

SIDE SIDE

 Southeastern
GUIDE DOGS

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

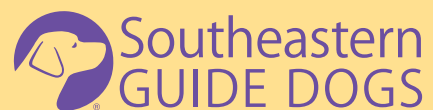


FALL 2022

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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Special thanks
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Myers Auto Group
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Side by Side.



Hello

Dear Friend,

This issue of *Side by Side* introduces another group of graduates—both two-legged and four-legged. With new best friends by their respective sides, these inspiring humans and dogs are embarking on exciting new journeys of transformation and hope, together, side by side.

As you take a look at each of the amazing stories inside, please remember that your support makes a difference not only in the lives of our newest graduates but also in the lives of more than 600 active Southeastern Guide Dogs alums. Thank you for all you do to bring our mission to life as you stand with us, 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 HOPE



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.



Edward Perry | Jake Emotional Support Dog

U.S. MARINE CORPS &
U.S. ARMY VETERAN 
VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA

During six years in the Marines, Edward Perry deployed twice to Iraq. After transferring to the Army, he became a chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear specialist. Today, this veteran works for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and his emotional support dog, Jake, makes coming home after a busy day something special. “Jake is very friendly and loving,” he says. “I love how chill he can be. When I’m home, I like to relax, and it’s nice having a dog that is just okay lying by my side.”

Jake was raised by Laurel McDevitt.



Brie | Abbie Gold Star Family Dog

PORT ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA

A large, loving family lost their husband and father when Michael, a chief warrant officer with the Coast Guard, died in an accident while on duty in Alaska. His wife, Brie, and four children needed emotional support and were recently matched with a sweet dog named Abbie. “Abbie brings comfort to the kids and that extra cuddle they need when they’re having a rough night,” Brie says. “She’s a lot of fun, but she knows when to slow down. She’s the perfect fit for our family.”

Abbie was raised by Penny Love.

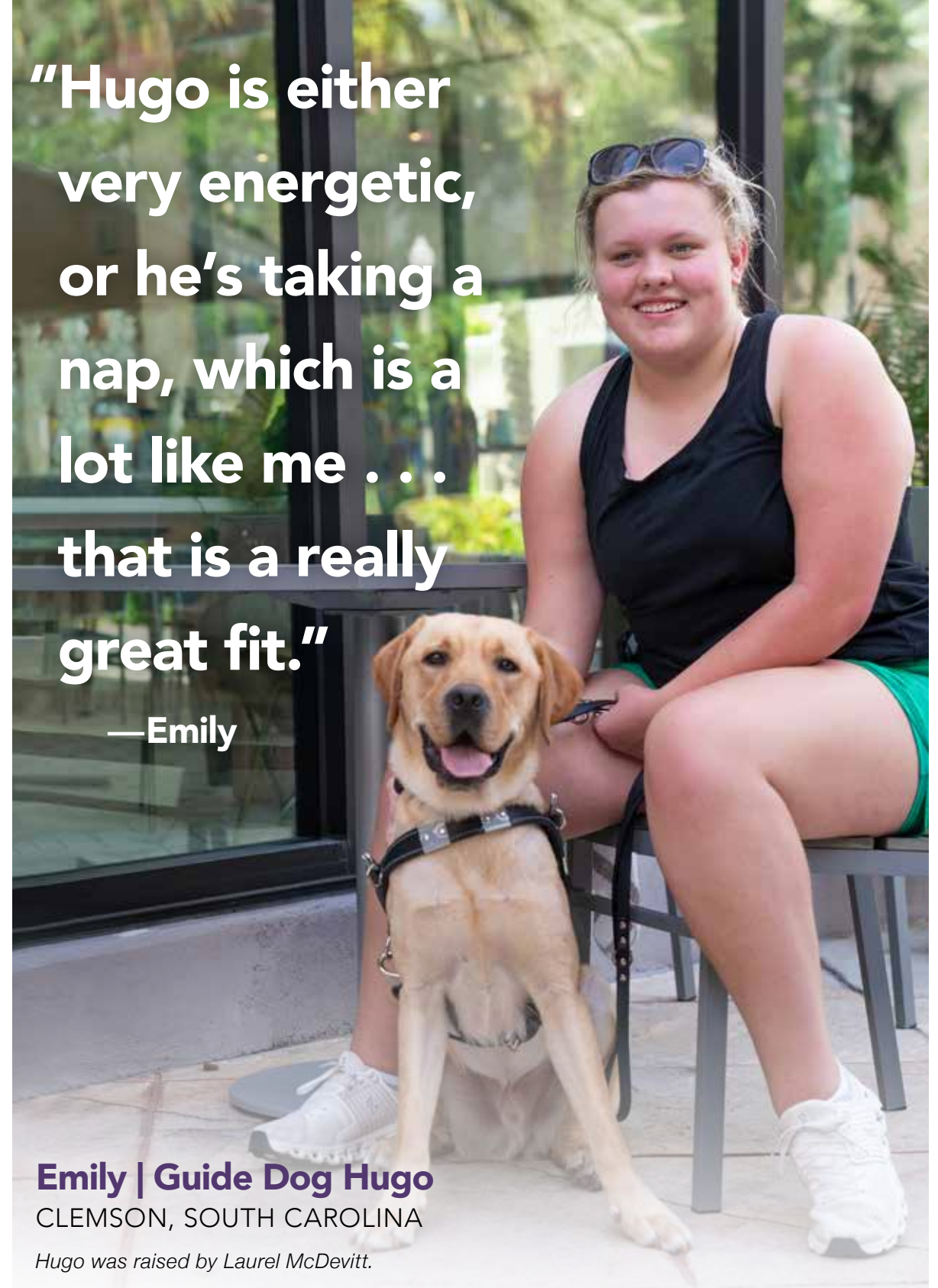
“Hugo is either
very energetic,
or he’s taking a
nap, which is a
lot like me . . .
that is a really
great fit.”

