

Visionary

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Helicopter Rescue
of Visually Impaired
and Guide Dogs in
Times of Disaster

IGDF Organisations
Collaborate



International Guide Dog Federation
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www.igdf.org.uk



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

The map below outlines the contributing countries for this edition of Visionary – **Australia, Czech Republic, Japan, Poland, South Korea, USA**



Cover Photo

JGDA staff and the Hiroshima Fire Department Air Corps, Japan

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Contents

- 3 Message From The Chair**
Bill Thornton
- 4 Board Nominations**
- 5 IGDF Assessments**
- 6 Helicopter Rescue of Visually Impaired and Guide Dogs in Times of Disasters**
Masaru Yamada and Shiori Nishida
- 8 Multiple Activities Target Varying Audiences**
Rachelle Kniffen
- 9 International Guide Dog Day, Poland**
Irena Semmler
- 11 International Guide Dog Day, Korea: "Thank you! We will remember you forever!"**
Baron Jang
- 12 How the guide dog inspired the creation of audio mobile game**
Jana Kuklova
- 13 Guide Dogs Australia invites you to CatchUp**
Gemma Hillis
- 16 Scuola Nazionale Cani Guida per Ciechi and Guide Dogs of America Collaborate**
Yvonne Martin
- 17 Committee Focus: Ivana Merryman Boncori**
- 20 IGDF Conference**
- 21 IWDBA Breeders Workshop**
- 22 Webinars and Workshops**
- 23 Next Issue**

Message From The Chair

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

It's been another busy and eventful few months at IGDF. In May we held a joint Board meeting with Assistance Dogs International (ADI) in Vancouver. Working more closely with ADI to strengthen standards and improve access rights for our service users was identified as a key priority in the 2021 and 2022 membership surveys, and I'm confident that this meeting is an important step on that journey. The two organisations agreed several key areas for closer collaboration and we will be working with ADI to agree a new Memorandum of Understanding to consolidate this positive relationship.

The meeting with ADI took place at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, venue for the 2023 IGDF Conference, and I look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible to Vancouver in April. Registrations for the 2023 Conference are now open.

It was great to see how many organisations marked International Guide Dog Day this year. The creativity and enthusiasm with which members celebrate guide dog services and the difference they make to people who are blind or have low vision is inspirational.

Thank you to everyone for completing the annual returns using the new online form this year. IGDF used this data to compile the annual guide dog statistics, and these were published in a press release ahead of International Guide Dog Day.

continued

Message From The Chair



dedication and hard work of the 5,589 people who work for IGDF organisations and the 33,551 individual volunteers.

The full 2021 guide dog statistics can be found on the [Facts & Figures page of the IGDF website](#).

After months of planning, the Accreditation Committee and Assessors have commenced virtual assessments for 26 organisations. A huge thank you to everyone who has been involved in making this happen, especially the AC and members of the Remote Assessments Working Group.

As always, please do get in touch with any feedback, comments or suggestions. It is always a pleasure to hear from colleagues around the world and better understand how IGDF can help member organisations deliver our shared vision.

Bill

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

please contact the IGDF office for a copy of both the guidance document and nominations form.

The deadline for nominations is 22nd August 2022.

These figures showed that 2021 was another challenging year for most organisations, but they also revealed the resilience and innovation which characterised the response to the pandemic. 2,405 new guide dogs were trained during 2021, compared to 2,038 during 2020 – a significant step towards returning to the pre-pandemic global averages of just over 3,000 new guide dogs each year. This is a testament to the

Board Nominations

Nominations have now opened for the 2022 Board Elections. Elections will take place at the AGM on 22nd September 2022.

If you would like to nominate someone from your IGDF member organisation,

IGDF Assessments

Update from **IGDF Office, UK**

2022 assessments are now underway using the new Remote Assessment process.

Organisations being assessed in 2023 will be contacted in due course to begin the process. 21 organisations are due to be assessed next year including one new Applicant Organisation.

[A guide to an IGDF assessment can be found on the IGDF website](#) for those wishing to prepare in the meantime.

If you are unsure what year your organisation is due to be assessed, please contact the IGDF office.

Congratulations to the following existing Enquiring Organisation which has been accepted as an Applicant Organisation:

- The Guide Dog Association in Turkey

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

- Chiens Guides du Coeur (France)

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

- Fondation VISIO (France)

IGDF and ADI Joint Board Meeting



Members of the IGDF and ADI Boards meeting together in Vancouver in May 2022

Helicopter Rescue of Visually Impaired and Guide Dogs in Times of Disasters

Masaru Yamada
and Shiori Nishida
Japan Guide Dog Association



Guide dog and instructor being air-lifted by Hiroshima City Fire Department Air Corps

In Japan, we have many natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, floods, etc. Although it is normal for the Japanese to have disaster prevention training at schools, workplaces, and commercial facilities, we never know when and where a disaster may suddenly occur.

