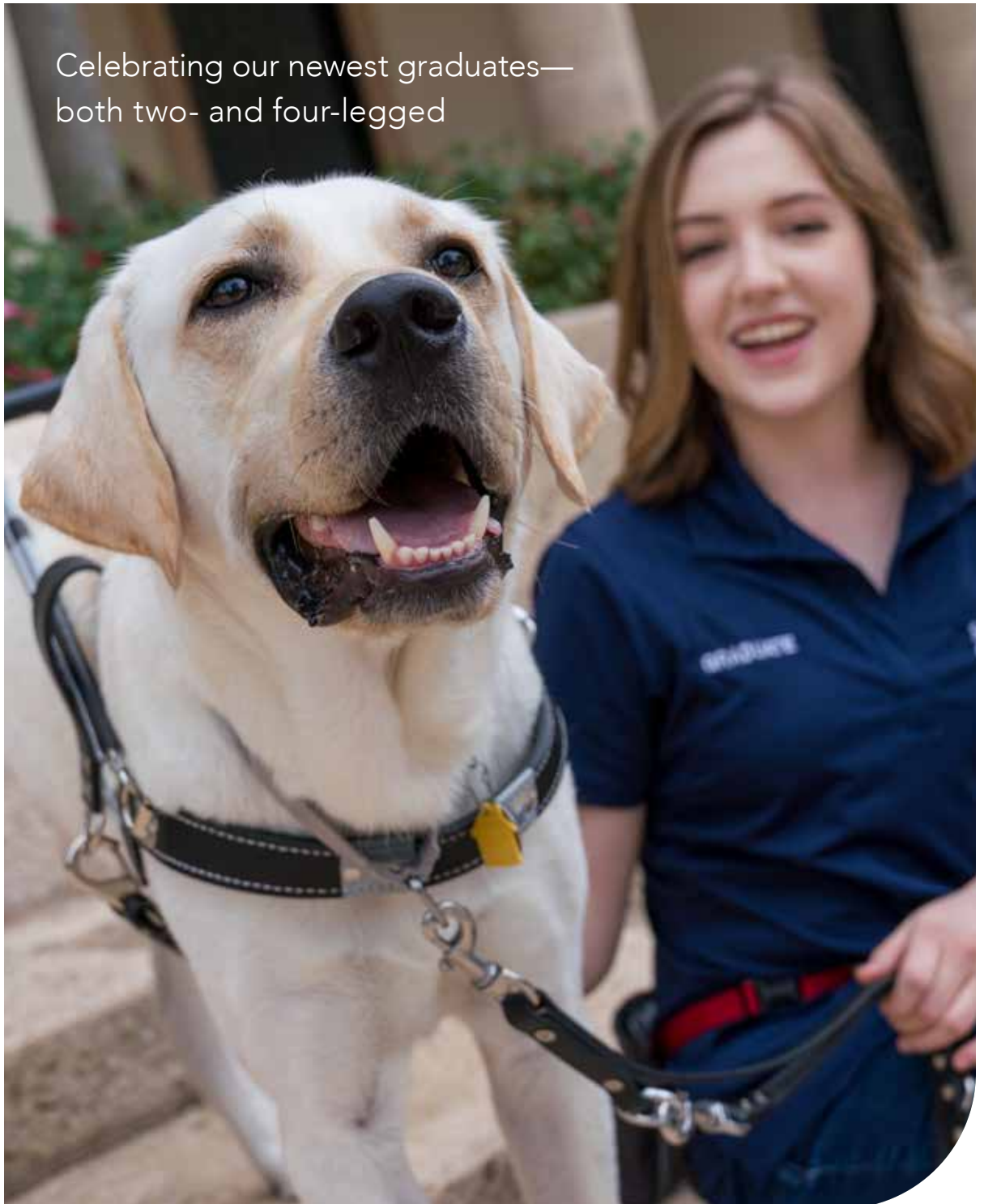


SIDE SIDE

 Southeastern
GUIDE DOGS

Celebrating our newest graduates—
both two- and four-legged



WINTER 2021

About

SIDE by SIDE is a publication of Southeastern Guide Dogs

Southeastern Guide Dogs transforms lives by creating and nurturing extraordinary partnerships between people and dogs. We breed, raise, and train elite guide dogs, service dogs, and skilled companion dogs and provide life-changing services for people with vision loss, veterans with disabilities, and children with significant challenges. We offer our premier dogs and lifetime follow-up services at no cost. Since 1982, we have successfully created thousands of guide and service dog teams throughout the U.S. and currently oversee the well-being of over 1,200 puppies and dogs. **GuideDogs.org.**

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Cover photo featuring Clare Weigel and guide dog Fin



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Special thanks

**to Jabil for
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this issue of
Side by Side.**

JABIL

Welcome

Dear Friend,

In this new publication, *Side by Side*, we're celebrating the people and dogs who have recently graduated from our school. Here, you'll see photos and sentiments from guide dog teams, service dog teams, and skilled companion dog teams as they begin their journeys together . . . side by side.

To each new graduate, our dream for you is that your dog restores your freedom, confidence, and hope. We're standing side by side with you as you embark on this new season of independence.

To our volunteers and donors, thank you for your generosity of spirit. Your kindness makes an impact beyond what any of us can imagine. With every gift—and every dog—you stand side by side with our alumni, both two-legged and four-legged.

Graduates, welcome to the Southeastern Guide Dogs family. And friends, thank you for making this family stand strong . . . side by side.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Titus Herman".

Titus Herman
Chief Executive Officer



Our Programs

OUR DOGS

OFFER FREEDOM



For people with vision loss

Guide Dogs help people with vision loss navigate independently; trained in over 40 cues.

