bailey, Doris Foggin and family and Frank. Faithful and willing companion to Patricia Rescigno. We will never forget you.

**Jay 26.04.96 – 12.09.10**
Puppy walked by the Blackhall family then beloved pet for 14 years. “The Duchess”, the most beautiful dog. Much loved and greatly missed.

**Jenkins 4.11.97 – 15.11.10**
Devoted guide dog to Joan Linch. Puppy walked with Joan and Derek Roddam to whom he returned for a happy retirement. Rest well “Big Fella” we will never forget you.

**Kathy 24.3.96 – 2.8.10**

**Leo 19.2.97 – 15.11.10**
Guide to Richard Booth of York and boarded by Don and Christine Blake and much loved by all their family. “Don’t cry, Leo is now God’s guide dog.”

**Louise 6.7.95 – 20.8.10**
In remembrance of my best friend – a true companion. I will always carry you in my heart my Bubbadus. Goodnight my Angel Love Mam, Dad, Chris and Chelsea X.

Masie, the first guide dog to Ann Stewart, Cumbernauld. Adopted by Robert Smith, Crieff. She gave me back my independence.

**Mick 09.07.97 – 29.11.10**
Faithful friend and loyal companion. You gave me the confidence to reach for the stars. Rest in peace, you will never be forgotten.

**Minty 28.11.94 – 27.8.10**
Brood bitch Minty, the puppy who stayed. Born to our previous brood Jodie, puppy walked by us, mother to 31 pups. A very special girl – loved and missed.

**Morton 20.8.99 – 17.6.10**
Guide to Peter Dawson, puppy walked by Anne Barrett. A very special guide dog who leaves behind so many happy memories. Missed by Peter, Pip, Jenny and Leah.

**Nancy 5.4.97 – 19.9.10**
Second guide dog to Mrs Janet Penn. Died suddenly and sadly missed by all.
Run free, from Mam, Dad and Toni and love forever.

Napier 11.3.96 – 10.8.10
Faithful guide dog to Jeff Parmenter and loved by all the family. We miss you and will never forget you.

Nick 12.7.97 – 29.7.10
Nick ‘the Goon’. Always full of fun and made us laugh every day with his antics, following his retirement. Miss you ‘Golden Boy’. Sarah, Max and Onyx.

Norman 24.7.97 – 19.7.10
Faithfully served as a guide dog, puppy walked and retired to Gill and George Johnson. You’ll be sadly missed but forever remembered, love always Gill, George, Mat & Gail.

Pepper 13.12.97 – 11.10.10
Puppy walked by Sue and Peter Donnelly, adopted by Sheila Black, Ayrshire on 1 April 1999. “Goodbye my darling, I will love and miss you forever.”

Pippa 22.6.96 – 5.10.10
First guide dog to Hayley Barnes. A loyal trusted and great family friend, much loved and missed by all the family and her many friends. Happy scrumping Pip!!

Portia (Penny) 29.3.95 – 27.7.10
Portia was a wonderfully funny, caring and empathetic, hardworking guide dog. She was loved by everyone who met her. Bless you, Miss P. Sleep well.

Quaker 28.2.97 – 22.10.10
Guide and loyal companion to Sue Hadley, then retired to Harry and Elaine for three wonderfully happy and carefree years. You deserve to sleep peacefully now, our lovely, gentle Quaker-belle.

Quala 27.11.97 - 4.11.10
Trusted guide to Phyllis Lee. She’s well missed and was loved by all the family. We all miss her and still look for her.

Ricky 8.11.94 – 8.8.10
A wonderful gentle lad walked and adopted by puppy walker Olwyna and Garry Stevenson. Life’s not the same without you. Miss you, in our hearts forever.

Sammy 3.4.99 – 14.7.10
Guide to Susan Pitt, put to rest after a short illness. You will always be in my heart, and never be forgotten. Goodnight, big boy.

Star 11.11.99 – 7.10.10
Gentlest of all our goldies, despite leaving Guide dogs training as “aggressive”. Our gain, but you would have been a great guide. Twinkle, twinkle, little Star.

Terri 1.12.97 29.10.10
First guide for Brenda Williams, retired 2001 and returned to puppy walker Diane Hoar. You were so brave. Loved by everyone – Diane, Steve, Brenda and David.

Tess 7.3.97 – 1.8.10
Retired brood bitch of the S litter of 1999 and T litter of 2001. We also had her mother, Jasmin, so saw her come into and leave this world.

Vance 7.4.99 – 29.11.10
Vance was my guide and loveable companion for nine and a half years, he was my rock and will never be forgotten. Rest in peace, love Roy and Kath Smith.

Vikki 13.8.96 – 26.8.10
Thanks for all the memories you’ve given me since we were paired. You will always be in our hearts. Goodnight my best friend. Have a packet of biscuits on me.

Whisp 4.10.96 – 7.6.10

Yarna 1.8.97 – 25.11.10
A very much loved and treasured guide dog, worked brilliantly. A very good friend to Leslie and Pat in her retirement. Known as Little Eyes. Always loved but never forgotten.

