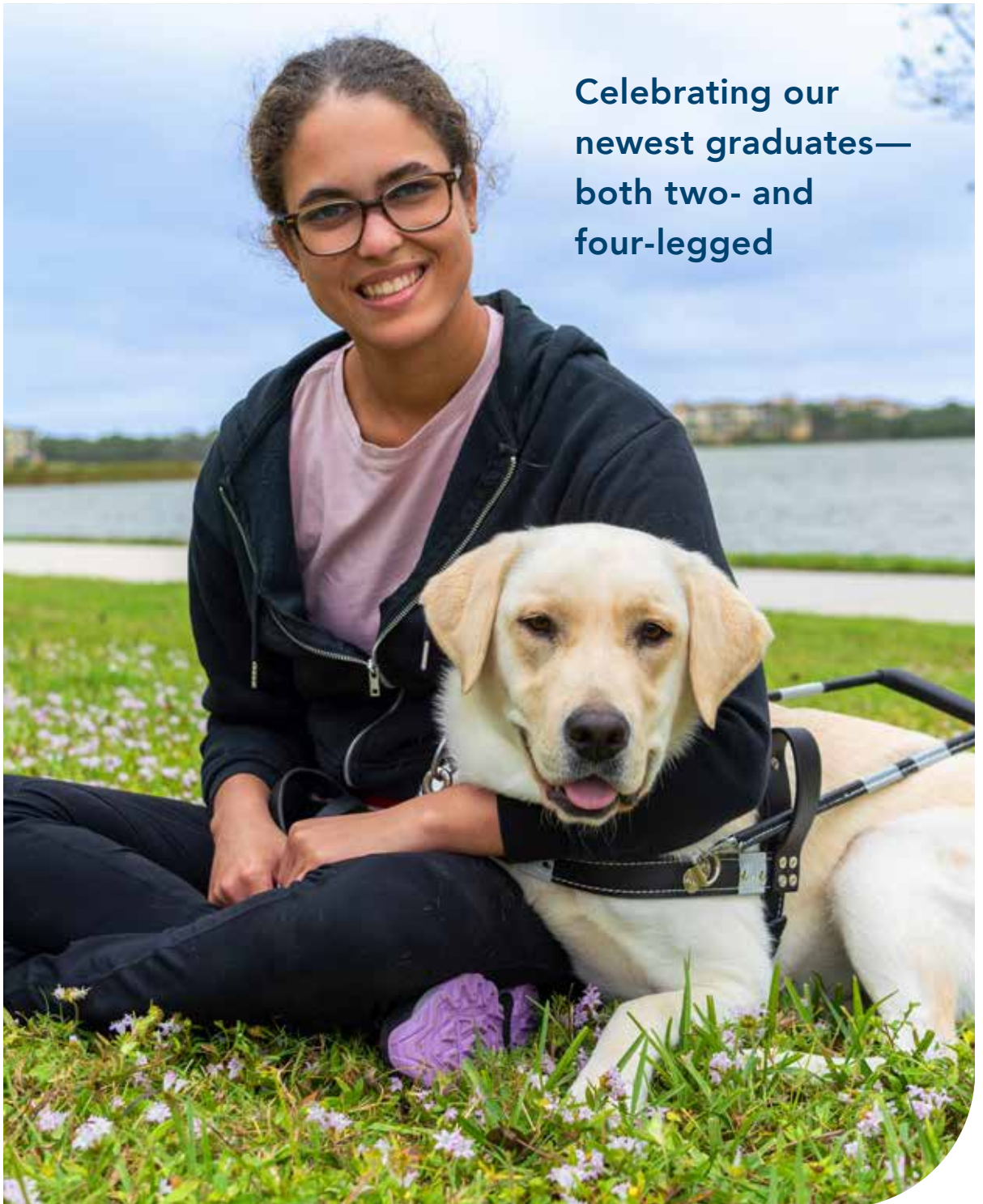


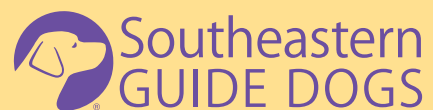
**Celebrating our  
newest graduates—  
both two- and  
four-legged**



