

# Paw Prints



**Guide  
Dogs**  
SA/NT

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR GUIDE DOGS SA/NT AUTUMN 2020

## A dream come true

Young carer Harvey's dreams came true when he got to spend a day with our puppies and dogs-in-training! Read about his PAWsome day on page 10.



Harvey and Karlo with ten-week-old puppy-in-training, Pride.

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# Message from the CEO, Aaron Chia

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A huge thank you  
for your support.



CEO Aaron Chia with  
puppy-in-training,  
Royal.

Welcome to a brand new year!  
I hope you and your  
family enjoyed a wonderful  
festive season.

What a year 2019 was! Thanks to your support, Guide Dogs was able to provide the highest quality services for people living with vision impairment, children living with autism, and their families.

Thank you for your continued support. Your generosity makes such a difference to people living in our community.

In this edition of Paw Prints I am proud to share many of our special achievements with you. Achievements that would have never been possible without your ongoing support.

On pages 4 and 5, I invite you to read about Chelsea's journey to find her perfect

Guide Dog. Matching a Guide Dog to a client in need is a complex process to find a dog that is the most compatible for the individual's specific needs. Chelsea needed a Guide Dog that could complement her walking style, adapt well to her full-time office environment, travel interstate, and much more. It has been a long journey for Chelsea, trialling many of our wonderful dogs, but I'm thrilled to announce Chelsea has finally been

matched with her perfect Guide Dog, Skylar. They truly are a match made in heaven.

As a father myself, I find it hard not to put myself in place of parents, Gary and Lisa. They simply want their son Oisin to be safe and happy. Fortunately, thanks to supporters like you, they now have Autism Assistance Dog, Zena, by their side. I know you will enjoy reading how much this incredible dog is making a difference in their lives.

Your support is the reason Guide Dogs can create these life-changing moments.

I know you will also enjoy reading the touching story of young Amaaya. Amaaya has a rare retinal disease called Leber Congenital Amaurosis that causes severe visual impairment in infancy and early childhood. Amaaya has been working with the Guide Dogs Vision Services team since she was a toddler. Amaaya's loving parents Gagandeep and Gunpreet want to bring awareness to Amaaya's condition and the specialised services that Guide Dogs provide – services that are available to children like Amaaya living in our community, thanks to your support.

I hope you enjoy this issue and, once again, on behalf of thousands of people across the South Australian and Northern Territory communities living with vision impairment, and children living with autism and their families, thank you. I am so grateful for your commitment to Guide Dogs.



**Aaron Chia**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Guide Dogs SA/NT

# INSIDE THIS ISSUE



## Oisin and Zena

Thanks to your support, 7-year-old Oisin has been matched with Autism Assistance Dog, Zena.

**Read about the newest Guide Dog team on page 4.**

## A pawfect match

We are thrilled to announce Chelsea has been matched with her perfect Guide Dog, Skylar.

**Read their heart warming story on page 6.**



## Pawgust Success!

Thanks to the support of participants across Australia, PAWGUST 2019 raised a phenomenal \$1,034,503!

**See all the PAWGUST Papparazzi pics on page 14.**



# A perfect match Oisín and Zena

Thanks to your support, 7-year-old Oisín has been matched with Autism Assistance Dog Zena.



Oisín is a happy and mischievous 7-year-old. Some of his favourite activities are going to the beach for a swim, playing with his lego, and climbing the local playground. Oisín also loves playing with his little brother Casey.

Oisín's parents Gary and Lisa first saw signs of autism when Oisín was around 12 to 18 months of age. Oisín wasn't making eye contact with them or responding to his name. He couldn't say the words Mum or Dad, no matter how much they encouraged him.

**Oisín was officially diagnosed with autism when he was just three years old.**

As Oisín grew older, other worries started forming for Gary and Lisa. As with any parent, one of their top priorities is Oisín's safety.

Oisín has no sense of danger and often tries to run off.