—Emily

Emily | Guide Dog Hugo


CLEMSON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Hugo was raised by Laurel McDevitt.





Marcus Luttrell | Ranger Emotional Support Dog

U.S. NAVY VETERAN 
MAGNOLIA, TEXAS

Decorated Navy SEAL Marcus Luttrell makes his mark as a motivational speaker, best-selling author, and podcaster. Marcus’ legend began during Operation Red Wing in June 2005, during a covert mission that tragically took the lives of nine brother SEALs and 16 others sent to rescue his group from a gunfire ambush by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Alone, wounded, and near death, Marcus’ miraculous story of perseverance lives on in the world-renowned book and film “Lone Survivor.” This American hero recovered physically, but the invisible wounds of post-traumatic stress (PTSD) linger.

There’s nothing like the skilled, affectionate, and healing magic of a dog. In 2008, Marcus was paired with service dog Rigby, who provided respite from the persistent emotional fallout of PTSD until the dog’s passing in 2021. Now, Marcus enjoys the company of another perfect match—emotional support dog Ranger. Full of eager energy and affection, Ranger offers his companionship and unconditional love.

Ranger adores people and other dogs and can’t get enough time outside in nature. Empathetic and sensitive to the emotions of those around him, he intuitively responds to his handler’s needs. With Ranger by his side, Marcus serves as a role model for other veterans, reaching out and inspiring others all around the world.

Ranger was raised by Isabel Adamus.



Juston Retzer | Jingles Gold Star Family Dog

U.S. ARMY VETERAN 
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

Army veteran Juston Retzer deployed to Bosnia, then left the military with a medical disability. His beloved brother Thomas, a Navy SEAL, was later killed in Afghanistan. Gold Star Family Dog Jingles makes Juston's days brighter. Justin says, "I haven't felt this happy since before my brother passed."

Jingles was raised by George and Tammy Killgore.



*"We love Crickett.
She's the best; just everything
we could have asked for."*

Amelia Pape | Crickett
Gold Star Family Dog 
FT. WAYNE, INDIANA

Crickett was raised by Joan Karlson and Jacqueline Bernard.



Tony True | Omni Emotional Support Dog

U.S. ARMY VETERAN 
PARRISH, FLORIDA

Tony True joined the Army in 2002 and served three rough tours in Iraq with the military police. Now a certified guide dog instructor, Tony's been matched with Omni, whose disposition makes her an ideal emotional support dog. "She makes me happy," he says.

Omni was raised by Judith Nevis.