In July 2018, the West Japan Flood Disaster caused river flooding, inundation, and landslides, and the number of fatalities exceeded 200 people, making it an enormous natural disaster. The disaster affected our guide dog users, and the Japan Guide Dog Association went to rescue guide dogs that could not evacuate with their users.

This disaster prompted the Hiroshima City Fire Department Air Corps to consult with

us on a rescue method for the visually impaired and guide dogs in a disaster. It was challenging to rescue guide dogs by helicopter if a visually impaired person and a guide dog could not escape.

We started by examining rescue tools and methods, having study meetings about disabilities and assistant dogs, and discussions with rehabilitation specialists and people with vision impairment. We repeated rescue training in a stationary helicopter and then stepped up to lifting and training in a flying helicopter with our JGDA staff.

The movement has spread out, and now, three other prefectures' Firefighting Air Corps can rescue guide dog users with helicopters, and it is expanding even more!

You can see a video of how a helicopter rescues guide dog users at the following website on JGDA's YouTube channel.

<https://youtu.be/EeucGFzYmkk>

There were also other problems when evacuating with guide dogs. A guide dog user consulted with us about his concerns about being refused access to evacuation shelters with his guide dog in a disaster.

In evacuation centers, assistant dogs' access is not as common as in other public facilities and transportation. Promotion of understanding and cooperation with the public and government authorities regarding the possibility of bringing assistance dogs to evacuation centers was necessary.

JGDA produced posters and brochures to promote understanding. In addition, our staff and guide dog users participated in disaster drills to see how users would live in evacuation centers.

As a result of our movements, disaster prevention activities considering assistance dogs are spreading in Japan. JGDA is not only a guide dog training

organization but also a rehabilitation facility that serves the visually impaired. We hope to continue our work to educate society on the understanding of guide dogs and the visually impaired.



Message on the poster:
Anytime. Anywhere. Together in a shelter.

What is an Accompanied Evacuation?

Assistance dogs that support people with disabilities will accompany users to evacuation centers in a disaster.

Under the Act on Assistance Dogs for Persons with Disabilities, assistance dogs can accompany users in facilities used by an unspecified number of people.

We ask for your understanding and awareness that assistance dogs will accompany users to evacuation shelters.

Multiple Activities Target Varying Audiences

Rachelle Kniffen
Leader Dogs for
the Blind, USA

Over the past several years, we have celebrated and engaged our constituents on International Guide Dog Day (IGDD) in a variety of ways. In 2022, we decided to connect with all members of our community through a mixture of online activities.

First, we partnered with the International Association of Assistance Dog Partners (IAADP) for an online webinar where our clients could learn about the history, advocacy efforts and benefits of IAADP membership.

Of course, we were active on social media via Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Our IGDD related Facebook posts included a video explaining common misconceptions people have about working with a guide dog and a Facebook

Live Event that provided a behind-the-scenes look into dog distraction training. The event had 4,700 viewers with our posts for the day reaching over 23,000 people and garnering over 1,300 interactions.

Over the years, promoting donating to Leader Dog on IGDD has proven successful. This year we associated our online IGDD campaign with a direct mail match campaign we were already running. This combination earned us a 150% increase in donor activity vs. typical Wednesdays which was an 85% increase in donations over 2021.

In the end, we found that combining some tried and true outreach methods with a few new activities made for a successful International Guide Dog Day.



Leader Dogs client, Heather with her guide dog, Ivan who were the faces behind the 2022 direct mail match campaign and were featured on social media for IGDD

International Guide Dog Day, Poland

Irena Semmler
Labrador Guide Dog
Foundation, Poland



Meeting with children at schools in Poland

The lifting of the restrictions related to the pandemic made it possible to plan the International Guide Dog Day celebrations with much greater momentum than in the past two years.

Being aware of the importance of promoting the idea of a guide dog, the Labrador Guide Dog Foundation from Poznań (Poland) decided that the activities undertaken as part of this year's celebrations will be aimed at the younger generation.

At the invitation of the Management, the representatives of the Foundation visited the Special Training and Educational Centre for Blind Children. The centre is located in the small town of Owińska

bordering Poznań, in a beautifully restored former Cistercian monastery complex, which dates back to the 13th Century. The facility includes a primary school, a general secondary school and a trade school and is surrounded by a historical park in which a spatial orientation park, unique on a European scale, has been created.