Kids Companion Dogs are skilled companion dogs that enhance independence for children with vision loss, preparing the way for a future guide dog.



For veterans

Service Dogs help veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other disabilities; trained in 15–20 cues.

Guide Dogs help veterans with vision loss navigate independently; trained in over 40 cues.

Facility Therapy Dogs provide comfort in military medical facilities nationwide.

Emotional Support Dogs benefit veterans and help restore a more active lifestyle.

Gold Star Family Dogs comfort military family members who have lost a loved one in active service to the nation.



For children & teens

Guide Dogs help teens with vision loss—ages 15 and up—navigate independently.

Kids Companion Dogs are skilled companion dogs that enhance independence for children with vision loss, preparing the way for a future guide dog.

Gold Star Family Dogs comfort military family members who have lost a loved one in active service to the nation.



Robin Thorsen Guide Dog Wave

LARGO, FLORIDA

Robin Thorsen is a woman on the go. Back in 2006, Robin suffered a stroke that took away her vision in an instant. A former registered nurse, she was delighted to receive her first guide dog in 2010, a lively girl named Florence. Flo gave her a sense of independence and mobility until this sweet dog was retired in 2019. Now Robin's successor dog, Wave, will bring her out of her shell, and she will start doing more things on her own again, as she did with Flo.

Wave was raised by Mary Mulvey.



Destiny and Luca (Junie) Kids Companion Dog Merlot

SEFFNER, FLORIDA

When Luca was 2, Destiny took him in as a foster child. He was born with septo-optic dysplasia, a disease that prevents the optic nerves from connecting the eyes with the brain. Destiny nicknamed him "Junie", because like a juniper tree, Luca is "strong and withstanding." Now his best friend is a female yellow Lab named Merlot. "Merlot is just a super snuggler and so sweet with Luca." Destiny says. Her love and attention give Luca extra confidence and help him prepare for a future guide dog.

Merlot was raised by Jo-Ski and Allen Theiler.



"He gives me
the independence
to go where
I want when I
want. It's really
that simple."