Amanda Juetten | Guide Dog Colonel COOKEVILLE, TENNESSEE

Amanda Juetten's symptoms of retinitis pigmentosa began in 2007, and by January 2020, her vision was gone. The journey to a guide dog took over 10 years, as she initially applied at another school in 2012 but was denied. Amanda found Southeastern Guide Dogs and now has her "perfect match" in her new guide dog, Colonel.

This sweet, handsome, and mellow southern gentleman loves to place his paw gently on Amanda's lap. Whether it's time to work, relax, or play, Colonel and Amanda are perfectly in sync. Even Colonel's military name feels right, as Amanda's husband served in the Air Force and her two sons serve in the Marines and Navy.

Amanda worked as a teacher and nonprofit general manager but stopped working and attending college until she retrained with skills to aid her vision loss. Colonel will stay busy as Amanda resumes her interrupted pursuit of a degree, manages a large, extended family including five children, and volunteers at her church. "Colonel will be a calm presence for church people who are struggling," Amanda notes. She's excited to regain independence and freedom, and she's glad her husband and kids can stop worrying about her. "When I hold onto Colonel's harness, it's a freedom that I haven't felt since before I lost my vision," she says happily.

Colonel was raised by Hannah Fedorowicz.

Mike McCrea | Guide Dog Ferris

PALM CITY, FLORIDA

As a young man with a mind for business and a degree in building construction from the University of Florida, Mike McCrea was poised for success. But when a road rage gunshot left him totally blind at age 24, Mike had to adapt. “I used to drive—other than contact lenses, I was fine,” he says. “But when I got shot—it was game over.”

After recovery and rehab, Mike partnered with a friend to start a concrete curbing business. He then worked as a project manager for 18 years and now runs his own successful vending business. Along with his wife and college-age daughters, Mike lives on five acres with a horse, two goats, a bunch of chickens, and the occasional 4-H Club pig or heifer. And now, he welcomes to the family a bright, mild-mannered, highly trained guide dog named Ferris.

Mike has always relied on other people to guide him, and now Ferris will give him the confidence to navigate on his own. Whether heading across his expansive vending facility or across town to hang out at the local marina—where Mike has a healthy respect for docks after falling off one—Ferris will be by his side. Mike reflects, “This should give me a whole different level of independence.”

Ferris was raised by Michele and David Ferguson and Janet McKernan.





Barry Collier | Summit Gold Star Family Dog



SARASOTA, FLORIDA

Barry Collier and his wife, Susan, founded the Collier Falls Winery and Vineyard in Healdsburg, California. Following Susan's death, Barry lost his older son, Adam. Adam was a Naval Academy graduate, Marine infantry officer, and respected commander who experienced two tours to Iraq and one to Afghanistan. When Barry's dog died, he spent six lonely months desperately wanting a new companion. Now Summit, a well-behaved Gold Star Family Dog understands him completely. "She's my best friend," Barry says. "She fills my day with joy."

Summit was raised by Sue Queen.



