



## News Release

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### **BRaille INSTITUTE COACHELLA VALLEY PARTNERS WITH GUIDE DOGS OF THE DESERT**

*Partnership Offers Both Organizations the Ability to Better Serve Individuals  
Living with Impaired Vision*

Palm Desert, CA – October 14, 2021 – Braille Institute Coachella Valley announced today that it has entered into a partnership with Guide Dogs of the Desert to provide training solutions to individuals living with vision impairment and blindness. With the new arrangement, Braille Institute will initially train students in the basic skills they need to increase their independence and maintain mobility. They will then refer these students to Guide Dogs of the Desert's application process. This partnership was timed to coincide with Braille Institute's annual Orientation and Mobility month, observed every October.

“This fantastic partnership has been a long time coming,” said Amy Sand, Regional Manager Braille Institute Coachella Valley. “Guide Dogs of the Desert provides a vital service to the visually impaired community but lacked the ability to comprehensively train students to develop the important life management, technology and mobility skills they will need to qualify for the Guide Dog program. Braille Institute regularly offers these skills in our workshops and classes. By partnering together, both of our organizations will be able to work together to improve the well-being and quality of life of people living with diminished vision.”

To be able to work in tandem with trained Guide Dogs, visually impaired individuals must first master skills such as daily living skills including calendaring, measuring, managing appointments, and self-care. They also must be fully trained in Orientation and Mobility to be competent navigating at home and in their community while using a white cane. Braille Institute also teaches students how to use technology so that they can apply to Guide Dogs of the Desert digitally. Braille Institute has always provided these skills to the low or no vision community, but through this partnership, Guide Dogs of the Desert will now refer their potential candidates to Braille when they need to achieve these skills. Braille Institute is now able to serve these applicants virtually which will assist a greater number of people from all over the country to become eligible for the Guide Dog program.

“We were thrilled when Braille Institute approached us with this wonderful solution,” said Dr. Jonathan Lorenzo Yorba, Executive Director of Guide Dogs of the Desert. “Working with a trained Guide Dog requires a set of learned mobility skills. Braille Institute already has the institutional expertise in training students with these skills, so partnering with them was an easy decision. We look forward to providing this elegant solution to our students.”

Once accepted to Guide Dogs of the Desert, students get matched with a high-quality trained Guide Dog. They attend a 28-day in-residence training program of small, individualized classes that include every nuance of living and working together. The trainers make every effort to ensure that all Guide Dog teams fit the students' personal needs and home environments. All training is provided at no cost to the student.

Students of Braille Institute Coachella Valley learn a variety of important life skills including "Personal Management and Sensory Awareness" and "Daily Living Skills." In addition to the specific training the students will receive prior to getting matched with a Guide Dog, they may also participate in any Braille Institute class or workshop, including topics such as Understanding Vision Loss, household lighting tips to help maintain home safety, and how to utilize community resources including transportation options like rideshare services. All Braille Institute classes and workshops are free, and many are offered in Spanish.

Braille Institute Coachella Valley is raising awareness of Orientation and Mobility during the month of October for their students and the entire Coachella Valley community. In addition to free online workshops, Braille students are encouraged to participate in Braille Institute's Second Annual Virtual Move-A-Thon, from October 1-29 and celebrate White Cane Awareness Day on October 15. More information is available at [BrailleInstitute.org/coachellavalley](http://BrailleInstitute.org/coachellavalley) or by calling 1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553).

#### About Braille Institute

Braille Institute is a non-profit organization that has been positively transforming the lives of those with vision loss for more than 100 years. Braille Institute offers a broad range of free programs, classes and services to more than 20,000 students of all ages, and continues to demonstrate that vision rehabilitation is a beginning, not an end. The organization serves the community from seven centers, and hundreds of community outreach locations throughout Southern California. For more information, please visit [BrailleInstitute.org](http://BrailleInstitute.org). Follow on Facebook @BrailleInstitute or on Twitter @BrailleInst.

#### About Guide Dogs of the Desert

Guide Dogs of the Desert is an internationally accredited Guide Dog school located on an eight-acre hillside educational campus in greater Palm Springs. The nonprofit organization is approaching its 50th year celebration and includes a wellness center/hospital, student residences, nursery, professional kitchen, dining hall and large auditorium. Guide Dogs of the Desert provides custom trained Guide Dogs for legally blind individuals, resulting in greater mobility, independence, and companionship. Students from all 50 states come to train on campus and throughout the Inland Empire. Since 1972, Guide Dogs of the Desert has been making a difference in peoples' lives with the help of credentialed trainers and staff, volunteer puppy raisers, generous donors, and the support of the greater regional community. For more information, please visit [guidedogsofthedesert.org](http://guidedogsofthedesert.org). Follow Guide Dogs of the Desert on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.