

# Carson City Guide Dog Club Information Sheet

**Background:** For over thirty years, guide dog puppies have been raised and socialized on behalf of Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) in Carson City, Nevada and surrounding communities. The puppies are specially bred by Guide Dogs at their San Rafael, California campus and given to raising families at eight weeks of age. Over the next 14-16 months, the raising family works closely with the local club and follows a carefully proscribed program of community experiences and teaching a special set of behavioral skills. At 14-18 months of age, the puppies are returned to Guide Dogs to begin a six month training program with licensed guide dog instructors. Guide dog puppies that meet the exacting standards are matched with blind men and women from all over the United States and Canada. The blind person and guide dog are trained together to form a guide dog team.

**History of Carson City Club:** During the early years, the Carson City guide dog group was primarily a youth oriented program affiliated with 4-H. Later, the club separated from 4-H and became a guide dog club open to both youth and adult raisers. At this time, the club was also recognized as an extracurricular program of the Carson City School District. This school affiliation allows the club to use community and school district facilities and students are able to participate in after school guide dog training classes. The Carson City Guide Dog Club is very proud of its outstanding record of raising guide dog puppies for Guide Dogs for the Blind. Puppies raised in Carson City are now working guides throughout the major cities of North America. So too, the Carson City Club is proud of its community outreach. The club has been very active doing presentations to a variety of school, church and community groups. For example, the club has participated with the Carson City public library in the "Paws to Read" program encouraging elementary aged children to read. The Carson City Club is also very proud of its scholarship program. Monies raised from community donations have been set aside to fund educational scholarships.

**Mission:** The mission of Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc. is:

*Guide Dogs for the Blind provides enhanced mobility to qualified individuals through partnership with dogs whose unique skills are developed and nurtured by dedicated volunteers and a professional staff. (Additional information regarding GDB may be obtained online at [www.guidedogs.com](http://www.guidedogs.com).)*

The Carson City Guide Dog Club supports this mission by providing puppy raising homes for young puppies and an opportunity for students and adults to contribute positively to their community. Nevada law allows guide dog puppies in training, wearing their official jacket, to go everywhere. Most of our dogs go to work, school, shopping, and various public places with their raisers thus greatly

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enhancing their socialization and training experiences. Club members are ambassadors for Guide Dogs for the Blind wherever they go.

**Club Membership:** Membership is open to both youth and adults who have a deep love for dogs and who would like to help Guide Dogs for the Blind fulfill its mission.

There are a number of ways in which someone may be involved in the Carson City Guide Dog Club. Initially, you are encouraged to attend several meetings to learn about the club and the basic approved techniques for handling the dogs. Everyone is encouraged to participate fully in the meetings by handling dogs and asking lots of questions. We are fortunate to have a number of club members who are students from local schools including Eagle Valley Middle School where they participate in the after-school guide dog training classes.

After attending at least three training meetings, new members will be asked to complete a Guide Dog for the Blind volunteer application. As a club volunteer, the new member is protected against personal liabilities by GDB general liability insurance and by the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997. All club volunteers must adhere to all GDB guidelines, policies and procedures provided with the volunteer application.

After attending meetings for a number of months, a club member may want to volunteer to begin puppy sitting. This requires demonstration of a minimum level of handling skills, review of the puppy-raising manual, and a successful home visit. Puppy sitting may be for a day, overnight or longer. Club leaders must approve all puppy sitting arrangements.

Caring for puppies of varying ages and with a range of behaviors over a period of time will provide the volunteer with the experience and knowledge necessary to make an informed decision about applying to be a puppy raiser. Puppy raisers need to be at least 9 years old – there is no age limit for adults. It takes the coordinated effort of an entire family to raise a guide dog puppy. Everyone in the family must agree to follow the rules and follow the structured training program. Regular participation in the club meetings is required of family members having day to day puppy raising responsibilities. Co-raising, the raising of one puppy by more than one raiser, has been an alternative way for puppies to be raised. Working together, two different families or individuals share in the responsibilities of raising and socialization. To apply to raise a guide dog puppy, a Puppy Placement Questionnaire is completed and must be reviewed and approved by the club leadership and the Community Field Representative from Guide Dogs for the Blind.

