

LEAD ON

Magazine of Seeing Dogs

A working name of The Seeing Dogs Alliance

*Training Dogs to Guide Blind and
Partially Sighted People*

Autumn 2019

**Editor
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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

With the cooler weather closing in, we are delighted to warm these chilly days and nights with the Autumn 2019 issue of *Lead On*, featuring the latest news and developments at Seeing Dogs.

You will once again be able to read latest updates from our Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, John Grave, about his latest trainee seeing dogs, including Ezra, a Hungarian Wire-Haired Vizsla, Winston, a Labrador, and Jasper, a Labradoodle.

We are pleased to feature an article from one of clients, Pamela Megahey, about the difference that her German Shepherd Dog, Evie, has made to her life.

Please be aware that there is no Secretary's Report in this issue, but we hope to provide you with an updated Report in the January 2020.

And always ending on a high note, we hope that you will enjoy reading another super interesting article by Neil Ewart, which looks at how best to protect your dog from being stolen.

If you would like to contribute a story or article to *Lead On*, please email esther@3commpr.co.uk

In the meantime, we do hope that this issue will ease you gently into the autumn months.

Esther Porta

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS

To give a donation, or to pay your subscription for one or more years by cheque, please use the enclosed Subscription and Donation Form.

If you wish to give a donation and/or pay your subscription automatically each year, please complete the enclosed Bankers' Order and return it to us, as we need to keep a record of who pays their subscription or donates by this method. We'll send it to your bank. Payments can be made monthly, quarterly or annually by this method. If you want to combine a regular donation with your subscription using this method, £5 of your first payment for the financial year will be considered to be your subscription.

The Subscription and Donation Form and the Bankers' Order will also be enclosed with the braille and tape copies, and they will be sent as an attachment to the email copies.

If you are a taxpayer and you haven't given us permission to claim Gift Aid on your donation, we would be grateful if you could complete the Gift Aid Declaration on whichever of the forms you use, to give us permission to claim Gift Aid. This now includes people who took out a Bankers' Order before January 2013, as we now have a different charity number.

We send the Subscription and Donation Form and Bankers' Order to everyone who receives *Lead On*,

whether they are subscribing or donating or not, as it saves keeping several lists. If you want to set up a new Bankers' Order, you will need to cancel any previous ones.

You can donate online via our website, www.seeingdogs.org.uk or on www.mydonatebt.com. Remember that you can also sponsor a puppy or a dog via our website.

You can donate, or pay subscriptions, by a direct bank transfer, although if you wish us to claim Gift Aid, you will have to complete a Gift Aid Declaration. Please use your name as the reference, so that we can recognise your payment. Our bank details are sort code 40 52 40, account number 00087614. These details are also on the Bankers' Order.

If you donate or pay your subscription online, or by direct bank transfer, please let us know.

Remember you can also donate anonymously if you wish, either by sending a cheque direct to Caf Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4JQ, or via our website. However, we like to acknowledge donations, so we would rather you let us know who you are. Thank you!

SEEING DOG OWNER, NATALIE SHAW, SHARES HER STORY ABOUT LIFE WITH THE INCREDIBLE EZRA!

I have had the pleasure of training four Labrador type Guide Dogs over the years and my last guide dog, Brendan, retired earlier this year.

And then Ezra, came into my life! Ezra is a Hungarian Wire-Haired Vizsla and I had never trained this breed before and the whole experience has been incredible. He's a gentle giant, who looks like an old, (but much-loved), Steiff teddy bear!

Whilst the training will be an entirely new experience for both of us, Ezra has enormous potential and I look forward to working with him.

Ezra is full of love, bounce and is willing to please. However, what I find most endearing about him is his cute little beard which I must repeatedly wipe after he drinks his water. He is very talkative and always wants the last word. Watch this space, as the best is yet to come from this incredibly special dog.

UPDATES FROM OUR GUIDE DOG MOBILITY INSTRUCTOR, JOHN GRAVE

Winston

Winston is a loveable large Labrador who enamours himself to everyone who meets him. Yet underneath that big frame, there is a gentle, sensitive male who responds well to words of praise and encouragement. As a Labrador he does like his food, and we use food and edible treats as part of his training.

By the time this goes to print, he will be hopefully working with his new owner in the London area. With their love and support, he will make a superb Seeing Dog and give his owner plenty of support and companionship.

A big thank you to Margaret and Chris for all their help and support in developing such a wonderful dog.

Jasper

Jasper has only started his training with Seeing Dogs. He is a bold, young labradoodle with a voracious interest in virtually everything!

He enjoys long walks and loves learning new skills. Sometimes his enthusiasm can get the better of him, but when this characteristic is correctly channelled, he bears all the hallmarks of a super seeing dog.

Many thanks to Gemma for developing a terrific young dog.

INTRODUCING 'ANDREW' (ANDY), BY PUPPY REARER, MARGARET ATKINS

Andy is the third puppy that we have reared for Seeing Dogs Alliance. He is by far the smallest puppy that we have reared and currently weighs only 23Kg, despite the fact that he is now 11 months old and fully grown. He has so much character, and is clever, alert and enthusiastic.

He is blessed with an amazing memory to return to places where has perhaps been once or twice previously!

He always gets a lot of attention from people, young and old, because they find him so handsome. Our three-year-old granddaughter adores him, and they play together like siblings (although she is always the boss). If there were ever to be a Mr Men book for dogs about him, his character name would be “Mr Wiggly Bottom” as he wiggles and wags his tail constantly because he is just so happy.

