



Servisa suņu biedrība TEODORS

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Rīga, December 2017

Service Dog Association TEODORS, Rīga, Latvia

Annual Report 2017

As has been the case every year, 2017 was quite eventful. Not only are we becoming more experienced and are better able to offer quality help, but we are becoming more creative and better organised.

Our year began with a couple of enjoyable birthdays. We congratulated our patron and Honourable Member Juha Herttuainen and our beloved Baiba on their birthdays. We met up at the lovely National Library of Latvia restaurant at Klīversala for a late breakfast. At the same time, it was also good training for our new assistant dog Elfa and our guide dog Feja. Courageously, Elfa found her way through the chairs and large number of people to make sure she did not lose her Baiba in a wheelchair.



Image 1. Toni, May 2017., Photo: Ligita Damberga

A very necessary but unpleasant task was taking our **guide dog Toni** away from his master. One of the association's duties is to check on the circumstances in which our guide dogs are kept, how they are being fed and being cared for. As a result we discovered that **Toni** was being kept in inappropriate conditions. We were very concerned about the dog's welfare, because so far in his life he had not enjoyed much luck with his masters. Subsequently, Toni spent some time in the company of a trainer, where he received a lot of love, was taken to a canine hairdressers, and had his health

checked, as well as his skills as a guide dog. Fortunately, the dog quickly recovered from his ordeal and turned out to be fine. We placed his in the care of Rinalds with whom Toni immediately developed a good understanding. Since April, they have established a good working relationship. At the start of October, they took part in the competition in Estonia, where they finished 5th. To learn more about Toni and Rinalds, click here: <http://www.teodors.org/tonijs-nav-tikai-suns-vins-ir-kosmoss>.



Image 2. International Guide Dog Day at Rīga Stradiņš University, 26.04.2017., Photo: Ligita Damberga

On **26 April**, we celebrated the traditional **International Guide Dog Day** at Riga Stradiņš University together with our guide dogs, and a guest Ramona Kārklīņa with her therapy dog Džerads, budding assistant dog Elfa, the dogs' masters, members and the general public. It was pleasant to observe students' interest in how service dogs can help people. After an open lecture, the dogs demonstrated their skills in the surroundings of the RSU.

For the past 18 months, our trainer Zaiga has been training our first assistant dog. This was a great challenge, a complex task, which required a lot of knowledge and patience. In the last six weeks before the full transfer over **the assistant dog Elfa** to her new mistress Baiba, every day Zaiga travelled from Carnikava to Pārdaugava to spend time with both as they went about their daily affairs - attending lectures at university, going to church, the shops, and travelling on public transport, etc. Since the start of **May**, Elfa has been living together with Baiba, is registered with the Agricultural Date Centre and is **the first official assistant dog in Latvia!**



Image 3. Baiba and Elfa, May 2017., Photo: Timurs Subhan

Spring and summer passed sorting the association's documents, refining and reworking all the necessary agreements, the rules for maintaining the dogs' welfare, and the association's regulations.

On a sunny 14 May, Sindija and Ivars ran 10 km in support of the association in the Lattelecom Riga Marathon 2017. This year, no visually impaired person or guide dog participated, because we have realised that the noise of the event and the large crowds of people are too stressful for the dogs, while the support from donors has been very moderate. However, thank you to those who supported us morally and with donations!

Starting from this year, our service dogs and their masters are due to undergo **annual tests** to prove and strengthen their skills. On **12-13 June** at Carnikava, with the participation of judges of Finland, Estonia and Latvia, our dogs and the masters confirmed their guard dog rights. We congratulate everyone for taking the test successfully.

In September, security staff denied our blind member Līga and her guide dog admission to the **Rīga Plaza Shopping Centre**. However, we were pleasantly surprised by the response of the Rīga Plaza management team, which apologised and offered to host an appearance at Rīga Plaza on **2 September** by representatives of the TEODORS Service Dog Association and their dogs, giving us the chance to explain to the public and shopping centre's security personnel how service dogs differ from ordinary household pets. Conclusion: an unpleasant event with a positive outcome!



