

Spring 2021 | Volume 87, Number 1

THE SEEING EYE®

# GUIDE

A MAGAZINE FOR FRIENDS OF THE SEEING EYE

Onward  
*and* Upward!





## A Seeing Eye Perspective

Spring is here and with it the promise of a happy and hopefully healthy summer. I sincerely wish you and your loved ones are doing well as we all continue to navigate this unprecedented health crisis.

Here at The Seeing Eye, we are beginning to settle back into a routine. Not quite “back to normal,” but closer to it. We have had students back on campus since August, and watching them and their Seeing Eye® dogs remind me every day that obstacles can be avoided, challenges can be overcome, and most of all, we all can learn to adapt to new situations.

There is a legendary story about Morris Frank and his Seeing Eye dog, Buddy, going to speak in front of a large audience. A skeptic who doubted a dog could guide a blind person around obstacles pushed a desk into the middle of the aisle that Morris was to use to walk to the stage. Before starting down the aisle, Buddy saw the desk... and simply guided Morris to another aisle that was unobstructed, to the delight of the watching audience.

Avoid, overcome, or adapt... these have been the buzz words at The Seeing Eye this last year. Smaller class sizes, masks, social distancing, frequent handwashing,

deep cleaning, safe travel procedures, and temperature checks have all been incorporated into our operating procedures. We have been navigating through the ever-changing obstacles of the lingering pandemic to avoid its consequences to our students and staff.

Most recently, we have made arrangements with a local hotel where our students can quarantine for 14 days prior to beginning class, to ensure they are healthy before interacting with our instructors or other students. We know the demand for Seeing Eye dogs is higher than ever, and we are incorporating this and other changes in order to serve as many students as quickly and as safely as possible.

From all of us here at The Seeing Eye, thank you for your continued support through these trying times. We could not do all that we do without you.

**Glenn D. Hoagland**  
President & CEO  
The Seeing Eye

# CONTENTS

THE SEEING EYE GUIDE | Spring 2021 | Volume 87, Number 1

- 1 Letters to the Editor
- 2 Cover Story: Mahesh Mathew
- 5 In Memoriam: Dusty: A Different Destiny
- 6 On the Road: Seeing Eye Breeder Dog goes to Switzerland
- 8 News Highlights

**ON THE COVER:** Dr. Mahesh Mathew and his Seeing Eye® dog, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross named Vino, walk through Prospect Park in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Photo by Nathan Klok Photography

This issue of The Guide is underwritten, in part, by income from a special bequest by Margaret Ann Barbour, May 13, 1931 – January 15, 2003, in support of the mission of The Seeing Eye.



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Dear Seeing Eye,

I started giving to The Seeing Eye because of the amazing outcomes it does for people. Not only does it make a difference to humans, but to the dogs as well.

I work at an animal hospital and animals truly do have an amazing connection to humans. When I first heard about The Seeing Eye I was beyond curious at what it was about. Then I went on your website and read about the organization, and at that moment I knew that I wanted to donate something. Every little bit helps!

These stories are very heartfelt and are amazing and touching. Keep up all the hard work and the happy stories!

**Marianne Klatt**

---

## Dear Seeing Eye,

Years ago I was following teen-age Debbie Deyo-Howe and her first Seeing Eye dog, a German shepherd Tocho, as they walked along the sidewalk. Debbie was headed for a collision with a long-hanging tree branch which would have hit her right in the face. However, Tocho led her around that tree branch and avoided the collision. That was impressive!

Young Debbie used to rough-house with her older brothers. One day, during a rough-house, I said, "Debbie, sometimes I forget you are blind."

She replied, "So do I!"

When I was a teacher at the Von Bartheld School of Music in the 1950s, Mrs. Deyo brought in young Debbie to see about taking piano lessons. Little Debbie was so tiny, she had to reach way up to hold her mother's hand.

Her first piano lesson was on an old upright that could not be tuned up to concert pitch. At one of our first lessons, Debbie said, "the middle C on your piano is higher than the middle C on my piano at home." She had perfect pitch.

Debbie is now working with her fifth Seeing Eye dog. She is a pianist and vocalist who has recorded her first CD and is working on her second.

Keep training those smart dogs.

**James Woods**

*Dr. Mahesh Mathew has graduated from several institutions of higher learning, but only one of his diplomas came on four legs!*

Mahesh, who was born in India, had never had a dog – in fact, had rarely even interacted with one – before coming to The Seeing Eye in March 2020 to be matched with his first Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross named Vino.

“I was always scared of dogs!” Mahesh said.