# 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**.



4210 77th St E, Palmetto, FL 34221  
guidedogs.org | 941.729.5665

*Special thanks*  
**to Fromm  
Family Pet Food  
for sponsoring  
this issue of  
*Side by Side*.**



# Hello

Dear Friend,

In every issue of *Side by Side*, we celebrate fresh beginnings. The new graduates you see in these pages have embarked on exciting adventures with their dogs—journeys of independence, freedom, and renewed hope.

For people facing vision loss, veterans living with disabilities, and children overcoming challenges, there is something so powerful and moving in the life-transforming bonds with their new best friends. I hope you enjoy these inspiring stories, photos, and quotes that illustrate our mission at work.

Thank you for making this mission possible! We are grateful that 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.

**Skilled Companion 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.



# Brennan | Kids Companion Dog Denver

MOORESVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA



When a calm, sweet, and loving black Lab named Denver joined his new family, he immediately won the name “the Goodest Boy.” Parents Elise, Dave, and daughter Bridgette warmed to Denver’s happy personality. But Denver’s bond with his new best friend—son, Brennan, age 12—is the biggest delight. Denver drops Brennan off at school each morning and does a happy

dance at pickup time. The two pals sleep cuddled up together. Best of all, Denver helps Brennan adapt to a new schedule, routine, and responsibilities, opening him up to new learning experiences.

Brennan was born with focal cortical dysplasia, causing intractable epilepsy with seizures and requiring two surgeries, costing Brennan most of his vision. A special education teacher at school recommended a Kids Companion Dog for the pre-teen, who also lives with attention deficit disorder and autism.

Someday, Brennan may have a guide dog of his own. Meanwhile, Denver helps break the ice for new relationships and introduces a hopeful dynamic that changes everything. “Denver definitely fits right into our family,” Elise notes. “He’s an amazing, very-much-loved addition. You can tell he loves us as much as we love him.”

**Denver** was raised by Jim Ebling and Kenzie Bastian.







**"Don't put it off. Don't think you're too old..."**

**If you want to go outside and do stuff, don't let age inhibit you. Don't let being visually impaired impair you. Just go for it!"**

**Bruce Goodnick | Guide Dog Izzy**  
SEBRING, FLORIDA

*Izzy was raised by Tracy Thielen.*

## **Amanda Metcalf** **Facility Therapy Dog Huey**

OHANA COUNSELING & WELLNESS  
LAKE MARY, FLORIDA

Facility Therapy Dog Huey helps veterans, military families, and first responders struggling with post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety. "There are things that he can do to build rapport and make people feel safe," says Amanda, a licensed mental health counselor and Huey's handler. "He breaks down barriers, and he's in all the right places at all the right times."

