

2016



# 2016 Annual Report

2/7/2017

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**Dear Friends of Guide Dogs of Texas,**

A couple weeks ago, Sarah, Director of Training for Guide Dogs of Texas, shared with me a short video. The video, taken on the spot with an iPhone, showed Guide Dog Essie taking some of her first steps with her new owner, Angela. Angela and Essie had only been training together for a few days. Essie was slowly wagging as she carefully maneuvered on the sidewalk. Her love for her new owner was radiantly visible.

I stopped everything and watched it over and over. Angela walked in beautiful synchronicity with Essie, her very first Guide Dog. I felt the significance of that moment as clearly as the ringing of a bell. I knew that Angela's life would forever change with the safety, independence, and freedom that comes from using a Guide Dog.

This is why I want to thank you. Your support is why we were able to help more people like Angela, be matched and trained with an incredible Guide Dog.

This year we need your help to spread awareness of our Mission. Do you know anyone that would like to learn more? Invite them to a monthly mission tour, a weekend training day, or to visit our website at [www.guidedogsoftexas.org](http://www.guidedogsoftexas.org). You can also access our profile on [Guidestar](#). Thank you again for your vital support.

In Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sandra Merrill". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light yellow rectangular background.

Sandra Merrill  
CEO, GDMI  
Guide Dogs of Texas  
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**Table of Contents**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Cover	1
Presidents Letter	2
Table of Contents	3
Mission and Vision	4
History	5
Programs and Services	6 - 7
Staff and Organizational Chart	8
Strategic Planning	8-9
Program Accomplishments	9-16
Board and Committee Members	17
Advisory Board	18
Balance Sheet as of 12/31/16	19

## **MISSION AND VISION**

### **MISSION**

Guide Dogs of Texas provides quality Guide Dogs for Texans who are visually impaired to increase their freedom, mobility and independence. We are committed to personalized service and lifelong dedication to our clients and their Guide Dogs.

### **VISION**

The vision of Guide Dogs of Texas is to serve all Texans who are visually impaired and who would benefit from the use of a Guide Dog.

## **CORE VALUES**

### **COMPASSION**

- We endeavor to understand the challenges and circumstances of the clients we serve and strive to enhance their mobility and independence.
- We provide an excellent quality of life for puppies and dogs in training, using modern, humane techniques.
- We teach our clients to handle and care for their dogs in the same manner.

### **HONESTY**

- We honor all commitments to clients, volunteers, employees, and the community at large.
- We practice good stewardship of all gifts entrusted to the organization.

### **RESPECT**

We respect and promote the role of the client, volunteer and employee as equal contributors in the mission of the organization.

### **SUPPORT**

We offer ongoing support for our graduates, designed to enhance client confidence and ensure successful, long-term graduate “team” outcomes.

### **ENCOURAGE**

We strive to create a home-like training environment with a relaxed, informal atmosphere to minimize client anxiety and promote positive transitional experiences for both Guide Dog and client.

### **TEAM SPIRIT**

We work together with positive attitudes, combining our strengths, skills, knowledge and talents to achieve the mission of the organization.

2/7/2017

## History of Guide Dogs of Texas

Since the 1920s, Guide Dog training has been available in the United States. However, early on, Guide Dog schools were concentrated on the East and West coasts of the U.S. A blind Texan made a heavy sacrifice to travel to California or New York to obtain a month of Guide Dog training. By the end of the 1980s, the stage was set for the creation of a small, regional Guide Dog school in the Lone Star state.

In 1989, a grass-roots effort began to bring a small, regional Guide Dog school to Texas. From its humble beginnings, the Southwest Guide Dog Foundation was established and earned its 501(C) 3 non-profit status in June of 1989. Initially, it was launched as a puppy walking program and the puppies were donated back to Guide Dogs of America in California. The beautiful Guide Dogs of Texas campus in San Antonio was constructed in 2005, and has been improved every year since then through the help of volunteers like the ATT Pioneers, Eagle Scouts and Girl Scouts.



Construction of the GDTX Kennel in 2005



Construction of the Storage Barn in 2012

Today, the school is known as Guide Dogs of Texas, Inc and it has grown into a full service Guide Dog operation. Dogs are bred and trained to assist the blind. Clients are provided education and instruction in the safe, effective use of Guide Dogs. Staff members deliver superior services; client referrals and information, quality Guide Dogs, personalized training services, and post-training support services.



Instructor Natalie Garza relaxing on the walk of independence with the dogs in formal Training.