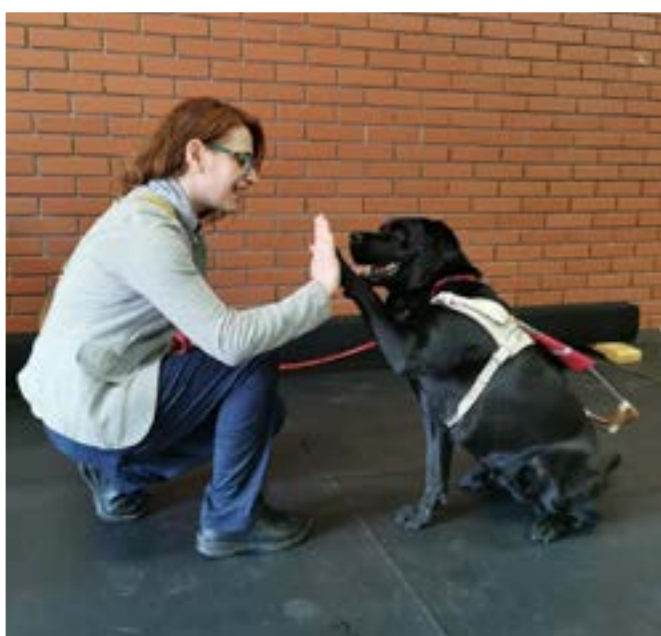
In Owińska we met two groups of teenagers amongst whom were also young Ukrainians. We spoke about working with a guide dog, about the psychological benefits of having an assistance dog, and about the role of puppy raisers in the process of raising and training future guide dogs. Our visit to Owińska met with a warm welcome, but above all with great interest on the part of the youths.

In addition to our visit to Owińska, we also met with students at one of the primary schools in Poznań. This time the participants were a group of nine-year-olds. We delivered a short presentation for them on how a guide dog helps a blind person, alongside a video, in which the heroine, a black Labrador Samba, explained what her job was.

Together with their teacher, the children took part in practical workshops; they got acquainted with the Braille alphabet, wrote their names on plates, and they recognised shapes in a textbook for blind children, blindfolded. This group also included several children from Ukraine who, despite the language barrier, actively participated in the classes. They said goodbye to us with applause and an invitation to visit again.

Such visits are extremely important as they bring a lot of good to the process of educating the younger generation, teach understanding and sensitivity, and build awareness from an early age. Meetings with children and young people are an important aspect of our activity.

Last but not least, we rounded off our International Guide Dog Day 2022 with our annual Walk with the Labrador. This is a new tradition of annual walks with volunteers, trainers, employees and guests of the Foundation, which we decided on after meeting for the first time last year, following the lifting of restrictions. Just like last year, the weather was good, the atmosphere was great and the feeling of pride was amazing as our handlers walked their dogs through the streets of interested on-lookers, whilst wearing the Foundation's logo.



Meeting with youths in Owińska

International Guide Dog Day, Korea: “Thank you! We will remember you forever!”

Baron Jang
**Samsung Guide Dog School,
South Korea**

Samsung Guide Dog School (SGDS) opened a guide dog memorial park to commemorate International Guide Dog Day and held a memorial service for dogs who have left us after completing their calling as guide dogs. Due to COVID-19, the event was held on a small scale by several employees and volunteers.

Starting with the unveiling of the statue, the memorial service held a silent tribute and floral offerings, followed by a wonderful performance from three current guide dog owners. At the end of the service, we released white butterflies, which represents reincarnation to honor the souls of the dogs.

SGDS had a memorial monument, which is a dog statue, for the guide dogs who have passed away, but it was renewed ahead of the 30th anniversary of its establishment due to the absence of a resting space for visitors. A round retaining wall was installed behind the monument and a bench was installed next to it so that visitors to the school could pay tribute to the guide dogs. On the retaining wall of the semicircular model, which looks similar to the model of the harness, a plaque with the names of the dogs will be attached.

Retired guide dogs are taken care of by volunteer families until the end of their lives in SGDS, and Ms. Kim, a volunteer who has taken in the most retired dogs, attended the ceremony as a representative and hung a flower necklace on the guide dog statue. Ms. Kim has taken care of six retired dogs since “Ruby”, her first, in 2014.