Zim 22.4.95 – 29.7.10
First and wonderful guide to Dave Richards. Puppy walked by Stephanie King, trained by Michela Butler. Loved and missed by all the family.

Zoe 13.1.98 – 17.8.10
Reducing the time

I am a very keen fundraiser and supporter of Guide Dogs for many, many years, and from what I have learned recently, blind and partially sighted people have to wait a long time for a replacement guide dog after the dog has died or retired.

Surely this could be alleviated if more people were trained?

Anonymous

Reply from the Editor:
I couldn’t agree more, as an organisation we do all we can to reduce people’s waiting times. Over 60 per cent of people requiring a replacement dog have no waiting time at all as we are able to plan with them for their dog’s retirement and subsequent retraining. However, we know there are still occasions when waiting times are too long

Forward in Daisy format

I am writing in response to a letter in the Winter edition of Forward sent in by Ian McClenaghen.

I hadn’t given much thought to the subject previously, but it may well be cost effective if Forward were produced in Daisy format, and anyone currently receiving it in another format (Braille in my case) could if they wanted to, have Daisy instead. Wouldn’t that be cheaper? I don’t know, but I imagine it would.

Elli Bennett

Reply from the Editor:
We’ve looked into the costings of producing Forward in Daisy format and the initial set up cost of producing the format is a few hundred pounds, whereas each individual CD has a very low unit cost of well under a pound. For this reason, it would only be cheaper to produce in the Daisy format if a lot of clients show an interest.

As we’ve not been bowled over by interested parties, I will certainly keep an eye on it and will give an update on the letters page in the Summer edition.

Fundraising efforts ignored

I was a little surprised and disappointed that you had not included the fundraising efforts of Bradwell Butchery in the Winter edition of Forward.

I knew it would be too late for the Autumn edition but had told them it should be in the next one.

Along with their Bradwell Bowls Club, the Bradwell Butchery raised well over £500 for Guide Dogs and presented the cheque to the secretary of the Lowestoft Branch.

Guide dog owner
Robin C. Evans with Bertie

Reply from the Editor:
Unfortunately, on this occasion, the news about the Bradwell Bowls Club and Bradwell Butchery was not included in the last edition of Forward.

As we currently receive a very large number of submissions for articles from supporters across the UK and, with only a limited amount of space, we can only include a small percentage of these in the printed edition of Forward.

We are very grateful to our supporters and always like to hear about the fun, creative and interesting ways that they raise funds for Guide Dogs and we’re considering alternative ways to share these stories as we hear about so many.

I hope that on this occasion you accept my apology and will continue to let us know about any fundraising events that you are involved with.
Brian Thorne

The Spelthorne Branch of Guide Dogs is sad to announce the death, on 19 October 2010, of its treasurer, Brian Thorne following a brief illness.

Brian had been the branch’s only treasurer since its formation in 1993, and has fundraised over £50,000 for Guide Dogs since the mid ’70’s.

One of Brian’s proudest moments was when he visited the Redbridge Training Centre to meet the trainee guide dog which he had sponsored, named Brian.

Brian was highly respected within the Guide Dogs family with other branch officers seeking his support and advice. Brian will be sadly missed by his family, friends and colleagues everywhere.

Brian was awarded a Civic Award from Spelthorne Borough Council in 2008 for his Outstanding Voluntary Service to the Community.

Alan Seddon

Alan Seddon was a dedicated dog trainer for Guide Dogs for almost 20 years. Joining in 1965, he served his apprenticeship at Bolton and Leamington and was part of the original staff at the Forfar Training Centre.

He married head kennel maid Freda Kenney and moved back to Bolton for many happy and busy years where they raised three children.

Alan progressed within Guide Dogs to area supervisor for Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire before returning to Scotland in 1984, where he built a successful boarding and training kennel business.

Alan died on New Year’s Day aged 72 following a short battle with cancer.

Peggy Powell

The Bristol, Avon and Somerset District Team is sorry for the loss of guide dog owner Peggy Powell of Patchway, Bristol. Peggy’s family would like to thank everybody at Guide Dogs for their kindness, generosity, and support over the last 12 years.

Guide dogs Isobel and Drew gave her a new quality of life after her husband John passed away, keeping her active with a purpose to carry on. She will be sadly missed.

Michael Durrant

The Wellingborough Branch is sad to announce the death of Michael Durrant on 16 September 2010. Michael was an active member of the branch and was always promoting Guide Dogs in his day to day life. Michael’s wife Ann would like to thank all his friends for their kind donations in lieu of flowers at his funeral, where £410 was collected for Guide Dogs.

Ann’s guide dog Eric was a constant companion to Michael in his final weeks and up until the day he died. Michael will be sadly missed by his friends in the branch.

In memory and in our thoughts

Asking for donations to charity in lieu of funeral flowers can be a special way of remembering a loved one.

We have collection envelopes that can be personalised by us with the name of your friend or relative.

To request envelopes, please call Joette Emerton on 0118 983 8385.
10 years of Le Tour experience
All that’s missing from the Alps is you

20–27 August 2011
To register your place today call us on 0845 600 6787
or text ‘DOGS’ and your name to 88802
For more details check out our website
www.guidedogs.org.uk/letour