**Huey** was raised by Kristen Sawyer, Paula Sedita, and Laura BeVille.



## **Beverly McLaughlin** **Service Dog Lunkenheimer**

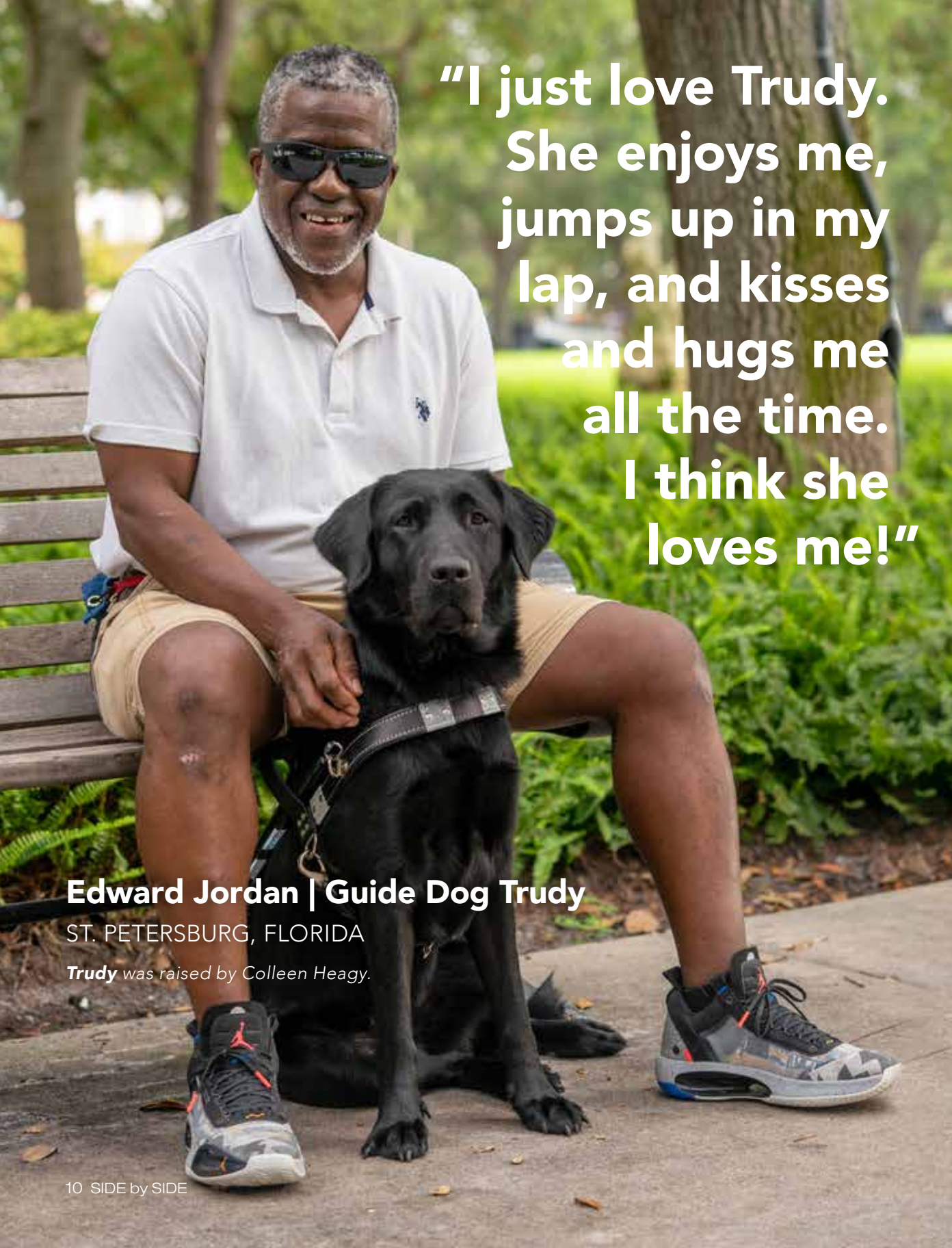
U.S. ARMY VETERAN 🇺🇸  
CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE

Army veteran Beverly McLaughlin hoped for a service dog that could help with night terrors and mobility issues. She was delighted to meet Lunkenheimer, her goofy, loving service dog. When nightmares woke Beverly at 3 a.m. their first night together, Lunkenheimer put his chin on her shoulder and Beverly felt safely anchored. She says, "I'm starting to relax more."

**Lunkenheimer** was raised by Kerstin and Paul Ramus.





A photograph of Edward Jordan, a Black man with a grey beard and sunglasses, sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. He is wearing a white polo shirt and tan shorts. A black Labrador Retriever, his guide dog Trudy, is sitting on the ground in front of him, looking towards the camera. The background shows green foliage and trees.