Charlie | Tina Kids Companion Dog

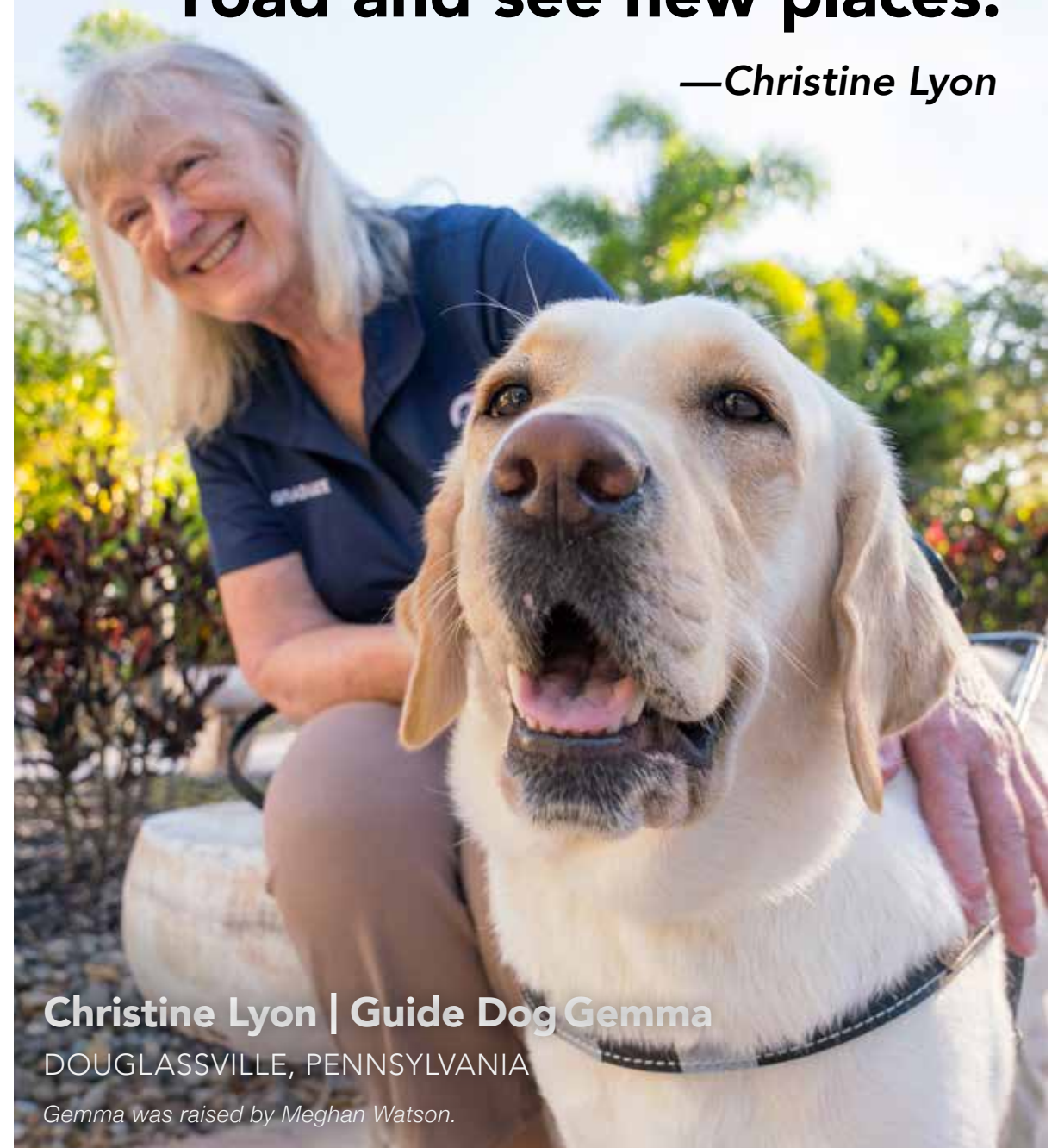
BRADENTON, FLORIDA

Charlie, age 8, lives with strabismus with esotropia, loss of depth perception, and loss of overall vision. He's learned to count on his dog, Tina, to be by his side whenever he needs a reassuring hug or someone to confide in. "Tina is amazing—so gentle, sweet, and easy," says Charlie's mom, Deanna, "She reads his cues and loves him. She has already helped Charlie become more independent and calmer. Tina has changed all our lives, and we are so extremely grateful to have her in our family."

Tina was raised by Isabella Napolitano.

"It's the way to freedom and to live your life. We'll hit the road and see new places."

—Christine Lyon



Christine Lyon | Guide Dog Gemma

DOUGLASSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

Gemma was raised by Meghan Watson.

"Buena's always with me. It's a completely different experience than I ever thought. There's been nothing like this, like the pure I'm here for you."

—Scott Finn



Scott Finn | Service Dog Buena

U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN 🇺🇸

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA

Buena was raised by Elli Freihofer.

Terrance Neal | Guide Dog Bandit

SLIDELL, LOUISIANA

Terrance Neal was born with small optic nerve hypoplasia, a condition where the optic nerves are undeveloped, reducing the ability of the retinas to send impulses to the brain. Over time, his vision improved, but Terrance still wanted a guide dog. "I wanted a dog to see things that I couldn't see and also be like a best friend," he says. Now that he's graduated high school and learned new skills at Affiliated Blind of Louisiana, Terrance made the trip to Southeastern Guide Dogs. He was hoping for a dog that could help him see curbs and slopes, avoid obstacles on the ground, and otherwise enjoy safe walking. Plus, he wanted to find that best friend.

