

[re]view 2010

by Antonette Sorrick, Executive Officer
State Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind

President: Eric Holm

Vice President: Tom Scott

Secretary: Joe Xavier

Board Members: Belinda Barragan, Jeff Neidich, Larry Grable, Frank Welte

2010 in review

The year was a busy and productive one for the State Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind.

We held five Board meetings and seven committee and task force meetings, updated licensee forms and consumer information, and held a press conference.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger made two final appointments giving the Board full membership at seven members. Welcome Larry Grable and Frank Welte!

Here is a brief look at our activities in 2010:

Outreach Activities

In February, the Board held a press conference at the Governor's San Francisco regional office that brought needed attention to the problem of dog attacks on guide dogs -- part of a larger, ongoing campaign to continually spotlight the issue and bring change. Guest speakers included:

- Sergeant William Herndon and Officer John Denny of the San Francisco Police Department Vicious and Dangerous Dog Unit.
- Brian Francis, Director of Admissions and Graduate Services, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc.
- Theresa Duncan, Alumni Director for Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc.

Read more on our Web site under the "Press Releases/Multimedia" link on the home page, and view video at www.dca.ca.gov/publications/multimedia/guidedogssf.wmv.

In addition, commendations were given to retired Sergeant Bill Herndon, Officer John Denny, and Officer Sherry Hicks of the San Francisco Police Department's Vicious and Dangerous Dog Unit for their efforts to prevent dog attacks on guide dogs.

Board members and staff attended the following conferences:

- California Council of the Blind Spring Convention
(Board President Holm)
- California Council of the Blind Fall Convention
(Board Secretary Xavier)
- National Federation of the Blind California/California Association of Guide Dog Users Fall Convention
(Board Secretary Xavier)

"While the Board attended only three stakeholder meetings this year, the Board is proud to have partnered with the San Francisco Police Department, veterinarians, dispatchers, first responders, consumers, and Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc., on the dog attacks on guide dogs campaign. To date, we have reached over 70,000 people with our tip sheets on preventing dog attacks. We continue to spread the word and get more people involved in preventing such attacks." – Joe Xavier, Chair, Outreach and Education Committee.

Laws, Regulations, and Advocacy

March 2010: We initiated a regulatory proposal that would make the Board fiscally solvent by setting the school renewal fee via regulation; amended client instruction to clarify that instruction be both in-harness and theoretical with a minimum number of hours, without maximum timeframes; and clarified that each license (school and instructor) be good for one year. The proposal was approved by the Office of Administrative Law on July 21, 2010, and was made effective August 21, 2010.

September 2010: In 2009, the Board initiated a legislative proposal to make in-home training accessible to all guide dog users, regardless of previous experience training with a guide dog. The bill was signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, filed with the Secretary of State on September 30, 2010, and made effective on January 1, 2011.

November 2010: The Board initiated a legislative proposal to change references from “secretary” to “board,” and to add a “spay” requirement for guide dogs assigned to a client to the existing “neuter” language. The State Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee has received the proposed amendments and are taking the proposal into consideration for an omnibus bill with other Department of Consumer Affairs boards.

Also in 2010: We formally supported House of Representatives Bill 5381 (Waxman) – the Motor Safety Act of 2010. This bill establishes regulations be drafted to address the sound concerns hybrid vehicles present to guide dog users and others with visual impairment. The Board also supported H.R. 3266 (Klein) which would make available grant funds for schools providing service animals to veterans. Support letters are posted on our Web site. Last, the Board pursued changes to the competencies of candidates eligible for an instructor license, for guide dogs, and for apprentices. Pending regulations can be accessed on our Web site.

“The Board will continue to be proactive and respond to legislation affecting our stakeholders, especially guide dog users, guide dog schools and guide dog instructors. To date, the Board has engaged in policy issues at the national, State, and local levels and will continue to do so in the future.” – Tom Scott, Chair, Legislative Committee

Licensing/Examinations

The Board held two examinations resulting in three new guide dog instructors.

Web Site

Our Web site continues to be updated with information on State and Federal laws and regulations. It includes a license look-up feature, which allows employers and consumers to search for the license status of a school or guide dog instructor. Check it out at www.guidedogboard.ca.gov.

We also created stakeholder-specific pages for consumers, applicants, apprentices, and licensees.

Looking Ahead

“The previous year was a time to engage in our mission, to ensure the quality of the guide dog industry by protecting, promoting, and educating guide dog users, instructors, schools, and the public in order to enhance the lives of blind or visually impaired individuals. We will continue to strive to improve our processes, ensure transparency in our decision-making, and always move forward with input from the consumers and licensees we serve.” – Board President Eric Holm