He recently came to the Komedia theatre in Brighton with us which, as the name suggests, is a venue for stand-up comedians. It is quite a noisy and dark venue where the audience sits around large tables. Andy took it all in his stride by quietly sleeping through the entire performance - clearly not appreciating the hilarious jokes! Elsewhere, he is very well behaved in busy centres such as Brighton and I barely notice him when I am out doing the shopping. (Sometimes, Andy is even far better behaved on shopping trips than my husband Chris!)

We think that once Andy starts his formal training with John that he has the potential to become a truly outstanding Seeing Dog. He is an all-round little sweetheart (I mean Andy, not John!), It is an absolute joy for us to be a part of Andy’s training and we shall miss him greatly when he starts the next phase of his adventure.

HOW EVIE HELPED CHANGE MY LIFE FOR THE BETTER, BY PAMELA MEGAHEY

My life changed after meeting Evie, my Seeing Dogs Alliance German Shepherd.

Evie and I built a bond very quickly after our initial meeting and were soon visiting an array of different places independently and with great ease. It has been truly fantastic to have the freedom to be able to visit so many without needing a chaperone!

In the last nine months, Evie and I have travelled by taxi, train, tube and plane, for a whole host of activities ranging from meeting up with friends and going to the gym, to attending hospital appointments and trips to the theatre. Evie is enabling me to live life to the max to enjoy it in the process. The Seeing Dogs Alliance is an amazing charity who provide well-rounded, superbly trained dogs to guide the blind and visually impaired. It is especially good to know that any money raised or donated is used solely for training and matching dogs and handlers.

My Evie is my much-loved, waggy-tailed lifesaver!

A GOOD READ, BY NEIL EWART

I have been reading a great book which is described as a “Cabinet of Canine Curiosities”. Amazing Dogs, by Jan Bondeson, reveals stories of the most bizarre dogs in history, including the once-famous dogs collecting for charity in London’s railway stations, with boxes attached to their backs.

Also, there are chapters covering turn-spit dogs ceaselessly running inside wheels to turn roast meat, and terriers put into rat pits, with bets laid on the numbers of rats killed - a fact you might care to raise when things go a bit quiet at your next dinner party! In 1823, a champion terrier called Billy, killed 100 rats in five and a half minutes! A record which stood until 1863, when it was beaten by Jacko, another champion rat killer.

Oh, and do ask if the other guests realise that among the jobs available in Victorian London were the ‘pure finders’, street collectors of dog faeces! It is on record that they met a ready market for all the dog mess they were able to collect, for use as a siccative for bookbinding leather at the Bermondsey tan yards. Out of curiosity, I do wonder who discovered this use, and how they came about finding it!

This great book suitably ends with a chapter on dog cemeteries and dog ghosts. Scary stuff!

So, what’s new, and how have things changed in the 21st century?

Well, during Victorian times dog thieves were rampant around the streets of London. They operated very closely with ‘dog finders’ and ‘dog restorers’ who

charged fees of their own for the safe return of the stolen dogs. Then there were the street sellers of dogs, some of whose animals may well have been the by-products of the dog stealing racket, for which the 'dog restorer' had been unable to negotiate a safe return to family life.

So, the theft of dogs has been around for a very long time. (However, I doubt that it was as well organised then as it is now).

We all need to constantly remind ourselves and others that we should treat dogs like any other valuable and irreplaceable property.

Have no illusions that your dogs might be immune from theft. Breeding bitches are particularly attractive to thieves. It is a simple matter to pinch one, falsify the paperwork and sell any illicit puppies for considerable sums of money.

Be aware that thieves can strike at any time and anyone who becomes a victim will find the experience unbelievably distressing, especially when the dog is never seen again.

Thieves will even target whole litters, so breeders should be extra vigilant and aware of their tremendous value. This being the case, here are some top tips to remember:-

1. Check how secure your garden is - especially when a footpath or field borders it.
2. Avoid leaving dogs outside shops, or the car. They do get pinched from locked vehicles!

3. When giving your dog a run, just watch out for dubious characters who seem to be overly interested in your dog. Keep the dog close to you.

4. It is still a legal requirement for a dog to wear a collar with identification when in a public place. It won't stop a dog being stolen, but it will help get your dog back if it simply goes walkabout. Oh, and put your mobile number on the identification tag so you can be contacted if your dog is found by a concerned member of the public who might find your dog.

5. If you have a brood, then be wary how many people you tell. Breeding bitches can be worth a lot to a thief.

6. Keep up to date photos of your dogs. Take special note of any unusual features.

7. Check that the details featured on the microchip are still accurate.

8. If you suspect your dog has been stolen, as opposed to simply 'gone missing' then report it to the police. And insist it is recorded as a crime and not just a 'lost' dog.

9. Finally, if your dog goes missing, and is eventually found, can you prove that dog is yours? In law, Microchipping is NOT proof. Keep all the paperwork relating to your dog, especially a bill of sale.

Want us to feature your stories and news? Please email your photos and personal stories, by 31 December 2019 to: esther@3commpr.co.uk

LOOKING FOR THAT SPECIAL CHRISTMAS GIFT?

Are you looking to give a special gift this Christmas? Seeing Dog owner and jewellery designer, Natalie Shaw, has some gorgeous hand-made silver trinkets available for you to buy. Better still, 100% of money raised when you purchase any of her pieces, goes to The Seeing Dogs Alliance!

1. Tibetan Silver Bookmark with Dog Paw Charm £2
2. Zip Pull with Dog Paw Charm £1
3. Key Ring with Dog Paw Charm £1
4. Dark Blue Tassel Bookmark with Dog Paw Charm £1.50

To place your order, please email Natalie Shaw direct on nataliemshaw@sky.com and specify the type and number of specific trinket(s) you would like. (All prices include VAT).