“In India, it is not very common for people to have dogs. And there are very few guide dogs. If someone is blind and they are using a dog, the dog was not as well trained as the dogs are at The Seeing Eye.”

Mahesh earned a bachelor of medicine-bachelor of surgery (MBBS) degree and a doctor of medicine (MD) in India. He was working there as a physician in a hospital when he began to feel severe tingling and numbness in his feet and fingers and his vision began to blur. Soon after the first symptoms appeared, his balance and mobility issues required him to use a wheelchair.

Dr. Mahesh Mathew

ONWARD  
*and*  
UPWARD



Photos by Nathan Klok Photography.

"I was told I would never walk again," he said.

Mahesh eventually came to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, where doctors determined his vision and walking problems were related – it was diagnosed as secondary motor and sensory peripheral neuropathy, a problem affecting the nerves in his fingers and legs, though they were unable to determine the cause. The condition also affected his eyes causing optic atrophy (a degenerative condition of nerves to the eyes) which is why his vision was failing.

"There were times I just wanted to give up. Within a few months I had gone from working as a doctor to being in a wheelchair and losing my vision," Mahesh said.

"But I was determined to get out of the wheelchair. I knew from medical school how important it was to keep exercising my toes, to keep trying to move them. For months, I kept trying to wiggle them. People said I was crazy. But I was going to walk again."

After several months, Mahesh said, he could move his toes. Eventually, he was able to stand. Then walk with a limp.

"When I tell people I was paralyzed, they don't believe it," he said.

"I finally can now walk without any trouble. But I don't have any sensation in my feet. After every time I go for a walk, and every night before I go to sleep, I check my feet for wounds, because if I stepped on something I wouldn't feel it."

But doctors told him nothing could be done to restore his vision.

No longer able to work as a physician in India, Mahesh remained in the United States.

"I was starting a new life," he said. "I decided to get trained in braille, in screen readers, in mobility. I wanted to learn everything I could about how to be a blind person."

He graduated this spring from the University of Minnesota with a master's degree in public health and has been accepted to the Ph.D. program in cardiovascular epidemiology.

"I became interested in epidemiology because it is related to my background in internal medicine. I'm more into research. I can use the knowledge from medical school and apply it to the field of epidemiology," he said.

While at State Services for the Blind in Rochester, he met a counselor who was a Seeing Eye graduate.

"I could tell how well trained this dog was," Mahesh said. "Calm, quiet, obedient. And I could see how much easier the Seeing Eye dog was making her life."

His orientation and mobility instructor also thought he'd be a good candidate for a guide dog, but Mahesh was hesitant. "It was a new thing for me. I thought it might help me, but I was a little unsure about it. This was a big decision for me."



*continued >>*

So Mahesh did what he had done so many other times in his life: He studied. He researched guide dogs and guide dog schools, and he finally decided he should get one, and it should come from The Seeing Eye.



“The Seeing Eye was a new experience for me. I was in a place where there were a lot of dogs, and they were all so well trained. It changed my whole impression of dogs. The only dogs I was familiar with were stray dogs that would bark at you. These dogs were not like that at all!” Mahesh said.

“My instructor, Brian O’Neal, is a very joyful person. Everyone at The Seeing Eye was so helpful. It was a nice experience,” said Mahesh, who was in the last class before The Seeing Eye was required to shut down for five months due to COVID-19 restrictions.

“Even someone like me, with absolutely no experience with dogs before, was confident after completing training that this was going to work,” he said.

One highlight was training in New York City. “I was impressed by how fast the crowds moved, but Vino was allowing me to keep up with them without any problem. It was so crowded, and so loud! I was completely confused by all the noise. But Vino knew where to go, and guided me properly, so I never got lost.”

Although Mahesh’s classes are all virtual, he and Vino are out walking every day. “I go out with friends, or I will take the light rail downtown and walk around. Vino helps me so much. He does not get distracted. Other dogs or people on the street try to interact with him, and he ignores them. My friends are quite impressed with him.”

When Vino isn’t working, Mahesh said, he likes to play with his toys. “He can tell when I’m working,” Mahesh said. “If I’m working on my laptop, he sits in his crate or he plays quietly with his toys. But as soon as my class is over, he comes over and wants to play with me!”

Mahesh said he hopes his story inspires others to overcome the challenges in their lives.

“What I have learned is one of the biggest strengths of a human being is the ability to adapt,” Mahesh said. “I could sit around and cry about what happened to me. I decided I would not. I decided I wanted to do things. I want to show people what can be accomplished.”