—Mike Strait

Mike Strait | Guide Dog Scotty

SIERRA VISTA, ARIZONA

Scotty was raised by Terence Kiernan.



Joe Bragg Guide Dog Billy

BLOUNTSTOWN, FLORIDA


Congenital albinism caused low vision for Joe Bragg all his life, but he didn't get his first guide dog until age 38. He now has his second dog, Billy, and says, "It gives you a lot of freedom that you didn't even know you could have."

Billy was raised by John Creaser, Caitlin Creaser, and Kim Coniglio.



"Donald is a stately, brilliant, beautiful, lovable Lab who's almost regal and very athletic. He just holds himself like he's a prince."

—Teresa Galgano | Guide Dog Donald

U.S. ARMY VETERAN 
FORT MYERS, FLORIDA

Donald was raised by Donna Brooker and Jim Rigg; Marylynn and Paul Caruso.



Billy Ginocchio Emotional Support Dog Audrey

U.S. ARMY VETERAN 
THE VILLAGES, FLORIDA

PTSD often darkened the thoughts and mood of Army and Vietnam veteran Billy Ginocchio. But now he's been paired with Audrey, an affectionate, smart, and sweet emotional support dog who makes him feel relaxed and grateful. "It relieves the stress in your life," Billy says.

Audrey was raised by Loretta and Mike Holtkamp.

"I will love being able to walk around my neighborhood again. I've missed it horribly."

—Dawn Carello



Dawn Carello | Guide Dog Norm

BURTON, MICHIGAN

Norm was raised by David Case and Karen Price.



Jeanette Nazario Gold Star Family Dog Bruno

CLERMONT, FLORIDA


The best days are what Jeanette Nazario calls “rainbow days.” Those are days when this mother of three sees a rainbow in the sky in conjunction with a special memory about her son, Zachary Charles Moore, who died while deployed to South Korea with the Army in 2017. On other days, Jeanette faces anxiety, isolation, and mourning. With the help of her Gold Star Mothers group that she calls her “sisters,” Jeanette’s been able to cope with her grief and work as a server at nearby Disney World. The women in her group all have support dogs and persuaded Jeanette to apply for one, too.

Now a Gold Star Family dog named Bruno helps Jeanette get back on track, feel happier, and have a purpose. Together, they are getting out into the sun, visiting a nearby lake to watch ducks, snuggling together, loving each other, and having long, intimate “conversations” about Zachary. “He just looks at me and he gives me unconditional love,” she says. “He’s already my best friend.” Since Bruno arrived, Jeanette has resumed running and feels less stressed. “Bruno is a gentle giant,” she adds. “He’s a tender-hearted being. He’s so loving, and you can just see right through his soul. And he’s the calm that I needed.” Bruno makes each day a rainbow day!

Bruno was raised by Alexis Kopp.



Robert Reuille Facility Therapy Dog Pella

U.S. AIR FORCE VETERAN 
EMERALD COAST BEHAVIORAL HOSPITAL
FT. WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA

Air Force veteran Rob Reuille heads three outpatient centers serving veterans, where facility therapy dog Pella comforts everyone she meets. “It’s amazing to see patients transform,” Rob says. “They walk in sad . . . then they see Pella. She runs up to them and you can see the weight lifted.”

Pella was raised by Bobbie Wimberley.



“She likes to hug and lay her head on me, but when it’s time to go and I say ‘heel,’ she is right behind me, wagging her tail. Jasper is always anxious to see what comes next!”

—**Dottie Langham | Guide Dog Jasper**
SEBRING, FLORIDA

Jasper was raised by Vicki and Richard Potapow.



Andrew Service Dog Huey

U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN 

Andrew loved being a Marine and served 16 years, including tours to Iraq and Afghanistan. After injuries and PTSD forced a medical retirement, his calm, cuddly service dog keeps him grounded. “Huey keeps me sane,” Andrew says. “No matter what’s going on, he’s got my back.”