In addition, Mr. Yang, as a representative of guide dog partnerships, and who has had



A few of the Samsung Guide Dog School employees, volunteers and clients

four guide dogs over the last 26 years since 1996, gave a eulogy for the guide dogs. Mr. Yang said, **“I hope this memorial park will be a place where everyone who has a relationship with a guide dog can share memories and warm stories.”**

Even before the official opening of the memorial park, people who were interested in guide dogs, often visited here. In January, candidate Yoon Seok-yeol, who was a presidential candidate at the time, now the president, visited the guide dog school and toured the facilities. He also had the special experience of a blindfold walk with the guide dogs. In particular, he visited the memorial park and had a moment of silence and said, **“If I become president, I will make as many places as possible more accessible for people with a visual impairment and guide dogs.”**

SGDS was established in 1993 and is the only regular member of the International Guide Dog Federation in Korea. Starting with the first guide dog, “Bada (meaning Sea),” in 1994, SGDS gives about 12 to 15 guide dogs to people with a visual impairment.

There are about 250,000 people registered with a visual impairment in Korea. SGDS has donated 260 guide dogs since its establishment and graduates 15~20 guide dog teams a year.

Not only does it focus on animal welfare, but also on improving the lives of the disabled in Korea by working to amend existing disability related laws to ensure that guide dogs are protected as part of “Welfare laws for the disabled”, which came into effect January 2000.

This event is not a one-off and SGDS will hold a service every April to honor the guide dogs who left us the previous year.



Yoon Seok-yeol visiting the SGDS memorial monument

How the guide dog inspired the creation of audio mobile game

Jana Kuklova
Client of Skola pro vycvik
vodicich psu, s.r.o.



Roman Kabelka and Jana Kuklova with their guide dogs

Nine years ago, when I took over my Labradoodle Safi from the Guide Dog Training School in Brno, I had no idea that our coexistence will one day be reflected in the story of a mobile game.

Soon after Safi became a member of our household, my husband and I got used to chatting with her, asking her questions and translating her behavior into our human language.

For example, every morning starts with a question: "Safi, would you like some breakfast?" And after Safi starts wagging her tail enthusiastically and runs to the kitchen, my husband Milos or I will say in a slightly altered voice: "Little gentlemen, don't bother with such a trivial question and instead quickly feed me some pellets."

Through our voices, Safi is an essential member of our household, whose input cannot be missed in any situation. So, it's no wonder that we brought Safi and her slightly wacky nature into the project my husband and I started working on less than a year ago.

Our long-term wish was to improve the range of mobile games that would be accessible to blind gamers. So last year we decided to found Kikiriki Games, a barrier-free game studio, and we created one such game together over the following months.

The result is the audio mobile game *To the Dragon Cave*. The main role in the game is played by a princess who has been kidnapped by a sinister dragon and blinded by its fiery breath. Fortunately, the princess is not alone. She is accompanied at every step by a talking dove. She makes sure that nothing happens to the princess on her adventurous journey. And when the dove speaks, anyone who knows our Safinka knows where our inspiration for creating this talking guide came from. The dove also wants to go home and even though she doesn't know exactly which way to go, she looks completely confident, so that no one can tell she's a bit lost.

But just like my Safi, the talking dove will eventually lead her princess safely to her destination. And just like in my life, the heroine of our audio game, the blind princess, would never be able to complete her task if she didn't have her animal companion by her side. I graduated from college and got a job in my field because Safi allowed me to move around

independently and go on journeys I wouldn't have ventured without her.

And this is what we have tried to show through the audio mobile game *To the Dragon Cave*. Our wish was not just to create a mobile game for players with visual impairments. We also wanted to contribute to removing barriers, both in the gaming industry and in the job market.

Through our project we try to show that blind people can work in the same positions as their sighted colleagues. That's why half of the team that worked on *To the Dragon Cave* was comprised of visually impaired people.

In addition to modern assistive technology, our canine guides made it easier for us to work together. For example, thanks to our

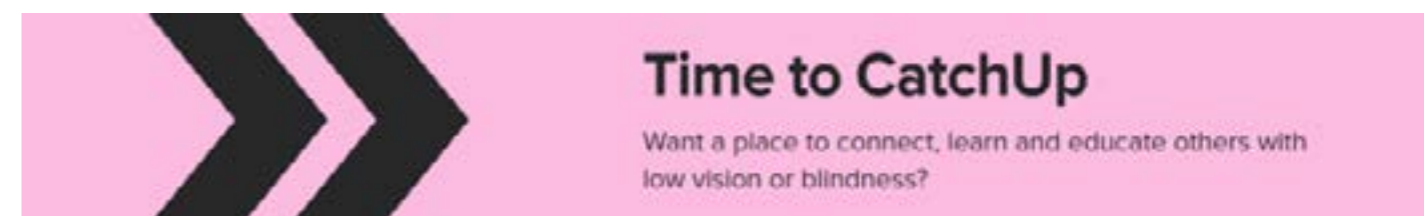
guide dogs, our blind sound designer and I were able to meet independently and work with each other on this mobile game.