**"I just love Trudy.  
She enjoys me,  
jumps up in my  
lap, and kisses  
and hugs me  
all the time.  
I think she  
loves me!"**

**Edward Jordan | Guide Dog Trudy**

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

*Trudy was raised by Colleen Heagy.*

**Laura Bryce | Service Dog Bruno**

U.S. AIR FORCE VETERAN   
CHOCTAW, OKLAHOMA

For Air Force veteran Laura Bryce, stress and violence surrounded her work as an Arabic linguist translating communications critical to national security and military operations. Then, a sexual assault by her abusive ex-husband—a fellow veteran—heightened the damage to her psyche.

For years, Laura struggled with nightmares and isolated at home. Hypervigilant and anxious, she found it impossible to enjoy life. But now, her service dog, Bruno, brightens her world.

"Bruno is a little ray of sunshine, happiness, and love," Laura says. "He's always happy to see me, and he's a big ball of joy. When I wake up, I feel safer knowing that he's right there. If I hear a weird noise, I look over at him. And if he's okay, then I'm okay. Bruno makes me feel that there's a life out there to be lived again, and not just to exist. I actually get to live again!"

**Bruno** was raised by Carter Ross.







## Joe Brogdon Guide Dog Zinfandel

LAKELAND, GEORGIA

With sweet Zinfandel by his side, Joe discovered he can go out on his own in his small, rural town, visit the senior center and stores safely, and navigate confidently while singing at nursing homes with his gospel band. He shares, "It just means a real, whole change of life!"

**Zinfandel** was raised by Jo-Ski and AJ Theiler.



*"There's someone to be with you all the time. It's so much better than trying to figure everything out on your own."*

**Kathleen Trutschel | Guide Dog MJ**  
ORMOND BEACH, FLORIDA

**MJ** was raised by Marya Turley.



## Joe | Service Dog Ranger

U.S. ARMY VETERAN 🇺🇸  
RIVERVIEW, FLORIDA

When Joe sent pictures from training, the first thing his wife and daughters noticed was his beautiful service dog, Ranger. The second was Joe's face. "I'm going to get emotional," he says. "They love how I'm smiling; I didn't do that before. This is the change I needed in my life."

**Ranger** was raised by Karl and Sharon Whitehead.



*"Having a guide dog is independence. You are free and have no worries when you're out and about because you have a set of eyes to take care of you. I have more life behind me than I do in front of me, and I'm going to enjoy it!"*

## Pam Kennedy | Guide Dog Ruby

NEW MARKET, ALABAMA

**Ruby** was raised by Lisa and Ethan Harvey.



## Brianna Bodden | Guide Dog Rider

PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA

Brianna Bodden grew up a country girl, riding her horse and hanging out with her pet dog and two barn cats. Now she's wildly in love with her new guide dog, Rider, a fast-paced, loyal Lab who loves to be on the go. "Rider's quite a character," Brianna says with a smile. "She's doing everything well, and with her, I can walk way faster than if I were to have a cane or a sighted guide. She'll get me out of the house more."

Born with vision loss from retinopathy of prematurity, Brianna sees life as if through a straw, with no peripheral vision. Bright sunlight makes it worse, which can be challenging in sunny Florida. She lives at home with her parents and brothers and studies animal science online at the State College of Florida.

When Brianna's horse passed away a few years ago, it left an empty spot in her heart. Now Rider fills her life with puppy hugs, but her guide dog's unique talent is the fresh dose of freedom she provides. Brianna shares, "I can go places by myself without a sighted guide because now when I leave with my dog, I'm not completely alone."

**Rider** was raised by Nicole Covington.







**Marina and Sabrena**  
**Kids Companion Dog**  
GLENMOORE, PENNSYLVANIA

Marina’s parents hope a guide dog will someday help their 14-year-old live independently. Weighing less than two pounds at birth, Marina has experienced vision loss all her life. When she’s ready, a guide dog will make all the difference. To help prepare for that day, Sabrena, her gentle, loving Kids Companion Dog, improves her confidence. “Sabrena has been amazing for Marina and all of us,” says her mom. “I think it’s priceless.”