Jeff Meth | Guide Dog Tashi

FT. LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

Jeff Meth became legally blind about three years ago. Detached retinas affected both eyes and could not be repaired, even with two surgeries. He enjoyed a career as the manager of mailrooms, but this former New Yorker has coped alone with his vision loss as a literal curtain descended and blocked out his central sight. When Jeff learned about guide dogs from the Lighthouse for the Blind of the Palm Beaches, he was ready and willing to apply.

Now, Jeff is so happy with his new four-legged life partner, his guide dog, Tashi. He fell in love with this yellow goldador immediately and describes everything about her as “outrageous!”. She is smart, affectionate, impeccably trained, and a quick learner. From the moment Tashi first steered him around a cement parking curb and kept him from tripping and getting hurt, Jeff knew that all the great things he heard about guide dogs were true. Tashi is there for him on daily walks; his companion when eating out; by his side on trips to the mall, and his guide wherever life may take him. “You know, we’ll learn together, and she’ll get all the love and caring back from what she gives me,” Jeff says with a big smile.

Tashi was raised by Paula Sedita.



Jim King | Guide Dog Piney

U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN 🇺🇸
NEW PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA

Jim King has his first guide dog and new best friend in a yellow Lab named Piney. Piney is petite, but Jim says, “She’s a ball of energy and a sweetheart. Piney has a personality that is bubbling over. It’s amazing how the trainers have matched me up with her . . . it’s like she was sent from heaven.”

This Marine and Vietnam veteran says his macular degeneration condition accelerated over the years due to exposure to Agent Orange, which also gave him cancer of the voice box. He has only slight peripheral vision in one eye. The visual impairment service team advisor (VISTA) at the VA recommended a guide dog, and now Jim is thrilled with his experience at Southeastern Guide Dogs. “I’ve learned so much about my life,” Jim notes. “How to move forward with my grandkids and with people. It’s just the most amazing thing in the world.”

Now Jim has the freedom and confidence to give Piney his complete faith and trust when she’s guiding him, which gives him goosebumps every time. “I’ve gone through the depression stage, and I never want to go there again,” he admits. “But with Piney, I don’t have to worry about that. She’s a blessing in disguise.”

Piney was raised by Monika Beard and Daniel (DJ) Horning.



"I feel more confident and safer, too, that there is someone looking out for me."

—Clare Weigel

Clare Weigel | Guide Dog Fin

TAMPA, FLORIDA

Fin was raised by Kerri, Rick, and Rikki Swift.

Joe Sicking Facility Therapy Dog Drew

NORTH RIVER FIRE DISTRICT
PALMETTO, FLORIDA



As Assistant Fire Chief with the North River Fire District in Palmetto, Florida, Joe Sicking manages department operations covering five firehouses and 64 firefighters. With Station 5 less than three miles from our campus, our organizations have come in close contact. Puppy raiser groups frequent the stations for puppy training, and fire department staff have long recognized our instructors out training dogs.

As first responders, firefighters get personal with human tragedy, whether from burning buildings or fatal car accidents. So, when elected fire commissioner Rob Bell—who is also on staff at Southeastern Guide Dogs—suggested that a dog might benefit those on the frontlines, Chief Joe agreed.

That's how a yellow Lab named Drew came to work as the North River Fire District facility therapy dog. Drew brings smiles and relieves stress at the five firehouses. With his relaxed but enthusiastically friendly personality, Drew fits in wherever Joe goes. After work, Drew's new forever friends include Joe's wife, Hilary, and their toddler daughter, Sloan.

"Drew definitely makes a huge difference around here," Joe says. "Some people have had some trouble recently—emotional issues—and Drew takes their mind away from the struggles of life. He's got the best attitude a dog could have!"

Drew was raised by Chip and Terry Hoover.