At the same time, we decided to make the mobile audio game in such a way that sighted players could also play it. That way, we wanted to allow everyone to visit a world in which the eyes are replaced by an animal guide. The audio mobile game *To the Dragon Cave* by the barrier-free game studio Kikiriki Games is available for iPhone and Android phones and can be downloaded from the Apple AppStore and Google Play Store.

Finally, I must thank the Guide Dog School in Brno, Czech Republic for training such wonderful guide dogs who are not only excellent guides for the blind, but who also bring special inspiration into our lives.

Guide Dogs Australia invites you to CatchUp

Gemma Hillis
Guide Dogs Australia



A place for social connection is what people with low vision or blindness asked for – and Guide Dogs Australia delivered. In March 2022, as a direct response to the voice of the Client, Guide Dogs Australia launched the online community hub, CatchUp. The platform is a place for connection, education, news and opportunities for people all over Australia (and abroad).

Designed for people with low vision or blindness, CatchUp is free to join for anyone within the community – Clients, families, friends, staff, health professionals and partners in the vision sector.

With a welcoming and engaging interface built from the learnings of the award-winning Guide Dogs Australia website, accessibility is top of mind for every setting including functionality, layout decisions

Continued

Guide Dogs Australia invites you to CatchUp

and colour choices. The platform will now play a key role in achieving the Guide Dogs Australia mission to support people with low vision or blindness to achieve whatever goals they have in life. In this instance, through education and connection.

CatchUp first came about in 2018 and was previously known as the “Community Hub”. Guide Dogs began by undertaking a partnership with the DXC Digital Transformation Centre at Swinburne University in Melbourne to discover what sort of connections and channels the low vision and blind community wanted.

Since then, the Community Hub has been to the groomer and came out as CatchUp. Guide Dogs will continue the research and co-creation with people from the community to create the best experience on the CatchUp platform.

Since its launch, CatchUp has already had a number of new feature releases as a result of feedback from clients and partners. Members can use a variety of exciting features and functionalities:

Social Groups

Groups within the low vision and blind community can be a part of either public Social Group Discussions or Private Groups.

Social Group Discussions are about a broad range of topics which have been set up as Social Groups such as Cooking, Hobbies and Games, Coffee Club or even location based Social Groups. Once you open a Social Group, you can then take part in Discussions relating to the topic.

There has been so much engagement across all of the groups so far with the community and Guide Dogs staff sharing questions, recommendations, tips and reviews!

Private Groups on the other hand is an invite-only place on CatchUp. This could be for a blind or low vision sporting team, or it could be for a Guide Dogs group of Clients who wish to chat outside of the regular provided program! Anyone is welcome to set up a Private Group and invite fellow CatchUp members to join by contacting the Guide Dogs Community email.

As the safety of CatchUp members is crucial, each group has a “Group Organiser” who is in charge of inviting members and also moderating behaviour to ensure everything is inline with the CatchUp Community Guidelines.

News and Updates

This section is for articles about news, events, tips, stories and anything in between. It’s updated with new articles daily so instead of scrolling through your usual social feeds, grab your morning coffee and jump on CatchUp for what’s new.

Personalised Profiles

In our strive to enable member’s choice and control, each member’s profile can be tailored to show as much or as little as they would like to others.

The only information required to be available to all CatchUp members is the

selected “nickname”. Or if members are open to sharing a little more, each person has the option to include a short bio about who they are and some of their interests such as movies or books.