**Sabrena** was raised by Diane Lincoln.



**Alex | Service Dog**  
**Napoleon**  
U.S. NAVY VETERAN 🇺🇸  
FLORIDA

For Alex, life was a struggle after the Navy. Losing her mom recently made life feel incredibly dark—until she met Napoleon. “It’s nice to have something light come into your life,” she says. “I’m super grateful. Every day when I wake up and see my dog, I’m amazed by Southeastern Guide Dogs and how much these dogs make a difference. We’re a really good partnership.”

**Napoleon** was raised by Debbie VanZee.



**Emily Hoey | Gold Star Family Dog Elle** 🌟  
U.S. ARMY VETERAN 🇺🇸  
TAMPA, FLORIDA

As a former Army transportation officer, Emily deployed to Kuwait, Iraq, and Honduras before meeting John, a U.S. Army Special Forces member. They married in 2007. When their daughter, Isabella, was just 1, John was killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) in Afghanistan. A beloved pet named Maggie comforted Emily and Isabella, but their hearts broke when their old dog passed away. Maggie had been John’s dog, too, and now she was gone.

Emily applied for a Gold Star Family Dog, which brought her to the intuitive, calming, patient, and soulful Elle. Elle’s new home includes Emily, Isabella, now 14, and Emily’s husband, Sean, currently serving with the Army Special Forces at MacDill Air Force Base.

When Emily struggles with grief, Elle provides comfort and a sense of purpose. “Elle gets you moving even if you’re not feeling it,” Emily shares. “She makes us feel better inside, naturally. Elle is the piece that makes our family whole again. She just fits!”

**Elle** was raised by Candace Miller and Ellen & Dennis Kokott.





## Lisa "Kitty" Boeger Service Dog Eddie

U.S. ARMY VETERAN   
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Kitty's Army career derailed because of intense post-traumatic stress disorder from experiences in Iraq as a policewoman and combat lifesaver. Now Eddie changes everything. "Eddie is more than what I asked for; he is what I need," she says. "He's an angel."

**Eddie** was raised by Kip and Mary Ann Rodgers.



*"Man, I love this dog.  
He makes me look so good when  
I walk. Life doesn't end just  
because you lose your eyesight,  
it's a new beginning."*

**James Umbel | Guide Dog Obi**  
SEBRING, FLORIDA

**Obi** was raised by Lisa MacDonnell.



## Susan Smith Guide Dog Caprice

WALNUT HILL, FLORIDA

As Susan's eyesight worsened from retinitis pigmentosa, she felt housebound, insecure, and fearful. Now she enjoys life with a guide by her side. Caprice, her third guide dog, complements Susan's brisk pace. "Caprice clips right along, and it feels so good," Susan notes with a big smile. "And my cane never wagged its tail at me!"

**Caprice** was raised by Victoria Martin.

"Having a guide  
dog means  
freedom;  
it means  
independence.  
I can control  
my own path,  
my own destiny."



## John Dyson | Guide Dog Audie Mae

TAYLORSVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

**Audie Mae** was raised by the Gutierrez-Hernandez family.





"I definitely  
feel better with  
Shellby. I like the  
idea that she's  
going with me  
everywhere;  
she loves to be  
by my side."

**Dennis | Service Dog Shellby**

U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN 🇺🇸  
BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

*Shellby was raised by Carol and Rick Tangum.*



**Scott | Guide Dog Soko**

BLUE HILL, MAINE

"Soko is more than just a loyal guide dog," says Scott, who has been blind from birth and struggles with balance issues and anxiety. "He's also my living, breathing, canine anxiolytic." (An anxiolytic drug treats anxiety, fear, dread, and uneasiness.) His dog's comforting personality is part goofy but all business when it's time to work. "Soko and I are getting along better every day," he says, and he appreciates his "faithful, calming, and loyal guide dog, Soko."