*“Even someone like me, with absolutely no experience with dogs before, was confident after completing [Seeing Eye] training...”*



# Dusty: A Different Destiny

## Attacked as a puppy, Dusty brought about new protections for service dogs

A nine-month-old German shepherd puppy named Dusty was attacked by a loose dog in New Jersey on Friday, July 23, 2010. Dusty, who was being raised by Seeing Eye volunteer Roger Woodhour, sustained severe injuries, as did Roger.

The physical as well as psychological trauma ruled out Dusty's chance to become a Seeing Eye dog.

But it turned out Dusty had another destiny: To change the law to protect present and future Seeing Eye dogs as well as their raisers, trainers, and handlers.

On January 21, 2014, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie signed Dusty's Law, New Jersey statute 2C:29-3.2, which made it a criminal offense to kill, injure, or interfere with a service dog or a service dog in training.

It sets penalties for owners of dogs who attack service animals and guide dogs in training, and provides restitution for the owner of the injured service dog who may have to face unplanned emergency bills, lost wages, and the need to replace their means of independent travel.

Prior to the law being adopted, a "dog-on-dog" attack would normally be referred

to the local municipality's animal control office, which in most cases is not staffed around-the-clock. By making such incidents a criminal matter, police would respond, and be able to render assistance if needed to the service dog handler whose dog may be unable to perform its duties.

Dusty even inspired similar laws to be adopted in other states.

"Currently, 47 states have laws on the books that are similar to Dusty's Law," said Melissa Allman, advocacy and government relations senior specialist at The Seeing Eye. "And a bill in a 48th state, Maryland, has been passed and is on the governor's desk waiting to be signed into law." The two states that do not currently have guide dog protection laws are Montana and West Virginia, she said.

Canada, in addition to having a nationwide guide dog protection law, has even stronger protections in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan, Melissa said.

Following the attack, Dusty was returned to The Seeing Eye and became an adoptable dog. He was adopted by a family in New Jersey who renamed him Pouncey, after the All-Pro center for the Pittsburgh Steelers. His new family took him North Carolina to jump in the surf, he wore Santa suits at Christmas and bunny ears at Easter, and he even travelled to Heinz Field in Pittsburgh to cheer on the Steelers.



On February 19, Dusty/Pouncey passed away at the age of 11 from an untreatable liver condition. But his legacy will live on forever as the inspiration for the law that will protect future generations of Seeing Eye dogs.

For more information about how you can keep Seeing Eye dog teams safe, go to [www.GuideDogAtWork.org](http://www.GuideDogAtWork.org).

**BACK TO  
WHERE  
IT ALL  
BEGAN!**

# Seeing Eye breeder dog goes to Switzerland

Seeing Eye breeder dog  
Bruce enjoying the mountain  
air of Switzerland. *Photo courtesy  
of La Fondation Romande Pour  
Chiens Guides D'Aveugles.*



Dorothy Harrison Eustis was born in Philadelphia, but the idea for The Seeing Eye was born in Switzerland.

There, in Vevey, she owned a kennel called Fortunate Fields where she bred and trained German shepherds for use by the Swiss police and military. Dorothy had visited a short-lived program by the German government in Potsdam to train dogs to guide veterans who had been blinded in World War I.

Dorothy wrote about what she saw in the November 5, 1927, edition of *The Saturday Evening Post* in an article titled "The Seeing Eye". The article was read to Morris Frank, a blind college student and insurance salesman living in Nashville, Tennessee. He wrote to Dorothy at Fortunate Fields and asked if she would train a dog for him – even though she'd never trained a dog to guide before.

After discussing it with her head trainer, Jack Humphrey, Dorothy told Morris she would train a dog for him... if he could go to Switzerland.

"Mrs. Eustis, to get my independence back," he replied, "I'd go to Hell."

Morris came to Switzerland – not an easy trip for a blind man traveling alone in 1928 – and was matched with a German shepherd named Kiss. Morris promptly

renamed her Buddy. Morris and Buddy worked with Jack at Fortunate Fields and on the streets of Vevey.

After the two had worked together for a few weeks, Morris asked if anyone was available to take him into town so he could get a haircut.

"You have Buddy, Morris," Dorothy said. "Why don't you go with her?"

In Nashville, a haircut was usually an all-day affair for Morris. His father would bring him to the barbershop in the morning on his way to work, then pick him up on his way home in the evening. This time, Morris could come and go as he pleased. When he returned to Fortunate Fields, he was laughing with joy.

"I'm free," he exclaimed to Dorothy. "By God, I'm finally free!"

In June, Morris returned to the United States, where to the astonishment of skeptical reporters he was safely guided by Buddy across a chaotic New York City boulevard so perilous for pedestrians it was nicknamed "Death Street."