Felisha and Parker Kids Companion Dog Rainer STATESBORO, GEORGIA

Felisha says her son Parker, 9, has a purpose in life to share his challenging story and to help others. Parker was born blind due to Norrie disease, a condition that prevented his retinas from forming and causes gradual hearing loss. Parker's worsening hearing causes anxiety, and that's where a sweet Kids Companion Dog named Rainer comes in. This attentive Lab always listens when Parker wants to talk about big feelings and emotions. Felisha says, "Rainer has provided an extra source of happiness for our family, which is really what we need."

Rainer was raised by Melissa Creter.

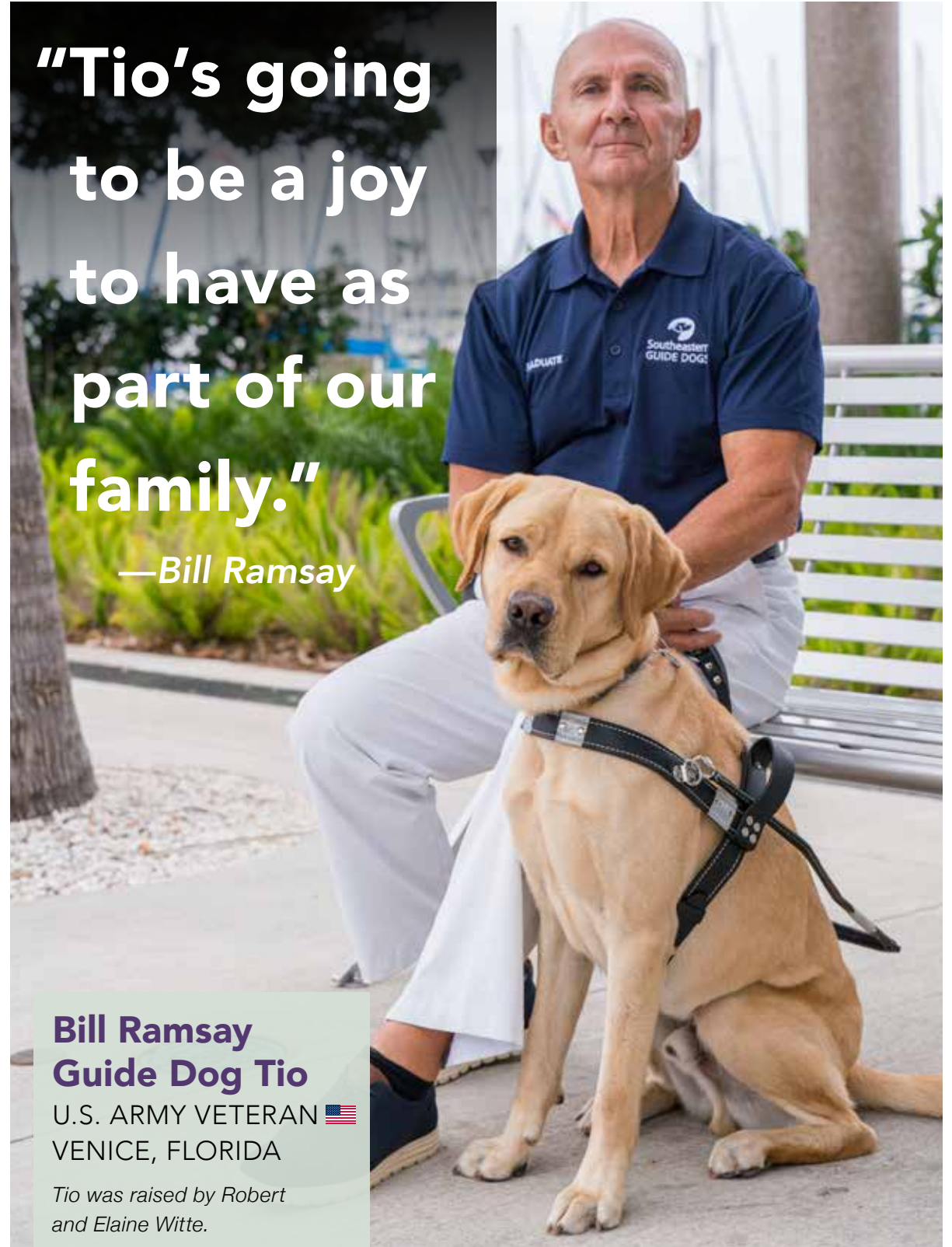


U.S. Air Force Veteran Service Dog JT

U.S. AIR FORCE VETERAN 

This Air Force veteran wanted a service dog to ease the pain of post-traumatic stress after a terrible experience in Iraq, where she served two tours as an aircraft mechanic. Enter JT, a Lab with big, brown, beautiful eyes that she describes as "staring directly into my soul." Now she has a furry friend to lean on emotionally, one who will always be her buddy. "JT is attentive, smart, and sweet, and it's already gone a million times better," she says. "My heart and my mind are so incredibly blessed."

JT was raised by Andrea Bivins.



"Tio's going to be a joy to have as part of our family."

—Bill Ramsay

Bill Ramsay Guide Dog Tio

U.S. ARMY VETERAN 
VENICE, FLORIDA

Tio was raised by Robert and Elaine Witte.

Guide Dog Camp

for Teens with Vision Loss



At Guide Dog Camp, 14 to 17-year-olds with vision loss and their parents learn how our guide dogs can change a teen's life. There's no charge for this overnight, two-day camp. In October and November we held our latest Guide Dog Camps with eight campers and nine parents attending.



TEENS & PARENTS GET TO EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH A GUIDE DOG!



IT'S WAY MORE THAN PUPPY LOVE!



"All my questions were answered."

—Camper Mom, Cindy