*Soko was raised by Sally and Paul Forsberg.*



**Diana Rogers  
Service Dog Gigi**

U.S. AIR FORCE VETERAN 🇺🇸  
CAPE CORAL, FLORIDA

Before Gigi, Air Force veteran Diana Rogers couldn't leave home without her husband close by. "I didn't want to venture out of bed, let alone out of the house," she explains. But service dog Gigi's enthusiasm for taking on the day, head-on, tail wagging, has rubbed off and provided independence. "She's a wonderful little girl," Diana shares. "She loves playtime first thing in the morning, but after breakfast, she wants to work!"

*Gigi was raised by Amra Dillard Rickwa.*



## Paul Selinger | Service Dog Journey

U.S. ARMY VETERAN   
FLORIDA

While deployed to Iraq, Army sniper team leader Paul Selinger's vehicle took a hit from an IED. The ensuing wreckage, trauma, and severe brain and bodily injuries ended the sergeant's military career. A decade of therapy and surgeries got him walking and talking again, but memory, balance, and speech issues persist.

A lifelong dog lover, Paul's beloved pet Sadie helped with his recovery. When she passed away, he was ready for the comfort and companionship of a trained service dog, which led him to Journey, a laid-back, affectionate, intelligent goldador.

"Journey loves to be around me and by my side, which is cool," Paul notes. "I guess he's a lot like me—very chill and mellow." Journey restores Paul's focus when anxiety makes it feel like the world is spinning a million miles an hour. "He shows me that the world is still going at my speed," Paul explains. "I'm excited to find out what the journey is going to be like and how we're going to help each other down the road."

**Journey** was raised by Gloria Gomez and Valentina Echeverry.







## Sheryl Hedrick Guide Dog Beau

RIDGEVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA  
For Sheryl Hedrick, her guide dog Beau's fast pace and reliable skills are a perfect match, and Sheryl is delighted to have him by her side. She enjoys taking walks and going out without relying on friends. "Even if you're lost, you're not alone," she explains. "And you never have to depend on people again. It's just so wonderful to have a guide dog that cares about you. The independence is just a different world."

