

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles

Guide Dogs of America Patch Program

(A program to facilitate knowledge of raising and caring for specially guide dogs.)

Juniors, Cadettes and Seniors: Must complete seven of the activities including the one starred.

1.* Take a tour of Guide Dogs of America (GDA), 13445 Glenoaks Boulevard, Sylmar, California, and answer the following questions. (Tours are conducted Tuesday through Thursday, by reservations. To schedule a tour of GDA, please call (818) 362-5834.

OR

Go to the Guide Dogs of America website www.guidedogsofamerica.org and watch one of the videos. Watch the puppy cam to see puppies in the nursery.

OR

Invite a representative of GDA to your troop meeting and answer the following questions. (To arrange for a speaker to make a presentation, please contact GDA at (818) 362-5834.)

- a) What is some of the etiquette needed when meeting a working guide dog or a puppy in training?
- b) What is the biggest obstacle facing guide dog schools?
- c) What breeds of dogs are most frequently selected to become Guide Dogs? Why do you think these particular breeds are chosen?
- d) What important factors are considered when matching blind students with guide dogs?
- e) How long does it take to train a guide dog?
- f) What is the average life of a guide dog? How old are they when they begin serving as a guide dog? What happens to the dog whose working life is at an end?

2. Write a song, story or poem about a guide dog. Share your story with the rest of the troop/group. Find appropriate pictures of dogs in magazines and add them to your story. (Suggestion for stories: if you have a dog, write about his characteristics and some of the fun activities you and your dog do together; if you do not have a dog, discuss your experiences with dogs (friends or neighbors with dogs, visits to pet stores, etc.).

3. Do an internet search and find three unusual places a guide dog can go that a regular pet can not. Share these places with your troop.

4. Read a book about a guide dog. (A suggested book list is given on the following page.) Your local library should have a variety of books on this subject. Draw a picture of what you learned. Share your picture with the rest of the troop/group.

5. Do a service project for GDA. Collect towels and blankets for the kennels and nursery or donate something on the wish list. View How Girl Scouts can Help GDA for ideas. (Donations can be sent to GDA, 13445 Glenoaks Boulevard, Sylmar, CA 91342.) Please check with the school before purchasing from the wish list as lists change from time to time.

6. Make a poster or power point presentation to help tell people about rules regarding guide dogs (e.g. NEVER pet a dog in a harness, etc.) Share the poster or power point with your class, another Girl Scout troop or other group.

7. Read a book about a puppy or dog as a troop/group. Create a skit, play or puppet show based on the story. Perform your skit, play or puppet show to a younger Girl Scout troop/group.

8. Participate in a Flag Ceremony at a Guide Dogs of America graduation.

9. Participate in one or more of the following Guide Dog Activities (see bottom of page). How did it feel to be led by a guide dog? Was it difficult or easy for you? Write or talk about your experiences as a blind person and as a guide dog with the rest of the troop.

Guide Dog Harness Activity

Find out what it's like to be led by a guide dog, or to be one! Make a harness with a coat hanger. Add rope, a belt, or a cloth strip to tie around the "dog's" waist. Find a friend who will be your "dog" and lead you as you walk blindfolded. Be sure that your "dog" knows how to guide you carefully, and both of you know the proper commands.

As a team, walk through a house, school or other building. Go up and down steps and through doors. After a few minutes, trade places so that you can both know how it feels to lead and to be led. Write or talk about your experiences as a blind person and as a guide dog.

Vision Impairments

Wearing a blindfold, try to do some simple everyday tasks such as lacing and tying a shoe, or putting together a puzzle or counting money from a wallet. Was this hard or easy? Why or why not?

Communications

Examine the Braille Language and find out about Braille cells. Find out how your name would appear in Braille.

Research how blind people use computers in today's world. Are there special adaptations needed? If so what might they be?

Suggested Book List

Butler, Beverly. *Light a Single Candle*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.

Curtis, Patricia. Graff: *The Story of a Guide Dog*. New York: Loderstar/Dutton, 1984.

Hocken, Sheila. *Emma and I*, New York: Dutton, 1978. (Written for Adults)

Rappaport, Eva. *Banner, Forward*. New York: Dutton, 1969.

Siegel, Mary-Ellen. *More than a Friend – Dogs with a Purpose*. New York: Walker & Co., 1984.

Wolf, Bernard. *Connie's New Eyes*. Philadelphia/New York: Lippencott, 1976.

Suggested reading for puppy raisers can be found on the GDA website as well.