In addition to being the only Guide Dog school in the state of Texas, GDTX is one of only 11 internationally accredited schools in North America. As an accredited member of the International Guide Dog Federation, GDTX participates in information exchange that includes best practices on breeding, training, Guide Dog/client matching, as well as information for instructor staff development.

2/7/2017

## Programs and Services

The mission at Guide Dogs of Texas is to provide quality Guide Dogs to visually impaired Texans, in order to improve their freedom, mobility and independence. We are committed to personalized service and dedicated to life-long support of our clients and Guide Dogs. Our organization fulfills its mission by breeding, raising and training dogs year round, by providing spring and fall client training sessions, by providing post-training routine and emergency visits to clients and by being a resource for other blindness related needs. No inquiry ever goes unanswered.

Every program and all related activities serve this purpose, including:

The Guide Dog Breeding Program: The newest program at Guide Dogs of Texas is the breeding program. The purpose is to secure a line of puppies specially bred for their characteristics and capabilities, in order to keep pace with future Guide Dog requests. We have welcomed 56 puppies into our program since October 5, 2010. These healthy, intelligent dogs are on track to become future Guide Dogs for awaiting applicants and will be matched with clients over the next two to three years. If a pup doesn't qualify to be a Guide Dog, they may be placed in a different career, suitable to their talents, or with a family on the waiting list. All dogs are tracked for their life-time. Guide Dogs of Texas is fully committed to never adding to the population of unwanted dogs. Responsible dog ownership is taught by our instructors and volunteers at every opportunity.



Darcy, mom of the H litter, sitting in the wildflowers wearing her Breeding Program Ambassador Jacket



Guide Puppy Dusty on a walk with Puppy Raiser Beth

Puppy Raising Program: Since 1989, the purpose of this program has been to raise social, well behaved, and confident pups to become Guide Dogs for the visually impaired. Volunteer families raise puppies from the age of nine weeks to 24 months. For 16 years, Guide Dogs of Texas has collaborated with the Dominguez State Prison to conduct a highly successful Prison Puppy Raising Program with

trained offenders- The PAWSitive Approach Program. We have also replicated this program at the Travis County Jail in Austin, TX. To date more than 120 offenders have participated in the program with a recidivism rate of less than 2%.

Advanced Guide Dog Training Program: Since 1997, the purpose of this program has been to prepare dogs for a working life with a blind Texan. Certified instructors oversee the daily training regimen for each dog in the program for 6-8 months, tailoring performance for a specific applicant. Instructors use positive reinforcement and modern, humane training techniques to achieve outstanding results and confident, happy Guide Dogs.



Guide Dogs in Advanced Training Duncan, Cassie, Dexter and Cruiser

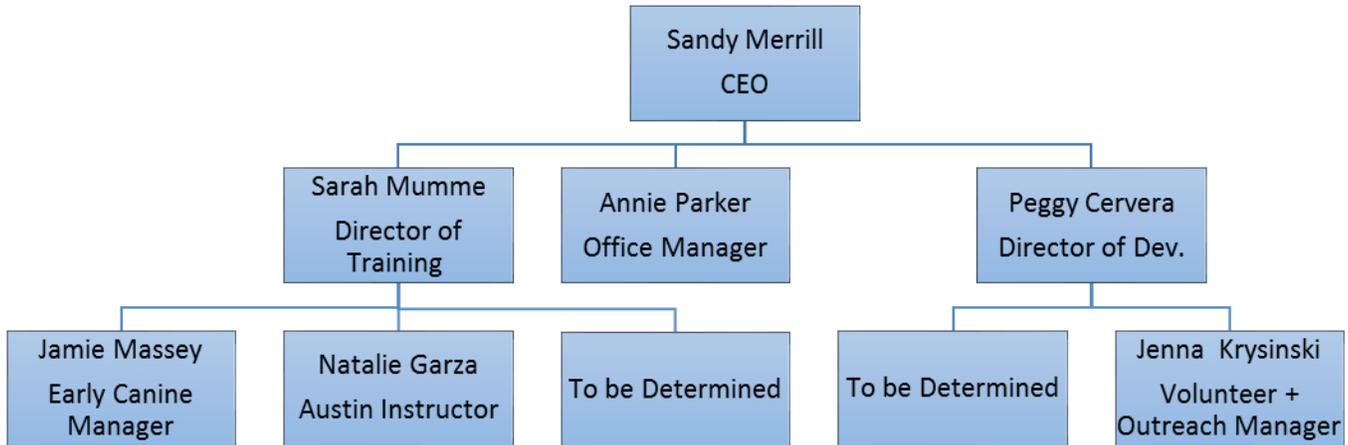
Client Matching & Training: This activity matches a blind Texan with a carefully selected Guide Dog and trains the prospective handler in the proper use and care of a Guide Dog. An applicant will complete a four week training class in their home area under the supervision of a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor.