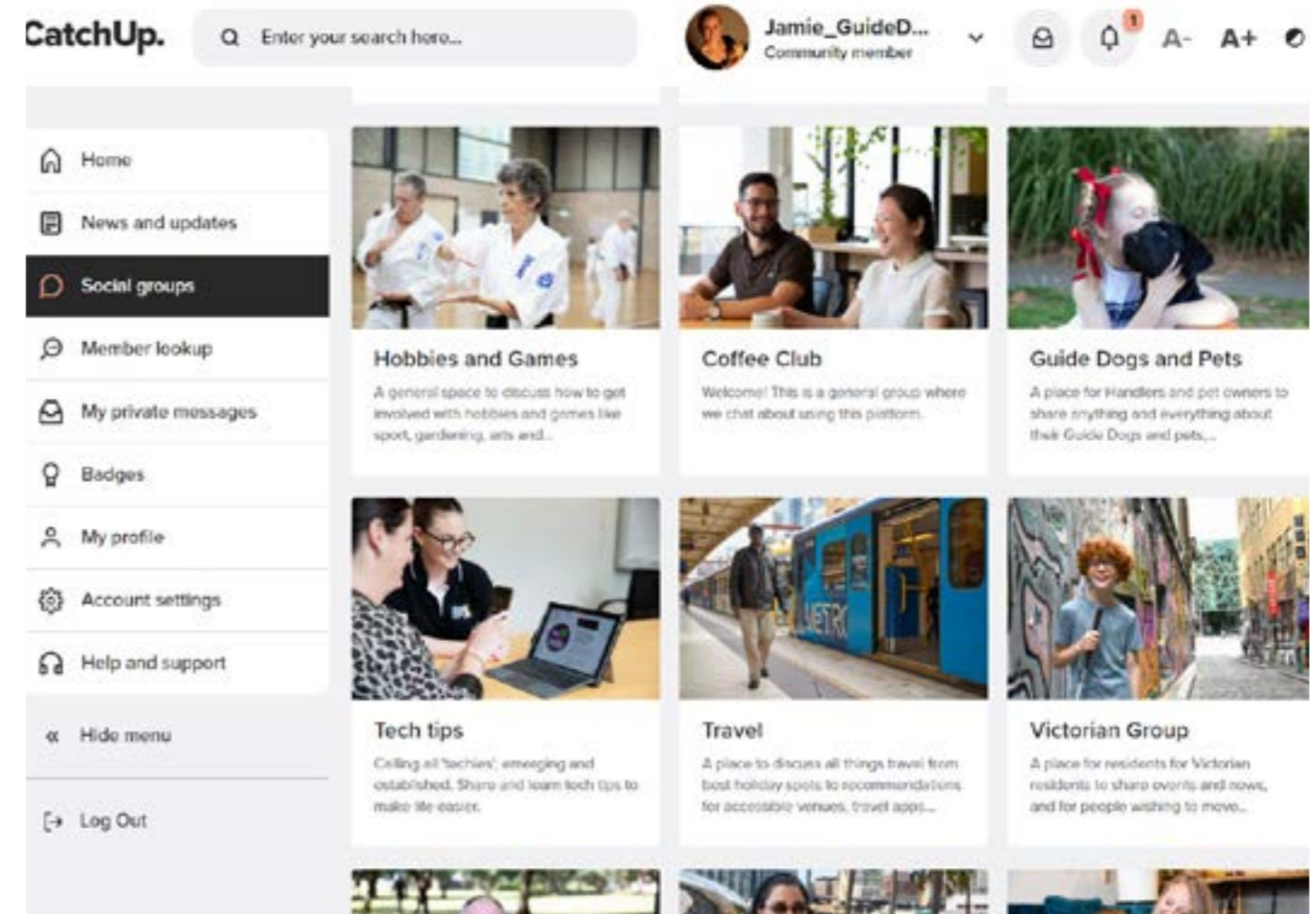
Member lookup and Private Messages

Members can search for other members on CatchUp. If there’s a friend or someone you would like to connect with, this is where you can find their profile and request to “connect”. Once you’ve connected with someone in the member lookup, you can then privately message them to chat one-on-one like you would in a social media platform.

Badges

To introduce a little fun and as a way of saying ‘thank you’ to members, CatchUp introduced badges which can be earned for different types of engagement on the platform. With fun titles like “Chatterbox” and “Profile Pro” – CatchUp members are challenged to earn them all!

CatchUp is truly designed and evolving as a direct result of the voice of the Client. There’s some exciting new features coming in the coming weeks, with a world of possibilities to follow. So what’s the future for CatchUp? Sign up and stay tuned to find out what the members decide.



The CatchUp home page is where members land when logging in

Scuola Nazionale Cani Guida per Ciechi and Guide Dogs of America Collaborate

Yvonne Martin
Guide Dogs
of America

Maybel and her new guide dog “Chrissy” were on a family vacation traveling in Italy. Unfortunately, while on the train in Italy, “Chrissy’s” harness was stolen, and Maybel and her family had just started their vacation.

Maybel contacted Guide Dogs of America/Tender Loving Canines where she attended and graduated from with her guide for help and assistance. Staff at Guide Dogs of America/Tender Loving Canines quickly

started trouble shooting how we would be able to help the team.

We reached out to several of our IGDF colleagues, Chris Muldoon, David Grice and Clare Pritchett to seek assistance with locating a school in Italy in proximity to where Maybel and “Chrissy” were. In addition, Guide Dogs of America/Tender Loving Canines is very fortunate to have a service dog trainer – Sonia Parisi who is from Italy on staff who also began calling the schools and helping with translation.