*Image 4. TEODORS, 02.09 2017., Rīga Plaza,
Photo: Velga Zēgnere*

We also prepared an explanation for shops and security firms about the rights of service dogs in accordance with **Clause 30.5 of LR Cabinet Regulation No. 959**, which entitles **service dogs to be present anywhere their master goes**. This means that service dogs can visit cafés, restaurants, shops, sporting events and cultural institutions, travel in a taxi, on domestic and international public transport, and to accompany their masters in shops.

On **30 September**, this year's international guide dog competition took place in Pärnu, Estonia. Finland, Estonian and Latvia were each represented by two competitors, each of whom had a guide dog. On this occasion too, we offered two of our members their first chance to take part in a competition. We were represented by Andris and Feja and Rinalds and Toni. Now all our blind members have gained the experience of taking part in this competition at least once. This is more important than winning first place, which was secure by the Finnish team. The Estonian team finished second, while the Latvians came third.



*Image 5. Annual Awards in Support of People with Disabilities, NLL, 29.11.2017.,
Photo: Velga Zēgnere*

This year, for the third consecutive year, the competition "**Annual Awards in Support of People with Invalidities**" was held, which the Latvian Ombudsman organises in collaboration with the association for invalids and their friends, Apeirons, and the National Library of Latvia. On **29 November**, our association was invited to participate in an awards presentation ceremony at the NLL. The goal of the award to recognise those non-governmental organisations that do a great deal of good work by helping people who suffer from disabilities. Our association won an award in the "Social Campaigns" category.

We have also taken part in other events. You can find more detailed information about the organisation work on our homepage: www.teodors.org and social networks: [Facebook.com/servisasunubiedriba](https://www.facebook.com/servisasunubiedriba), [Twitter.com/servisasuns](https://twitter.com/servisasuns) and [Draugiem.lv/servisasunubiedriba.lv](https://draugiem.lv/servisasunubiedriba.lv).

TEODORS' friends recall the fact that a year ago we had to say goodbye to our first guide dog Teodors. The association's Chairman Aleksejs Volkovs lost his best friend, guide dog Teodors. We want to train a new guide dog and to present it to him for Christmas! **Please help to make this festive gift a reality!** (<http://www.teodors.org/help-serena-become-a-guide-dog/>)



Image 6. Serena and Aleksejs, October 2017.

Planned activities in 2018:

- social work in schools, as well as at meetings and summer camps
- a celebration marking International Guide Dogs Day
- qualification trials for participation in the International Guide Dog Competition in Finland and participation in the final event on 6 October 2018
- 2 – 3 day training camp with service dogs and their masters, concluding with an attestation test for guide dogs
- formally celebrating the association's 5th anniversary at the end of May or at the start of June
- delivery of one guide dog to a blind person in Latvia
- training work with guide dogs and their guardians
- looking after guide dogs and providing them with veterinary care, providing support to puppies and their foster families

You can read about our association's main goals and task on our homepage.

The association uses donated funds solely for the attainment of the association's goals as expressed in the articles of the association.

The association's account for donations:

Bank: **SWEDBANK**
Recipient: **Servisa sunu biedriba**
Reg. No. **40008208343**
Acc. No. **LV04HABA0551036537614**
BIC/SWIFT: **HABALV22**

The association would like to express its sincerest gratitude to all those who already support the service dog movement in Latvia, including our Finnish partners and a special thank you to Zaiga and Juha for all the dogs they have presented to us and their voluntary work, without it - the association could not exist.

You can read about how we use your donations on the association's homepage: www.teodors.org

To date, the association has prepared **seven guide dogs** for people with impaired sight and **one assistant dog** (the first in Latvia) for a woman with impaired mobility.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with you so that the service dog movement can continue and expand its operations!

Sincerely yours,

Service dog association TEODORS