Now he's been paired with Bandit, an ideal guide dog for a young man just starting adult life. Fun-loving, laid-back Bandit works hard when in harness. He will be by Terrance's side when he pursues a job and when he shares his story as a motivational speaker. "We will show people that they can do anything they put their mind to," he says. "I want to become an example for that." Right away, Terrance experienced new independence. "I already see increases in the ways Bandit helps me. So, anybody that's second-guessing it, you should take the chance and try to get one."

Bandit was raised by Lynn and Frank Aquilon.





Christian | Ivy Kids Companion Dog

PINELLAS PARK, FLORIDA

Christian, age 5, has been blind since birth due to a rare developmental disorder. To help him gain confidence and independence, he's been matched with his best friend, Ivy. Ivy watches him with care, and Christian is learning to walk her. "Ivy is doing great," mom Vanessa reports. "She's eager to please and loves to play. Ivy definitely fits."

Ivy was raised by Melanie Tumminello.



"I've seen people with dogs, and they just seem more confident and more sure-footed. That's what I'm looking for. Jerry will bring a lot more to my life."

Pauline Proulx | Guide Dog Jerry
WEST WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND

Jerry was raised by Sara McMahon.



Geoffrey Murray Guide Dog Nobska

FRYEBURG, MAINE

Geoffrey Murray's eyesight worsened until he could only perceive light coming in from a window. Living alone has gotten more challenging, but now he's been matched with his guide dog Nobska, a calm dog who makes smart decisions. "A guide dog will give me more confidence being outside," Geo rey says. "I'm happy with how well trained he is."

Nobska was raised by Toni and Eddie Vilella.

**"When Nissa
sees the
harness, her
tail goes
100 miles an
hour. She's
waggin'!"**

—Claudia Sucre



Claudia Sucre | Guide Dog Nissa

RIVERVIEW, FLORIDA

Nissa was raised by Jeannie Sumner.



Anne Hatton Guide Dog Angelo

CAPE CORAL, FLORIDA

Anne navigated with Edgar, her first guide dog, for eight years until he passed away last year. While navigating with a cane again, this independent woman felt her freedom and mobility slipping away. “The past several months, I saw myself letting my world get smaller again, refusing social invitations and things,” Anne admits. Now, she’s happily paired with Angelo, a sweet, loving “teenager” of a guide dog who likes to be kept busy. The pair bonded immediately. “We both like to go!” Anne says.

Angelo was raised by Marcia Gosline.



Thomas Sheppard Guide Dog Stosh

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Thomas Sheppard feels grateful to be alive. This strong, hardworking owner of a contracting company suddenly experienced 13 Covid-induced strokes, resulting in a coma and six months in the hospital. Given only a 1% chance of survival, he beat the odds but lost his vision and had to learn to speak and walk again. Now, a determined, hardworking guide dog named Stosh brings him untold joy. “We’re basically the same person,” Thomas notes. “Stosh doesn’t want to sit around at all, and I’m the same way.”

Stosh was raised by Karen and Natalie Alexander.

Carson Crenshaw | Guide Dog Jetson

CHESTERFIELD, VIRGINIA

Carson Crenshaw has trouble seeing in bright sunlight, at night, or in dark places such as the movies, which he enjoys despite his vision limitations. As a baby, he experienced a liver transplant and was later diagnosed with Alagille syndrome—which may have caused the vitreous hemorrhages that affected his vision. Carson has learned to navigate with a white cane but wanted more independence than a cane can offer. So, at the recommendation of the Department for the Blind in Virginia, he traveled to Southeastern Guide Dogs. Here, Carson met a dog who will change his life, a yellow Lab named Jetson.

“Sometimes he’s energetic, and sometimes he’s very calm,” Carson says about his new guide. “When we go out and train, he’s high energy.” Jetson harnesses that energy when he helps Carson find his way, as he learned during a recent excursion. “I thought we were going one place, but Jetson went the way we were supposed to go,” he explains. “I thought that was real good!” Back home, when Carson isn’t working at his job handling virtual scheduling, Jetson will help him navigate to his girlfriend’s house, out shopping, to restaurants, and to the movies. “It’s going to be a lot easier, especially at night,” he says. “I’m amazed at what a guide dog can do. He’s really good—and I love him!”