Annual Continuing Education Support Program (ACES): The intent of this program is to provide support and assistance to all Guide Dogs of Texas' Guide Dog teams. Clients and their Guide Dogs are provided post-class, routine, and priority aftercare services as needed. Preliminary visits are scheduled three months after graduation then yearly, thereafter. In the event of an emergency or some other circumstance, an instructor is dispatched to provide rapid attention to the client's needs.

GDMI Apprentice Program – This unique educational opportunity is like no other. Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDMI) are certified through a three to four year apprenticeship. Candidates complete a rigorous curriculum as well as “hands on” practical experience to attain this certification. Upon completion of the program, the candidate is offered a full time GDMI position with GDTX. They will have the educational equivalency to a Master's degree.

Re-Homing Program – Not every dog becomes a Guide Dog. Some of them are released because temperament or health issues arise. In those rare cases, good homes are located for these dogs to live out their lives as loved pets. Often, released Guide Dogs enter a new career field, like diabetic or seizure alert work or search & rescue work. We track and stay in touch with these dogs for the rest of their lives.

## 2017 Staff Organizational Chart



### **Strategic Plan and Current Status**

On November 21, 2013, the Board of Directors of Guide Dogs of Texas approved by a majority vote that our strategy for the operation and growth of our school would be based on a phased decentralization of our Instructional Staff from San Antonio to the major cities of Texas. This model of operation is referred to as Satellites.

This historic decision by our Board was made after an extensive debate and examination of every aspect of our method of delivering services to the visually impaired population of Texas. The 2015 Strategic Plan update continues the model of decentralization, while refining the time-table, expenditures and satellite launch order.

By 2020 we plan to have Certified Guide Dog Mobility in the following cities:

- San Antonio Feb 1989 (completed)
- Austin June 2015 (completed)
- Houston April 2016 (Established but currently seeking GDMI)
- Dallas June 2017 (with possible 1-2 yr delay)

The adoption of satellites improves our retention of Guide Dog Mobility Instructors by reducing their travel time from an average of 6 months away from home every 18 months to virtually no overnight stays. Satellites will also have a positive impact on reducing our expense growth rate, while enhancing our ability to produce more teams each year.

- Austin Satellite Services – In 2015 Guide Dog Mobility Instructor Natalie Garza was relocated to the Austin area in order to provide more efficient services to the greater Austin community. This includes formal training of three to four Guide Dogs a year, matching and placing those Guide Dogs with local Applicants, training the new Guide Dog teams, providing support to existing Guide Dog teams in the area, interviewing applicants for Guide Dogs, and providing community outreach and education about blindness and Guide Dog mobility. In addition, Austin is home to the Travis County PAWSitive approach program.
- West and North Texas Services – Full client services continue for West and North Texas. In 2015, the Austin-based Instructor managed these areas. By 2020, North Texas will have a dedicated Instructor. Depending on demand, West Texas may have a local Instructor in the future also.
- Houston Satellite Services – In April of 2016, a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor was hired for the Houston area. This Instructor assisted applicants, supported current teams in Houston and East Texas, worked with 3 Guide Dogs, and began engaging the local community. Unfortunately, her husband got a job in KY, and she resigned. The Director of Training is accepting applications from certified Guide Dog Mobility Instructors in order to continue the Houston Satellite.
- San Antonio Main Campus, South and Central Texas - The main campus in San Antonio is home to the fundraising and administration offices. The Program Manager, Jamie Massey supervises the Nursery and Breeding Program, as well as the Puppy Program and Dominguez Jail PAWSitive approach program. The Training Director, Sarah Mumme, oversees the satellites and San Antonio programs. The Instructors also train Guide Dogs in formal training, match and place clients, interview applicants, and provide services to existing teams in the greater San Antonio area.

The campus in San Antonio houses our beautiful nursery/kennel, and the ATT Pioneer Park. This well-maintained area contains development activities for the puppies and a large free-run area for dogs at all stages of training. Our Volunteer and Outreach Manager, Jenna Krysinski, recruits and supports volunteers for positions ranging from Puppy Raisers to Speakers for events. Over 150 volunteers assist GDTX every year.