**Beau** was raised by *Athaiah Lewis*.

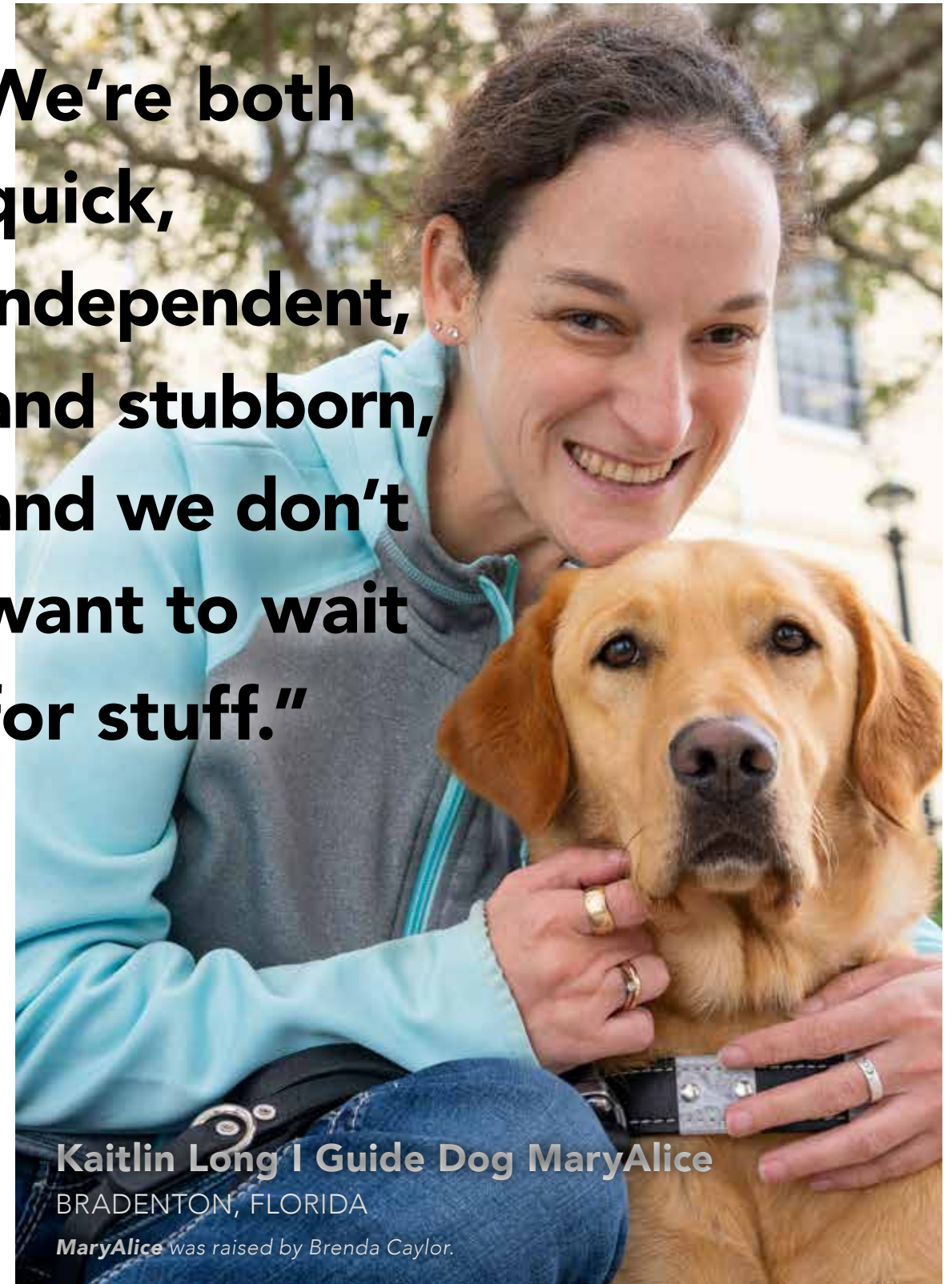


## Anne Buckley Guide Dog Mickey

BOYNTON BEACH, FLORIDA  
Because of vision loss, Anne felt reclusive and disengaged. But now, guide dog Mickey restores her independence and hope. "If I could have picked out someone that is just perfect for me, it's him," she says. Mickey helps Anne get out and safely walk for miles. "I will be the person I used to be a long time ago," Anne says. "This dog has given me some confidence . . . and I know I have something to give!"

**Mickey** was raised by *Jessica Hunt*.

"We're both  
quick,  
independent,  
and stubborn,  
and we don't  
want to wait  
for stuff."



## Kaitlin Long | Guide Dog MaryAlice

BRADENTON, FLORIDA

**MaryAlice** was raised by *Brenda Caylor*.



## Service Dog Refresher Class

The service dog instructor team recently welcomed a group of veterans for a week-long refresher class. Training activities strengthened the bond between handlers and dogs and incorporated outings to brush up on the dogs’ behaviors in real-life settings. “The results were fantastic across the board,” says Emily Dombrowski, director of our service dog program. “It was a rewarding experience to work with these returning students and see their partnerships flourish.”