Jetson was raised by Michael and Amanda Kramer and Julia Niemczura.



Jack | Kids Companion Dog Chance

CARROLLTON, GEORGIA



Twin brothers Luke and Jack both suffered retinopathy of prematurity when they were born at only 25 weeks' gestation. Jack's eyes were more profoundly damaged by almost total retinal detachment, which did not improve with surgeries. Now 15, Luke has vision in one eye while Jack sees only color and shadows. Their mother, Laura, decided that when Jack was medically stable and ready for the responsibility, he would benefit from a skilled companion dog.

Jack attended our Guide Dog Camp for teens in 2021 and was immediately smitten with the idea of someday having his own guide dog. Now this teen—who was once afraid of dogs—loves his role as primary caregiver to an angel named Chance, a Kids Companion Dog. Chance was the perfect companion when he followed

Jack to a different summer camp. There, he became a celebrity amid 120 kids who all wanted to be Chance's best friend. But that "best friend" title belongs to Jack. "Chance did so beautifully," Laura notes.

"I really wanted Jack to have something for himself as they were approaching high school and the milestones that were going to be rolling along for them in their teenage years," Laura says. For Jack, Chance represents a milestone in maturity and purpose, as he takes on the joys and responsibilities of caring for his dog.

Chance was raised by Kim Chronister.

"Steve brings such joy to us. He is a hug on legs!"

—Cheryl Kreutter



Cheryl Kreutter | Gold Star Family Dog Steve

MALABAR, FLORIDA

Steve was raised by Jennifer Taylor and Carla Anderson.



Rachelle Lovejoy Guide Dog Glory

SWANSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

For over 20 years, Rachelle Lovejoy's vision has deteriorated due to autoimmune retinopathy and neuritis. Without her sight—and while living through and leaving an abusive relationship—she felt trapped, alone, and without hope. Now she feels hopeful about living on her own with her guide dog, Glory, whose name means happiness and light. "That's absolutely what she is," Rachelle says. "Now I can hold my head up when I walk and watch things in front of me while I can still see. You can't top that!"

Glory was raised by Sylvia and Ed Hudson.