### **Major Milestones for the Training Department in 2016**

- In May of 2016, Sandy Merrill, Sarah Mumme, Jamie Massey, and Natalie Garza attended the International Guide Dog Federation Conference. Each attendee gained valuable knowledge as well as made vital contacts with professionals around the world. Additionally, though, GDTX reached a major milestone. Sandy and Jamie gave GDTX's 1<sup>st</sup> presentation on the International Stage! They spoke about GDTX's PAWSitive Approach Program- the only of its kind in the world. Since then, they have received multiple requests from around the world for more information and assistance establishing similar programs. They are known as the experts on successful prison programs in the Guide Dog field.

- GDTX was proud to become a certified member of Assistance Dogs International and as such we were able to join the ABC Breeding Co-op. Through continued collaboration we will be able to diversify our breeding lines, ensure the procurement of future Guide Dogs, and assist other Guide Dog and Service Dog Schools.

### **Client Training – Accomplishments in 2016**

In 2016, Guide Dogs of Texas trained 4 new Client/ Dog Teams around the state of Texas. Class consists of at least 3 weeks of daily training with a GDMI, Client, and Guide Dog. GDMI's teach the Clients how to support, control, and work a GD. Additionally, the GDMI teaches the Team the Client's home routes. Examples of home routes include: the Client's route to work, school, or church; routes to stores; pleasure/ exercise routes etc.

- In January, Celeste and Cassie graduated. Celeste lived in El Paso, Texas. Celeste was a first time Guide Dog User. Celeste loved Cassie and enjoyed having a Guide Dog, but her health ended up precluding her from successful Guide Dog Mobility. She returned Cassie to GDTX, and we trained Cassie with a different Applicant.



- In March, Douglas and Dylan graduated. Douglas is a first time Guide Dog User. He and Dylan have similar personalities, both enjoying leisurely strolls through the neighborhood and spending time with Douglas's grandchildren. Douglas and Dylan were the 1<sup>st</sup> local Team to graduate since the launch of our Austin Satellite in June 2015. We were very excited about this milestone for our Austin Satellite!



- In October, Jim and Cassie graduated. Jim is also a first time Guide Dog User. He quickly fell in love with this bright-eyed, eager to please little girl. Jim works for The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services in the Dallas area and has already been a great representative for GDTX in his area.



- In December, Nancy and Ember graduated. Nancy has had 2 previous Guide Dogs from GDTX. Her 2<sup>nd</sup> dog, Jazz, had retired a few years ago due to poor health. Nancy didn't want to train with a new dog until Jazz had passed away. When Jazz passed away over the summer, we were able to match Nancy with Ember in the fall. Nancy has a complicated medical history and needs a very gentle, docile, willing girl. Ember is the perfect match! They can be found working the busy corridors of La Cantera or enjoying a morning stroll through their neighborhood.



## Welcome to the GDTX Family!

### Guide Dog Applicants – Interviews and Matching Visits in 2016

- In 2016, GDTX Staff counseled and assisted over 80 Applicants. GDTX is often the 1<sup>st</sup> call people make after they lose their sight. This is often an emotional time with lots of information and decisions to be made. GDTX Staff offer referrals to appropriate services, a listening ear, and guidance on the next step. Once an Applicant has submitted the necessary paperwork, an in-depth at-home interview is scheduled. 22 Interviews and 6 Further Assessments were conducted in 2016. These Applicants live all over the state. A GDMI spent at least 4 hours with each Applicant, answering questions, learning about the Applicant's goals and current mobility,

and determining if Guide Dog Mobility would be right for the Applicant. If the Applicant is a suitable candidate, he or she is added to GDTX's waiting list. The information gathered on the Interview allows GDMI's to successfully match each waiting Applicant with a suitable Guide Dog.

- Once the Guide Dog is ready to be matched, the Applicant is given a chance to meet the dog, ask questions about the dog, and go on a short walk with the dog. Providing everything is satisfactory to both the Client and the GDMI, class is scheduled. These Matching Visits are one of the most rewarding and enjoyable days as a new Team is introduced. GDTX conducted 3 Matching Visits in 2016.