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**Advisory Committee:** A committee consisting of puppy raisers and club volunteers meets monthly to discuss club activities and provide suggestions to club leadership. They advise the leadership on topics ranging from calendar of events, outings, activities for meetings and club concerns.

**Financial Commitments:** Raising a guide dog puppy is recognized as a charitable activity on behalf of Guide Dogs for the Blind. Raisers are expected to pay for the expenses of dog food, transportation and incidentals. Each guide dog puppy has a \$250 medical allowance for vet expenses (shots and minor medical procedures). Upon prior approval, major vet expenses are reimbursed by Guide Dogs. Though the Carson City Guide Dog club does not actively engage in fund raising activities, the club has an account at Guide Dogs in which donations from individuals and community groups have been deposited. Club funds are used primarily to pay for student scholarships and donations to help further the mission of Guide Dogs. A club financial report is presented quarterly to the club membership.

**Scholarships and Donations:** For each guide dog puppy that qualifies as a guide or breeder, the raiser is awarded a \$500 scholarship towards their post high school education. In lieu of a scholarship, raisers may opt to make a donation to Guide Dogs for the Blind to be used in part for the purchase of a guide dog harness. The scholarship and/or harness donation will be equally divided between co-raisers of a graduating dog. Only one full scholarship will be awarded per qualifying dog.

**Meeting Schedule:** The Carson City Guide Dog Club conducts weekly meetings. From September to June (school year), the club meets alternate weeks at Fuji Park in the indoor event center. Two meetings a month are outings at various locations (ex. Fire station, public library, various stores, community college). Most meetings are on Monday evenings from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

**Meeting Attendance:** Youth (under 16 years old) who are raising a puppy in their home must be accompanied by an adult parent/guardian at all meetings and outings. Special circumstances may be arranged in advance between the parent/guardian and club leaders (with written permission). Leaders at their discretion may require parents of other youth to attend meetings and outings as well. Puppies in training are required to attend at least 80% of the scheduled meetings and outings. Each co-raiser must attend at least 50% of scheduled meetings and outings. If a puppy raiser (or one of the co-raisers) is unable to attend a meeting, one of the leaders should be notified in advance and arrangements made for the puppy to attend the meeting or outing.

**Supervision of Youth:** Youth members can only be supervised by his/her parent/guardian, adult mentor, or one of the club leaders. If the parent/guardian cannot be in attendance, permission for the youth to attend

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must be received from one of the leaders. Adults who supervise youth other than their own children must meet the screening standards of Guide Dogs for the Blind. The required ratio of leaders to unaccompanied youth is 1 to 12 at meetings and 1 to 8 on outings. To insure the complete safety of all members, parents are strongly encouraged to make sure there is a club leader in attendance.

**Transportation:** It is the responsibility of parents to arrange transportation of their children to meetings, outings and other functions. Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Carson City Guide Dog Club bear no responsibility or liability for transportation to and from club events, meetings or outings.

**Communication:** It is recommended by the Carson City Guide Dog Club that any person who has a dispute or conflict with another club member first attempt to resolve the conflict by speaking directly to the other individual in a courteous and productive fashion. If the concern is not resolved, it should immediately be brought to the attention of one of the club leaders or the advisory committee. If a club member's concerns are with club leaders and the advisory committee, they and club leaders can look to the GDB Community Field Representative for advice and assistance. If a concern should arise regarding the GDB Community Field Representative, members are asked to contact the Puppy Raising Manager at GDB. To ensure cordial and productive membership club dynamics, GDB requires that this chain of communication be followed.

**Club Leaders:** Warren Wish & Claudia Wish have been club leaders since 1992. Currently they are raising their twenty-first guide dog puppy. Christina Van Hook and Becky Friend are the assistant club leaders. Christina is raising her tenth puppy and Becky her fourteenth.

## **Contact Information:**

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Club website: [www.carsoncityguidedogs.com](http://www.carsoncityguidedogs.com)  
Guide Dogs for the Blind: [www.guidedogs.com](http://www.guidedogs.com)