It was determined that the team would be in close proximity to the IGDF member and guide dog school near Florence.

IGDF organization, Scuola Nazionale Cani Guida per Ciechi spared no time and quickly contacted Maybel with an offer of help and assistance with a harness. Within a couple of days, the team travelled to the school where “Chrissy” was fitted for a beautiful harness allowing Maybel to enjoy her time visiting the beautiful country of Italy safely and with the independence that her guide dog gives her!

This is what IGDF collaboration is all about!!

Guide Dogs of America/Tender Loving Canines is forever grateful to the team at Scuola Nazionale Cani Guida per Ciechi and their assistance with keeping Maybel and “Chrissy” safe.



Maybel and Chrissy at Scuola Nazionale Cani Guida per Ciechi

Committee Focus: Ivana Merryman Boncori



Ivana with a guide dog in training

Interview with Ivana Merryman Boncori, GDMI and Certification Consultant at Danish Association of the Blind, Denmark; Volunteer Board member for Dogs for Life, Slovakia; and Chair of the IGDF Development Committee.

How did you first get involved in the guide dog sector?

At 14 I loved dogs but wasn't allowed to have my own. My parents however, became puppy raisers for a guide dog school in Slovakia where we raised a total of 4 puppies. By the last puppy, I had become interested in the whole guide dog process and so I started training her and I never left the field.

Briefly describe the responsibilities of your day job.

I am responsible for helping the Danish Guide Dogs align what they do with the

IGDF Standards. This involves identifying gaps and creating more detailed documents and processes. I am also helping to create a curriculum for GDMIs and Puppy Raiser Instructors and am involved with the planning and provision of an O&M course for GDMIs. Additionally, the organisation is currently in the process of creating its own breeding program, so I advise on that as well as help to build international relationships with other guide dog organisations.

On the more practical side, as a GDMI, I am allocated a group of puppy raisers who I visit, supervise and provide training to. Additionally, when a suitable dog becomes available, it lives with me at home and I am responsible for training it. Whilst I never really left the field, I did have to step away from the practical GDMI work whilst I travelled, met my husband and had kids, but I have now come back to it and I am really enjoying it. I love working for a small organisation where you can be involved in both the practical GDMI work as well as the planning and strategy side of things.

Could you describe your IGDF role and that of the Development Committee?

Working for the IGDF Development Committee is quite a big job requiring a number of hours, if one is committed to it, however, I started working on the Committee as a way of 'paying it forward'. My old school in Slovakia was helped a lot by IGDF and its member, and I personally, benefited greatly from the assistance and advice provided to us.

Continued

Committee Focus: Ivana Merryman Boncori

The Development Committee's role is to provide advice and guidance to developing schools who are not currently IGDF members and to help them meet the IGDF Standards. This may be assisting new organisations to source puppies, provide education to their staff or develop procedures; or helping more established organisations to identify and address gaps to enable them to meet the Standards. We also work with IGDF members who are experiencing issues, using our own expertise, or helping to connect them with people or organisations that can assist.

Over the years, the way the Committee works with and assists schools has become more structured. It has introduced educational activities and workshops to help both members and applicant schools to develop and identify gaps.

As a member of the Development Committee, I am assigned a couple of schools with whom I work directly, but as the Chair I also get to oversee the work and planning of the Committee and help to move its remit forward.

Currently the Development Committee are looking into how we can help schools develop their traffic training programmes in response to the updated IGDF Standards which now provide more clarity around IGDF's expectations. It has taken us some time to work on this, but we are looking at offering schools who may not have traffic training programmes that align with these new Standards, substantial learning opportunities and the ability to see

examples from other schools. We accept that different schools, countries and cultures do things different, but through this we are aiming to help schools understand what is behind the training and how they as individual schools can address this in their own individual settings.

We have also identified a need by many schools for orientation and mobility expertise, development in positive reinforcement training techniques and collaboration in breeding and sourcing of dogs, so going forward we are looking to develop opportunities for our schools in these areas.

How do you find time to balance all these responsibilities?

It is not easy as it can take up a lot of free time, but I have a very helpful and patient husband and the kids can be quite understanding when it comes to being taken to a meeting where there are puppies present. It has become a style of living for me and I don't see my work with

Ivana working with a client



guide dogs as 'work'. I have actually spent many years doing it as an unpaid volunteer because I enjoy and want to do it. I think if I really want to do something, I will find a way of fitting it in.