Gary and Lisa are forever holding on to Oisín and watching him like a hawk. They are constantly on the alert for any open doors or surrounding dangers that he might run straight towards.

Oisín is also getting stronger, making it even more difficult for Gary and Lisa to go out as a family, ***"We find it incredibly hard to go out in the community with Oisín because of the risk of him running off,"*** Gary explains.

Oisín has no functional language. He can say words or numbers at random that have no context to the environment or situation he is in at that moment. Often Oisín will say a group of numbers at random over and over again.

Oisín has trouble communicating what he wants, which leaves him feeling frustrated, confused and exhausted.

Oisín and Zena at home

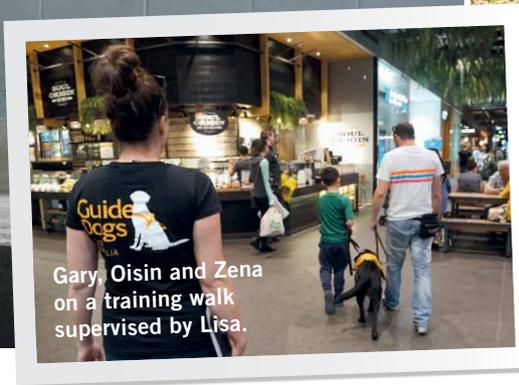


Gary, Oisin and Zena on a walk.

“Now that we have beautiful Zena, we can go out in the community with the peace of mind that Oisin is safe.”



Oisin and Zena love walking the trails near their house.



Gary, Oisin and Zena on a training walk supervised by Lisa.

Oisin can also be sensitive to noise in a new, unfamiliar environment, causing the occasional meltdown. Although Gary and Lisa have developed ways to help calm him, they often avoid new environments as a result.

### Oisin was in desperate need of an Autism Assistance Dog.

Early intervention through an Autism Assistance Dog is essential for the development of children like Oisin. It is also imperative for his safety.

An Autism Assistance Dog like Zena promotes positive social interaction and assists in the development of skills used to enable participation in community, social and recreational activities.

### Zena is a perfect match for Oisin.

Guide Dog and Mobility Instructor, Lisa, knew Autism Assistance Dog-in-training, Zena would be perfect for Oisin. Zena's sweet, calm and willing nature makes her the perfect dog for the role.

***“I knew immediately that an Autism Assistance Dog like Zena would make such a difference to Oisin and his development. With Zena, Oisin would also be safe. Oisin would be attached to Zena's coat through a belt around his waist, so he can't easily run off. It would create peace of mind for Gary and Lisa when they're out and about as a family,”*** Lisa explains.

After a home trial and many weeks of intensive training, Oisin and Zena are officially matched! They are doing extremely well together, and parents Gary and Lisa are thrilled.

***“Zena has settled fantastically well into our home. She likes our company, and we are loving hers,”*** Gary shares. ***“Zena and Oisin go very well together on walks and are starting to form a great bond at home.”***

In the short time Zena has been with their family, she has already made a huge difference to their lives, ***“Now that we have beautiful Zena, we can go out in the community and go to events we wouldn't usually be able to, with the peace of mind that Oisin is safe,”*** Gary said.

Your support is the reason Guide Dogs can match families and children in need with their very own Autism Assistance Dog. You truly are changing lives.

**[Your support has opened up a world of possibilities for Oisin – thank you.](#)**

# The journey to her perfect Guide Dog

## Chelsea and Skylar

You may remember reading about 31-year-old Chelsea in our 2017 Christmas Appeal, **Chelsea lives with severe vision impairment.**

Chelsea

Skylar

Chelsea has Bardet–Beidl syndrome; a disorder that caused her vision to deteriorate from three years of age.

Chelsea is an active young woman who loves shopping, going to the football, and travelling.

To do some of the things she loves, Chelsea needed to be accompanied by her family or friends. It frustrated Chelsea that she had to rely on the help of others.

Chelsea needed a Guide Dog.