"My experience showed me just how confident a guide dog could make me.

I DID NOT HAVE ANY FEAR

crossing streets or going up and down stairs. Working with the dogs at camp truly drove home that the guide dog will be there through thick and thin."

— Camper, Bailey

"The best part about Guide Dog Camp was the chance to **CONNECT** with other families and gain a deeper understanding of what it means to have a guide dog."

—Camper Mom, Laura



For more information or to apply, visit [GuideDogs.org/Camp](https://www.guidedogs.org/camp)



Sustaining dollars are the bedrock of our financial strength, and our [Cornerstone Society](#) is an important program for like-minded members of our community who believe in our mission. Your commitment to make a lasting difference ensures that we can provide our extraordinary dogs to the people we serve.



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We invite you to join the Cornerstone Society, an exceptional group of donors who pledge a recurring gift. With your multi-year commitment, you will receive the following benefits:

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Founder | \$100,000+ per year

Leave a Legacy That Lasts



HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Heritage Society is a group of caring individuals committed to ensuring the long-term stability of our school through wills and bequests. To join, simply notify us that you have included Southeastern Guide Dogs in your will by **emailing heritagesociety@guidedogs.org**, and find out more at **[GuideDogs.org/HS](#)**.

Remembering Southeastern Guide Dogs in your will creates a legacy of kindness, and gifts of any size impact our extraordinary dogs. Don't have a will? We've partnered with Freewill.com to give you a simple, convenient way to write a legally valid will, at no cost. Get started on your will today by visiting **[GuideDogs.org/will](#)**.

Consult your tax professional for advice, and thanks for giving!