What do you like about your IGDF role?

As I mentioned previously, the Development Committee is my way of 'paying it forward'. It was hard for me and my old school, who were knowledgeable in what we did, but needed the external help to meet the IGDF Standards in a much shorter time frame than it would have taken us on our own. I love that I can now help others to do the same and I love to see other schools develop as a direct result of our support.

What advice would you give to someone who would like to get involved in IGDF?

IGDF is you already, in the sense that it is the people who create IGDF. If you want to get more out of IGDF and help others to get more out of it, then become part of it and part of its growth and development. It is hard because you need the time and commitment for it to work, but we need people to be involved, so whatever you want from IGDF and whatever you can offer, please come forward.

What do you see as the main challenge currently facing the guide dog sector in Denmark?

In Denmark there are financial challenges associated with the fact that the municipalities pay for the guide dog and they pay very little. This financial insecurity makes it a challenge not just to build up a stable programme delivering essential services, but also to build and develop an organisation with things such as a secure workforce.

Another challenge is the source of our dogs. Currently we are sourcing dogs from private breeders, some of which can be very nice, but some are also quite unsuitable. As a result, we are now looking to start our own breeding programme allowing us directly influence what kind of dogs we want.

What do you see as the main opportunity for the guide dog sector going forward?

I am looking forward to development of the European Standards (CEN/TC 452 Assistance Animals and Animal Training Competencies). I believe this will help so many countries professionalise the GDMI role and help our guide dog users to obtain better quality dogs and better services. I'm also looking forward to seeing IGDF becoming an ISO/EC 17065 Certification Body as this will help improve quality of services provided by certified schools and also access rights for our guide dog users.

Ivana with her husband and family





Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W Georgia St, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

April 27 – 30, 2023

WELCOME BACK MEMBERS!

The Board of the International Guide Dog Federation is very excited to welcome you to Vancouver, Canada for the 2023 IGDF Conference “**Strengthening Connections**” to be held April 27-30, 2023.

Cradled amid sky-scraping mountains and sparkling oceans, our international delegates will experience the very best of this beautiful city and super, natural [British Columbia](#). At the same time, enjoying educational plenary sessions and workshops at the world-renowned Fairmont Hotel Vancouver. We look forward to strengthening connections with colleagues and friends after so much time apart.

Conference Information

The 2023 International Guide Dog Federation Conference begins on Thursday, April 27 with a ‘Lets get reacquainted’ evening reception. This is followed by two and a half days of plenary sessions and workshops from 8.30 a.m. on the Friday April 28, through to Sunday April 30.

Registration Details

Registrations are now open to IGDF organisations for the 2023 IGDF Conference

[Please follow this link for further information and to book your delegate places.](#)

A special Early Bird discount rate is available for bookings made before 1st November 2022.

Registration to non-IGDF organisations will be open at a later date pending availability.

Schedule and Information

This registration link and additional information including the preliminary conference programme, information on nominations for IGDF Awards and Scholarships, and how to submit a bid to host the 2025 Conference, is also available under the [‘What’s New’ section of the IGDF website.](#)

Hosted by

2023 IGDF Conference is hosted by IGDF member BC & Alberta Guide Dogs



Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W Georgia St, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Workshop Information

The 2023 International Breeders Workshop begins on Sunday, April 30 with an evening Welcome Reception and packet pick-up from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Packet pick-up will also be available immediately after the close of the IGDF Seminar at the same venue. Workshop sessions will begin at 8:00 AM on Monday, May 1st.

Registration Details

Workshop Registration for IGDF, IWDBA and ADI members of all types opens on Monday, August 1st. Registrations submitted between August 1st and October 31st will benefit from the Early Bird registration rate. Standard registration rates will begin on November 1st.

Sign up for automatic updates or watch for updates here or visiting www.iwdr.org and following the registration link.

The event schedule will be provided for others not affiliated with IGDF, IWDBA and ADI to register at a later date pending availability. Places are limited - don't miss out!

Schedule

Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd May, 2023

Speakers will cover a variety of topics during Breeders Workshop Conference sessions - see our Speaker line-up below for more information on some of the scheduled topics.

Wednesday 3rd May, 2023

Participants are also invited to attend one of two optional events immediately following the Breeders Workshop:

1. Behavior Checklist Focus Workshop - with both live dogs and videos; or
2. Reproduction Focus Workshop

Speaker Line-Up

Fiona Hollinshead BVSc(Hons) PhD DACT;
Kevin Conrad, DVM;
Eldin Leighton PhD;
Bart Broeckx- DVM, PhD;
Plus many other presenters