### Marc | Service Dog Scooter

U.S. NAVY VETERAN   
TREASURE ISLAND, FLORIDA

*“Scooter is always focused and loyal to one thing . . . me! It’s difficult to explain how Scooter has affected my life. He puts a smile on my face and gives me a purpose.”*

**Scooter** was raised by Kassaundra Ray.



### Gary Davis | Service Dog Milo

U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN   
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

*“Milo has significantly changed my life in a positive manner. He is indeed a battle buddy. I have less anger, more patience, and a will to live and thrive.”*

**Milo** was raised by Lori & Mark Mitchell.

## Michael “Mike” Deardorff | Service Dog Ryan


U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN   
PARRISH, FLORIDA

*“Ryan’s impact on my life is immeasurable. He is so much more than my best friend; he is my life saver; the one who can bring me into the moment without saying anything. He is the one who gives me hope.”*

**Ryan** was raised by Gail & Patrick Gagliardi and Dave & Maggie Thompson.



## Travis Johnson | Service Dog Sadie

U.S. ARMY VETERAN   
WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

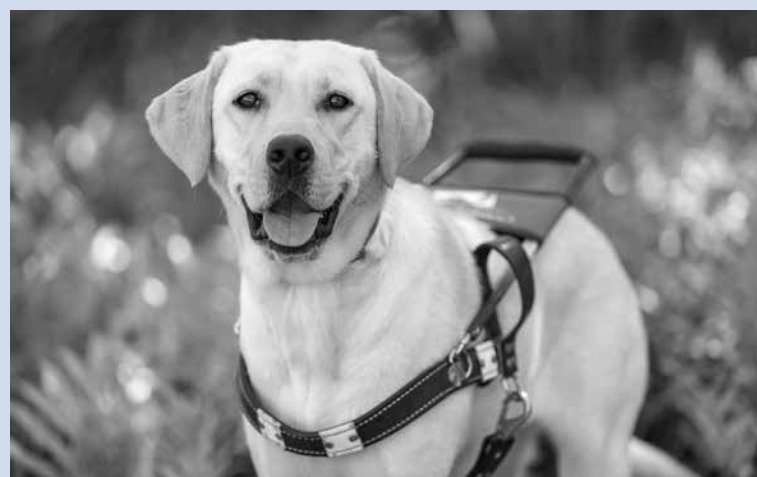


*“Sadie has been a huge benefit to my everyday life, by having that friend that is always by my side through the ups and downs that life challenges me with. She is not only my service dog, but a member of my family.”*

**Sadie** was raised by Sherrie & Zac Giparas.



# Class Supporters



Thank you for your thoughtful and compassionate gift. We recognize your desire to make a difference and your ability to create a lasting impact through meaningful giving.

## SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTERS

American Legion Michael J. Cicero, Post 173  
Bradenton Puppy Raisers  
Carl and Phyllis Dalton Family Foundation, Inc.  
The Raymond George and Ruth Bitner Fisher Foundation  
Gail Padgett, Family & Friends  
Samantha's Friends, Inc.  
Deborah & Paul Siebert

# 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)



# MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE.

The Southeastern Guide Dogs  
**Cornerstone Society**  
is an exceptional community of like minded friends  
making a profound impact on our mission.



You're invited to join the **Cornerstone Society** today!

## MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

**Partner** | \$1,200–\$4,999 per year

**Benefactor** | \$5,000–\$9,999 per year

**Visionary** | \$10,000–\$49,999 per year

**Guardian** | \$50,000–\$99,999 per year

**Founder** | \$100,000+ per year



Enjoy exclusive events and other benefits.  
Join at [Guidedogs.org/CS](https://Guidedogs.org/CS) or call **941.729.5665**.

Generosity can  
live forever.

Nola Timmins &  
Guide Dog Brizzy



## HERITAGE SOCIETY

Join our Heritage Society by including  
Southeastern Guide Dogs in your will.  
Leave a legacy that lasts.



Learn more at [Guidedogs.org/HS](https://Guidedogs.org/HS)





## We're proud to support Southeastern Guide Dogs

At Fromm Family Foods, we pride ourselves on offering a wide variety of premium dog and cat foods produced using the finest ingredients. Countless families across the country trust us with feeding their four-legged family members. We are honored to be selected as the Official Dog Food of Southeastern Guide Dogs, providing nutritional excellence to their extraordinary dogs throughout the United States.



To find a retailer near you, visit  
[frommfamil.com/retailers](http://frommfamil.com/retailers)