### **Guide Dog Team Support in 2016 – (Annual Continuing Education and Services)**

- GDTX is proud of the support services we offer to our Client Teams. Each team is visited at least once a year. These visits help maintain the standards of care and responsibility GDTX has both to our Clients and our Guide Dogs. Clients can also request support visits. Examples of such visits would be: assistance with new routes after relocation; assistance with access issues; support after a change in health of the Client or GD; or support after a change in the Client's vision. In 2016, GDMI's conducted 68 ACES visits.

### **Guide Dogs in Formal Training in 2016**

- The GDMI's completed formal training of 3 Guide Dogs and trained them with their Clients in 2016. 1 Guide Dog has completed her training and will be trained with her Client starting mid-January 2017. 2 Guide Dogs have mostly completed their training and will be matched and trained with their Clients in Spring 2017.
- Advanced Training includes teaching the Guide Dog how to safely and effectively guide a visually impaired Client in all environments. GDMI's train their dogs in all different types of environments including rural areas, busy downtown areas, malls, stores, restaurants, schools, churches, and more! The Guide Dog is taught to navigate obstacles on the ground, at head level, and on the Client's right side. The GD is also taught to stop and indicate intersections by sitting at the curb and indicating the sidewalk once the team has crossed the street. The GD must do all of this while ignoring any distractions in the environment. The dogs in Advanced Training live with Volunteer Boarders or Staff Members at night and on the weekends.

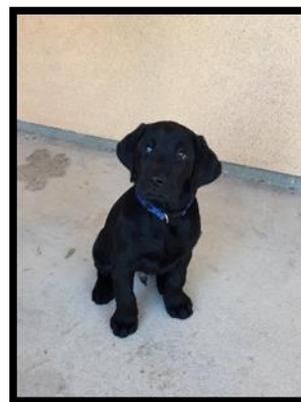
### **2016 Puppy Program Highlights**

- Throughout 2016, KSAT 12, a local San Antonio TV station, followed one of our G litter pups, Gino. His Puppy Raiser, and members of the GDTX staff coordinated with the station to submit weekly footage of Gino growing and learning. On a monthly basis, KSAT reporters visited GDTX or met Gino and staff in the field to learn more about GDTX, Gino's journey, and the vital

mission we fulfill. We are happy to report that KSAT will be following Gino into 2017 and Advanced Training!



- In 2016, we inducted the rest of the E litter and F Litters into Advanced Training after completing our January and June In-For-Training Assessments.
- Our G and H litters, along with our 4 dogs from GDA; Betty, Billy, Rocky, and June; continued to grow and learn under their Volunteer Puppy Raisers' careful guidance.
- Towards the end of 2016, we added 4 puppies to our Puppy Program. 1 of these dogs came from our continued collaboration with Guide Dogs of America in California. 2 came from Guide Dogs for the Blind, a collaboration that is ongoing but that was re-established at the Council of US Guide Dog Schools bi-annual meetings as well as GDTX's attendance at the IGDF Conference. The 4<sup>th</sup> puppy is our first arrival in connection with our participation in the ABC Breeding Co-op. Welcome to GDTX: Raider, Jax, Bell, and Cora.





- Jamie conducted monthly Training Days as well as individual training sessions with the Puppy Raisers. With Jenna Krysinski, our Volunteer and Outreach Manager, they recruited and trained Puppy Raisers and Sitters to meet the volunteer needs for the litters. Puppy Raisers are responsible for the socialization, house training, and basic obedience of the puppies from 8 weeks old until at least 12 months old. The puppies currently in the Puppy Program will be eligible for Advanced Training at the In-For-Training Assessments in 2017 provided they are at least 12 months old.

### **2016 Breeding Program Highlights**

- As mentioned above, GDTX became a member of ADI as well as joined the ABC Breeding Co-op. This Co-op will be essential as we move forward with our Breeding Colony.
- At the beginning of 2016, GDTX had 3 dogs in the Breeding Program; Stud, Austin, and Broods, Darcy and Effie Mae. Stud, Austin, retired in the Spring of 2016. Effie Mae was sent to California as part of our collaboration with Guide Dogs of America. They offered to host Effie Mae and her litter in exchange for half of the puppies. This was a great deal for GDTX as we didn't need an entire litter of Golden Retrievers. Through no negligence on the part of GDA, Effie Mae ended up contracting a serious infection that ended her chances of being a Brood. She was retired from the Breeding Program and is happily living with her Brood Holder in Austin. She will be a very busy Ambassador for GDTX. Darcy is still in the Breeding Program and is slated for a litter in Fall 2017.
- Additionally, we added Stud, Gunner and Broods, Grace and Helen to the Breeding Program in 2016. We choose the best of the best for our future parents and are excited to see our lines continue through these high quality breeding dogs!