*“I’d love to be able to travel easily around the community, particularly at night because I’m night blind. I often have to ask my family and friends to assist me. I also find busy shopping centres really difficult... it’d be great to go shopping with a Guide Dog by my side, not having to ask anyone for assistance,”* Chelsea said.

The training process to transform one of our gorgeous puppies into a Guide Dog for Chelsea required time, expertise, and resources.

**Each dog in our Puppy Development Centre costs over \$35,000 to raise and train, so you can understand why Guide Dogs are so grateful for the continued generosity of people like you - thank you so much for your support.**

**Matching a person who is blind or vision impaired with a Guide Dog is a complex, timely process to find the most compatible Guide Dog for that individual.**

Chelsea needed a Guide Dog that could complement her walking style, adapt well to her full-time office environment, travel interstate, and much more.

It has been a long journey for Chelsea, and thanks to your support, Chelsea was able to trial many wonderful dogs in the Guide Dog training program.

I am thrilled to announce Chelsea has been matched with her perfect Guide Dog, Skylar.

Chelsea and Skylar are a match made in heaven.

“Skylar has proved to be a very willing and patient dog, ideal for someone who is a new Guide Dog handler” says Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, Mike. “The process of learning to use a Guide Dog can be challenging; but Skylar’s ability, consistency, and reliability in her guide work has helped to grow Chelsea’s confidence during their time together. In the short time Chelsea and Skylar have been together, they have already formed an incredible bond.”

Chelsea is thrilled with her new partnership. “Skylar is a sweet and gentle dog who is willing to work. I love her cheekiness, and I know she is there for me to guide me wherever I go.”

Your support is the reason Guide Dogs can match people in need like Chelsea with our incredible dogs. Your support helps provide the confidence, safety, and companionship you can’t put a price on.

**Thank you for supporting Chelsea on her journey to find her perfect Guide Dog.**

“Skylar’s ability, consistency, and reliability in her guide work has helped to grow Chelsea’s confidence during their time together.”



Skylar.

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# Amazing Amaaya's journey to independence

Not even a rare  
congenital disease  
can stand in little  
Amaaya's way!

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Amaaya  
using assistive  
technology.

## 5-year-old Amaaya has a rare retinal disease called Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA) that causes severe visual impairment in infancy and early childhood. LCA is estimated to affect just one-in-100,000 people.

Children born with LCA have poor vision because of the impaired development of the retina. The extent of vision loss varies from person to person, and in Amaaya's case, it is quite severe.

Currently Amaaya has just less than 10 per cent of peripheral vision in both eyes, and by the time she reaches her late teens, Amaaya will be completely blind.

Amaaya's parents Gagandeep and Gunpreet want to bring awareness to Amaaya's condition, ***"The disease is so rare that there is little research to offer any successful breakthroughs. If we find more patients we can push for a need for more research. We need more research and treatment facilities that could eventually offer hope to people with a form of this disease,"*** Gagandeep says.

Our specialist services provide a lifetime of independence, inclusion, and wellbeing for adults and children living with vision impairment. Your support generously funds these services and assistive technologies starting from childhood.

Amaaya has been working with the Guide Dogs Vision Services team ever since she was a toddler.

Children living with vision impairment like Amaaya may take longer to reach developmental milestones when compared to most children with sight, as vision affects a child's understanding of their world and their motivation to be mobile.

With the help of Amaaya's dedicated parents, Amaaya's personal goals were identified early on, and an individual training program was developed to help her adapt to her progressive vision loss, and to also teach her a variety of skills to encourage growth and development.

Amaaya is a determined little girl and is tackling day-to-day activities with confidence. She is achieving her goals, overcoming challenges, and is on track to reach a high level of independence.

Amaaya's parents are so proud of their little girl and are thrilled with how she is progressing, ***"When Amaaya was diagnosed, we were told she wouldn't be able to lead an independent life. Now she dresses herself, loves to draw, swim and play. We are thrilled with her progress."***

**Thank you for generously supporting children living with vision impairment like Amaaya. Your support truly changes lives.**

"Amaaya's goal for 2020 is cane training, to help her become more confident walking in unfamiliar environment.