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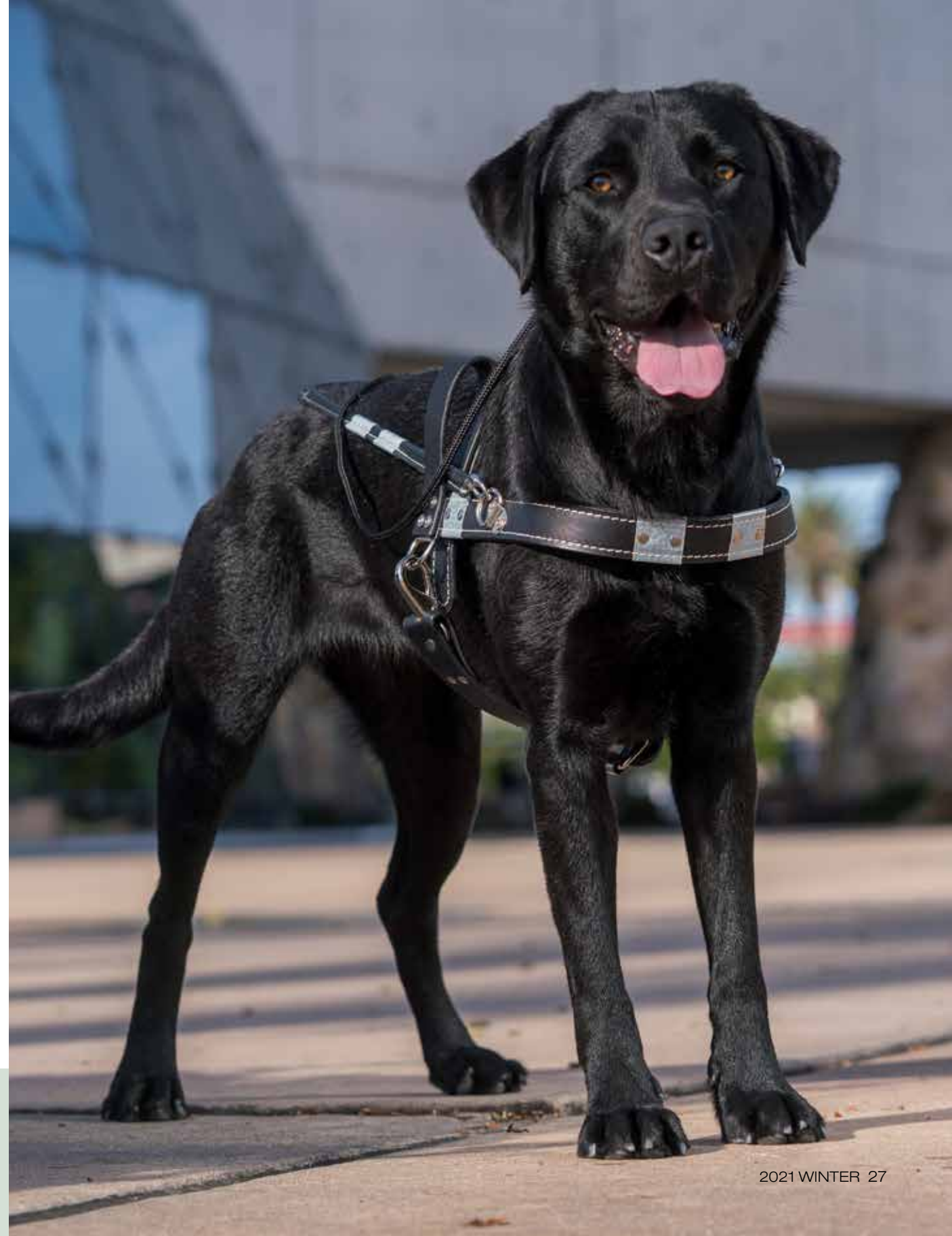
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Or, contact Gloria Manzenberger, VP Finance & Risk Management at Gloria.Manzenberger@guidedogs.org or **941-845-1870**.

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Through its Jabil Cares program, Jabil participates in numerous volunteer efforts, initiatives and partnership with organizations, like Southeastern Guide Dogs, that support our core beliefs around **Education, Empowerment** and the **Environment**. At the root of all these efforts is our greatest asset – our employees.

Over the past six years, Jabil along with our employees and suppliers, have donated \$250,000 to support Southeastern Guide Dogs.

With these donations, trained service dogs have been partnered with military veterans to provide a renewed of sense of stability and well-being, and of course what dogs do best - unconditional love and loyalty.

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