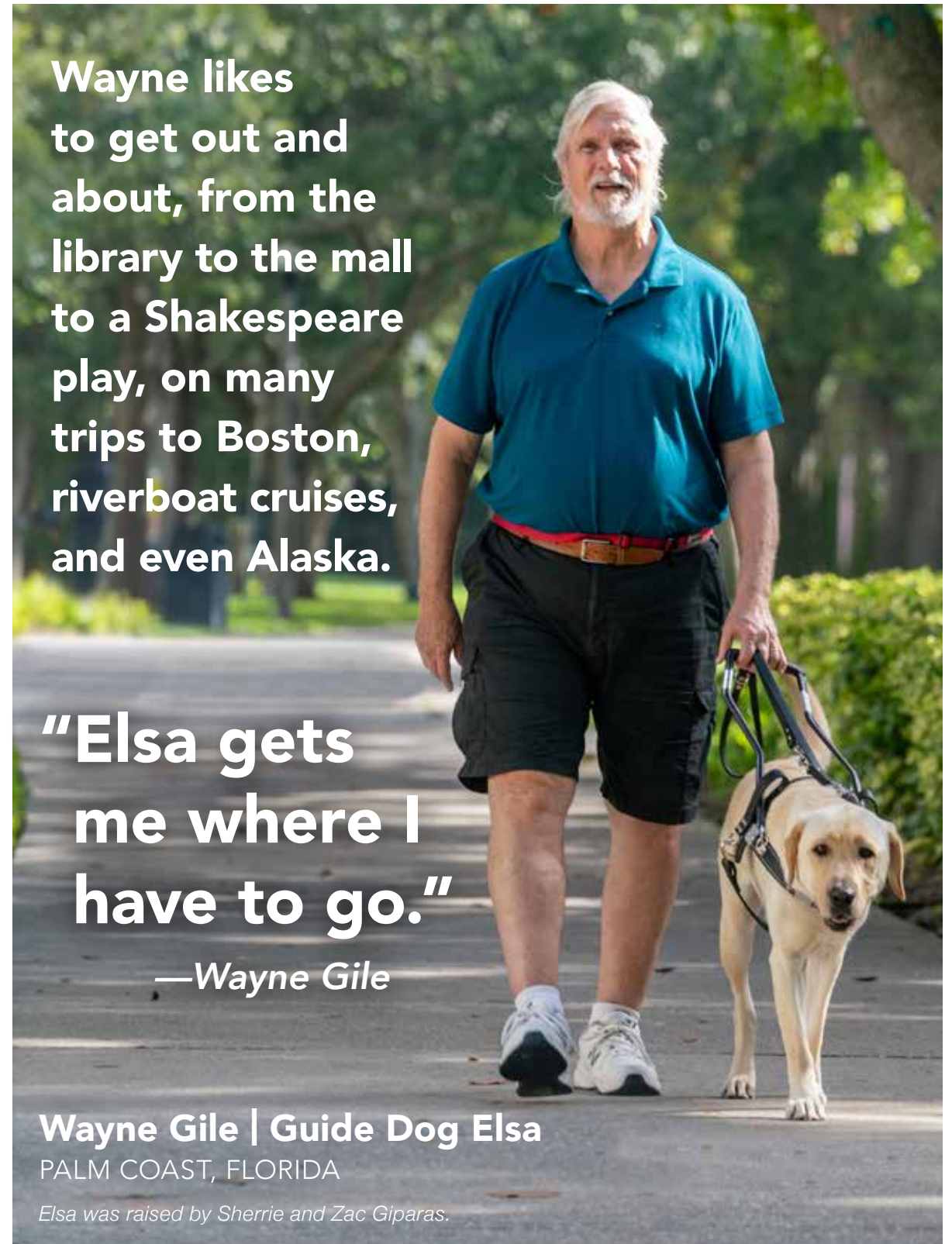


Rhonda Warren Guide Dog McKee

NEW PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA

Rhonda Warren's sight has been poor since childhood. She was first diagnosed with kaleidoscope vision and later with Chiari malformation, which caused many health issues, including vision loss. Guide dog McKee, a smart, sociable, attentive fellow, changes everything for Rhonda. "He's a good listener, and I think he's smarter than me!" she says. "When he's in harness, he is focused and driven. So that makes him a great dog." Rhonda is excited to give up her clumsy cane and regain confidence and independence.

McKee was raised by Robyn Phillips.



**Wayne likes
to get out and
about, from the
library to the mall
to a Shakespeare
play, on many
trips to Boston,
riverboat cruises,
and even Alaska.**

**"Elsa gets
me where I
have to go."**

—Wayne Gile

Wayne Gile | Guide Dog Elsa

PALM COAST, FLORIDA

Elsa was raised by Sherrie and Zac Giparas.



Kathy Weir | Guide Dog Greg

INDIAN TRAIL, NORTH CAROLINA

Kathy Weir enjoyed her job as a receptionist until her advanced macular degeneration meant she could no longer drive. Isolated at home, she lost her confidence and independence, but her guide dog, Greg, provides a new lease on life. Kathy feels her independent spirit returning and looks forward to taking trips to visit friends. She notes, "It has been a wonderful experience."

Greg was raised by the Ferentinos family.



"Indy shows flashes of brilliance. I love him to death. He's terrific."

George McCoy | Guide Dog Indy

ARAB, ALABAMA

Indy was raised by Anna Hart.



Anonymous Veteran Emotional Support Dog Tracker

U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN 
FLORIDA

Tracker bounded his way into the heart of a Marine Corps veteran who prefers anonymity. This loving dog makes a significant impact, and the two have become best friends. He fits into the family and provides much-needed companionship and love. Tracker is cherished by this grateful veteran.

Tracker was raised by Jennifer Buffington.

"Wave stays calm all the time."

—Neal Eastep



Neal Eastep | Guide Dog Wave

DECATUR, ALABAMA

Wave was raised by Mary Mulvey

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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 where teens experience the freedom of walking with a guide dog, and families learn what's next in their journey toward independence.

How do teens and parents describe Guide Dog Camp in one word?



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

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LAKELAND


NORTH ORLANDO



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