Thanks to your support, Amaaya is becoming more confident and independent than ever."



# A dream come true

Young carer, Harvey, got to spend a day with the P Litter puppies and Autism Assistance Dog, Poppet.

Harvey

Remind me again whose  
dream is coming true?!

Yum, yum!

Poppet

Harvey offering Poppet  
a tasty reward after  
obeying the cue 'leave it'.

# Harvey's PAWsome day

Like most ten-year-old kids, Harvey LOVES dogs. But, as one of the estimated 750,000 Young Carers who support a family member living with a disability, he often misses out on the experiences of other kids his age.

Harvey's mum Jodene lives with severe osteoarthritis, which can make it difficult to get around. Jodene says she wouldn't know what to do without her son's help – he is thoughtful and compassionate beyond his years.

To say thanks to Harvey for all that he does, Guide Dogs SA/NT and Little Dreamers fulfilled Harvey's dream to spend a truly PAWsome day with our puppies and dogs-in-training!

Harvey's special '**Dream Experience**' began by meeting Karlo, who leads our Puppy Development Centre, and the six yellow pups of the P Litter: Pippin, Pride, Pixel, Prince, Poppet and Paxton.

Karlo showed Harvey some obedience training techniques using positive reinforcement. Harvey put his new skills to work with Poppet, practising essential cues like '**sit**' and '**leave it**', which he reinforced with praise and a tasty treat. Harvey then took Pride for a walk on-leash through the obstacle course in our Puppy Enrichment yard.

After more cuddles and puppy playtime, Harvey met Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, Lisa, with then Autism Assistance Dog-in-



Karlo teaches Harvey how to walk with Pride on-leash.

## Puppy training with Karlo and Pride

training Zena. The highlight of the day for Harvey was experiencing an attachment walk with Zena, while Lisa explained how our Autism Assistance Dogs are trained to enable safety and independence for young children with autism.

Of course, Harvey loved playing with puppies, but learning about Lisa's work training dogs to support people with disability was a truly powerful moment. Harvey and his mum take great comfort in their companion dog, Penny. Now, Harvey has a range of training techniques they can practise together at home!

## Time for cuddles!



Jodene, Harvey, Autism Assistance Dog Zena and Lisa



Harvey experiencing an attachment walk with Lisa and Zena

## Attachment walk with Lisa and Zena

Our thanks to Harvey for helping our puppies prepare for future careers as Guide Dogs, Autism Assistance Dogs or Therapy Dogs, and thanks to you, our amazing supporters, for making experiences like this possible.

# Your legacy will guide our future

Guide Dogs volunteer, Kate, shares her rich history with dogs, Guide Dogs, and why she chose to leave a gift in her Will.

“My name is Kate and I am a volunteer and bequestor for Guide Dogs SA/NT.

I volunteer as a home boarder, caring for dogs while they attend formal training with Guide Dogs, after they have completed their 12 months with the wonderful Puppy Raisers. In this role, I have had the privilege of witnessing the incredible skill, care and dedication that goes into transforming a loveable Labrador into a highly skilled Guide Dog, Autism Assistance Dog, or Therapy Dog. I've also been lucky enough to meet some of the clients who have been matched with a Guide Dog, and see first-hand the remarkable difference these dogs have made to their lives, providing them with improved mobility, confidence and independence.

My passion for improving the quality of life for people with vision impairment runs in the family; I can remember learning Braille with my Grandpa when I was little, after he suffered sudden vision loss. My Mum taught me about the importance of giving back to the community by being a long-term Guide Dog Puppy Sponsor – ‘Guide Dog Grandma’ as I call her. She was the one who encouraged me to get involved with Guide Dogs and I'm so glad I did.

Working full time means I'm not always able to contribute as much time to volunteering as I'd like to; I wanted to do something more.