- Brood and Stud Holders are volunteers who provide loving homes for our breeding dogs while they are in the Breeding Program. When a Brood or Stud retires, the Volunteer Family is welcomed to submit a Rehome Application. When Austin and Effie Mae retired, they both became permanent members of their Volunteer's families.
- GDTX Stud Gunner is slated to be bred with a Guide Dogs of America Brood in 2017. We will split the litter with GDA in continued efforts to collaborate with other schools and diversify our Guide Dog lines. Brood Darcy is also slated to be bred in 2017. We will host her litter at the GDTX Nursery and procure a Stud from another Guide Dog school.

### **Rehome Program Highlights**

- One of the aspects of GDTX that makes us unique, is our life-time commitment to our dogs. Whatever path our dogs take, we follow them all the way through. We are proud to rehome retired or released Guide Dogs into other careers and loving families. GDTX has

over 50 retired and rehomed dogs. In 2016, staff visited and followed up with our Rehome Families and their dogs as well as found homes for several retired or released Guide Dogs. These visits allow GDTX to update vet records and files on the dogs. This is especially important as we track health and temperament of our litters over time. These visits are also a time for us to re-engage Volunteers who have made the commitment of loving one of our dogs and who can often serve in other roles as well such as Leaders of the Pack or Ambassadors. Here are a few of the pictures that resulted from the work in this program this year.



Guide Dogs of Texas  
Members of the Board of Directors Jan 1 2017

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Vice Chair: Ms Sarah Miller  
Secretary: Mr Paul Longoria  
Treasurer: Mr Allen Snyder  
Member: Ms Karen Wahrmond  
Member: Ms Jennifer Sisson  
Member: Maj Gen (retired) Mark Zamzow

Guide Dogs of Texas  
Members of the Standing Committees Jan 1 2017

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**Facilities Committee**

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(Committee Lead)  
Teresa Beck  
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Guide Dogs of Texas  
Members of the Advisory Board of Directors Jan 1 2017

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Susana Milewich

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LouAnn Williams

Kurt Winkler

Paula Winkler

Tony Yuan

Dr Andrew Greller

Dr Sandra Fox

John Bramblitt



**Guide Dogs of Texas, Inc.**  
**Summary Statements of Position**  
**As of December 31, 2016**

	As of		
	December 31, 2016	November 30, 2016	December 31, 2015
<b><u>Assets</u></b>			
Cash & Cash Equivalents	153,968	167,835	385,771
Pledges & Accounts Receivable, Net	44,498	39,289	61,381
Prepaid Insurance	5,743	3,052	6,406
Prepaid Other	7,390	8,309	5,661
Total Current Assets	211,597	218,484	459,218
Land	140,184	140,184	140,184
Buildings & Improvements	644,712	644,712	642,409
Furniture, Fixtures, & Equipment	98,276	98,276	98,276
Vehicles	161,702	161,702	161,702
Website Development	10,161	10,161	10,161
Loan Origination Fee	4,647	4,647	4,647
Accumulated Depreciation	(403,318)	(398,788)	(346,859)
Accumulated Amortization	(1,174)	(1,134)	(704)
Fixed Assets, Net	655,190	659,759	709,816
Deposits	250	250	250
Total Assets	867,037	878,493	1,169,284
<b><u>Current Liabilities</u></b>			
Accounts Payable	471	3,026	1,042
Credit Card Liability	585	2,779	4,975
Sales Tax Payable	342	342	489
Accrued Expenses	475	950	1,209
Accrued Salaries & Wages	7,778	13,349	11,213
Other Payroll Liabilities	4,704	1,545	379
N/P Broadway Bank	0	0	3,105
N/P Accion Texas	-	-	7,836
Deferred Revenue	0	0	-
Total Current Liabilities	14,355	21,989	30,247
<b><u>Long Term Liabilities</u></b>			
N/P Accion Texas	(0)	(0)	86,177
N/P BOSA LOC	-	63,749	-
Total Long Term Liabilities	(0)	63,749	86,177
<b><u>Net Assets</u></b>			
Unrestricted Net Assets	816,433	772,602	958,908
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	31,150	15,053	88,852
Permanently Restricted Net Assets	5,100	5,100	5,100
Total Net Assets	852,683	792,755	1,052,860
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	867,037	878,493	1,169,284