That was when I decided to make a bequest to Guide Dogs. The team at Guide Dogs was extremely helpful and guided me through the process of leaving this special gift. I loved that it was an easy action I could take right now! I am proud to be a member of the ‘Buddy for Life’ program, and would love you to join me by leaving a gift to Guide Dogs in your Will.

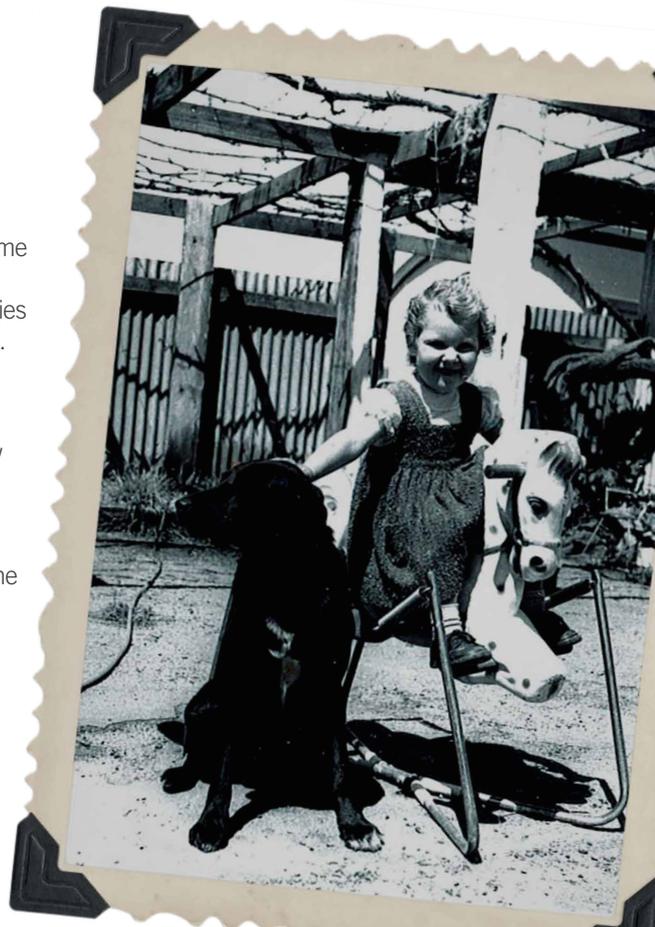
You might think that making a Will is a gloomy thing - not at all. It's just a simple, practical act, and one of the most important things you can do for your loved ones. The recent loss of a good friend of mine really brought home to me the value of having a Will and how it can ease the pressure on families during what can be a distressing time.

My Will gives me peace of mind, knowing that my wishes will be respected. My family understand how much it means to me, and recognise that I'm doing something special by making a bequest to Guide Dogs. By leaving a gift in my Will, I feel a genuine comfort knowing that I am assisting Guide Dogs to continue their life-changing work well into the future.”

*Kate Hallam*

(Volunteer and Bequestor for Guide Dogs)

*My passion for dogs started at a young age, in 1967 with my pet Labrador Retriever.*



“I am proud to be a member of the ‘Buddy for Life’ program, and would love you to join me by leaving a gift to Guide Dogs in your Will.”

**Kate Hallam**

Volunteer and Bequestor  
for Guide Dogs



Kate with Guide Dog Oakley.

**Bequests are the greatest commitment a supporter can make to Guide Dogs.**

Leaving a gift in your will can make profound change to the life of a person with disability. You may never meet the person whose life your kindness changes, but they will never forget your contribution. Your legacy will help guide our future. For more information on leaving a gift in your Will visit our Bequest web page, or call Zoe Rennie in our Planned Giving team on **08 8203 8319**.

# PAWGUST 2019!

PAWGUST returned in 2019, bigger and better than ever!

2019 was the second year of PAWGUST, and we were so excited to have over 11,000 people and their pups (and even a goat!) register to put their paws to the pavement in support of Guide Dogs.

It was wonderful to see PAWGUST paw-ticipants walking each and every day through rain, hail, mud, shine and even SNOW to raise much needed funds for our puppies-in training!

Participants from across the country **raised a phenomenal \$1,034,503!** These funds were distributed to Guide Dog organisations around Australia to help breed, raise, train and support 20 puppies-in-training on their journey to becoming Guide Dogs, Autism Assistance Dogs, or Therapy Dogs.

## What is PAWGUST?

PAWGUST challenged people to raise much needed funds for Guide Dogs, walking their dog 30 minutes a day for 30 days during the month of August, which is no small feat in winter weather.

It was a wonderful feeling helping people and their pups – all whilst taking my dogs on a walk every day.

Lucy, PAWGUST Participant 2019



What the bleat?!



For more information or to pre-register for PAWGUST 2020, visit [PAWGUST.com.au](http://PAWGUST.com.au), or email [PAWGUST@guidedogs.org.au](mailto:PAWGUST@guidedogs.org.au)

What's on at  
Guide Dogs



## BOSS' BLIND DATE

**Are you a boss?  
A team leader, manager,  
supervisor, or CEO?**

Use your power for good this month and sign up for our immersive fundraising event, Boss' Blind Date, and go blindfolded for part of your workday on March 19, 2020. Head to [bossblinddate.com.au](http://bossblinddate.com.au) to take on the challenge and make a difference to people living with vision impairment.



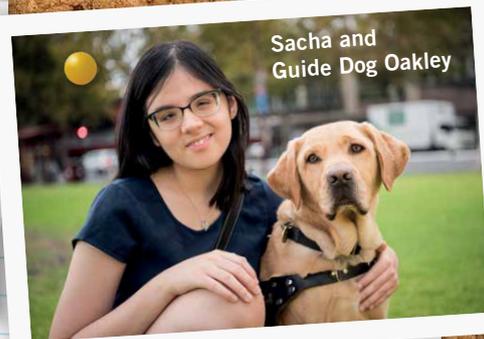
# PAWGUST

Grab your best mate & walk 30 minutes a day for 30 days



## Take the challenge this August!

For more information or to pre-register for PAWGUST 2020 visit [PAWGUST.com.au](http://PAWGUST.com.au) or email [PAWGUST@guidedogs.org.au](mailto:PAWGUST@guidedogs.org.au)



Sacha and  
Guide Dog Oakley

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or call 1300 614 307.**



## International Guide Dog Day 29 April, 2020

International Guide Dog Day is a perfect opportunity to raise awareness about vision impairment and celebrate the life-changing impact Guide Dogs and Autism Assistance Dogs have in enabling independence, participation, inclusion and wellbeing for our clients and their families.

**Stay tuned on our social media for more updates!**



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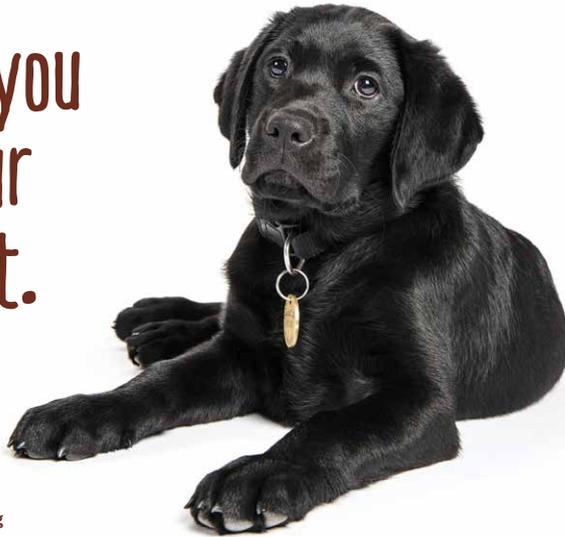
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for your  
support.



Imani, puppy-in-training

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