Morris then sent a single word telegram back to Switzerland: SUCCESS. On January 29, 1929, he founded The Seeing Eye, a school to do for others what Dorothy and Jack had done for him.

Last year, a male breeder from The Seeing Eye was sent home, as it were, to Switzerland as part of our exchange program with guide dog schools elsewhere in the world. The exchanges help increase genetic diversity in breeding programs.

Breeders from The Seeing Eye are sought after, explained Peggy Gibbon, The Seeing Eye's Director of Canine Development, because of our high standards for health and temperament.

The breeder sent to Switzerland is a yellow Labrador retriever named Bruce, now four years old. He is now a stud dog for La Fondation Romande Pour Chiens Guides D'Aveugles – the Foundation for Guide Dogs for the Blind – in Lucens, about 30 miles north of Vevey. The guide dog school was founded in 1994.

"They told us that Bruce saved their breeding program," Peggy said. "With COVID restrictions, the school wasn't able to participate in its usual breeder exchange program with other European schools."

Bruce has fathered three litters to date, with a fourth on the way, and lives with a retired female breeder named Alba with the school's CEO.

He spends his days at the school's campus, where he gets lots of exercise running with guide dogs in training.

Several other dogs have made the trip to Switzerland, including a male black Labrador retriever named Aaron in 2007.



*Far Left:* Dorothy Harrison Eustis, co-founder of The Seeing Eye, in Switzerland with one of her German shepherds.

*Center:* Morris Frank being guided by Buddy, the first Seeing Eye dog.

*Near Left:* Bruce at home with Alba, a female Labrador retriever retired breeder. *Photo courtesy of La Fondation Romande Pour Chiens Guides D'Aveugles.*

Seeing Eye Groundskeeper Rich Picone and Seeing Eye Instructor Kristin Lake in front of the leaf plow, attached to one of The Seeing Eye's tractors, with Seeing Eye dog in training Chance, a female golden retriever.



# Thank You, **TRACTOR TIME WITH TIM!**

The Seeing Eye's hard-working groundskeepers maintain two large campuses – our 60-acre Washington Valley campus and our 330-acre breeding station campus in Chester.

Both campuses have lots of trees... and lots of leaves!

In November, the YouTube channel *Tractor Time with Tim* announced they would hold a contest to award a Ventrac EF300 Leaf Plow. Seeing Eye groundskeeper Rich Picone entered the contest and told *Tractor Time with Tim* about The Seeing Eye and our mission. And we were the lucky winners!

"I'm ecstatic," Rich said. "This is a piece of equipment we will make good use of in the fall."

*Tractor Time with Tim* not only gave us the leaf plow, but also asked their viewers to donate to The Seeing Eye... and that they would match the first \$1,000 in donations! They far exceeded that goal, with more than \$5,000 donated to The Seeing Eye by the viewers of *Tractor Time with Tim*.

In return, The Seeing Eye recognized *Tractor Time with Tim's* generous donations with the chance to name a future Seeing Eye puppy. They chose the name Johnny, which is the nickname they've given to their beloved John Deere 1025R tractor.

In March, Rich and Seeing Eye Instructor Kristin Lake traveled to Indiana to pick up the leaf plow and meet Tim and Christy Marks from *Tractor Time with Tim*. Kristin brought along a Seeing Eye dog in training, a male yellow Labrador retriever named Frodo.

Tim, with Kristin's instruction, went on a blindfold walk while being guided by Frodo. Rich helped by using one of Tim's tractors to give Frodo a traffic check!

To see the video with Kristin and Rich meeting Tim and Christy from *Tractor Time with Tim*, go to [www.SeeingEye.org/tractortime](http://www.SeeingEye.org/tractortime).



# VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE PUPPY!

Once again, The Seeing Eye is doing a calendar contest! Our puppy raisers are taking photos of adorable Seeing Eye puppies.

They're all cute, but which one is the cutest?

Go to [www.seeingeye.org/calendar](http://www.seeingeye.org/calendar) to vote for your favorite puppy by donating to The Seeing Eye. Every dollar donated for a particular puppy is a vote for that puppy. The top eight photos will be featured as their own "month" in the calendar, and the next eight photos will be in the calendar as watermarks. A special committee of Seeing Eye staff will select four additional feature photos and four additional watermark photos.

And of course, the calendars will be available for sale this fall, so you can keep The Seeing Eye in mind 365 days a year!



Banach, a female black Labrador retriever, was our featured puppy for the month of May 2021.

## The Seeing Eye thanks its corporate partners



Transforming Lives™



[www.HealthyVisionAssociation.com](http://www.HealthyVisionAssociation.com)



The Seeing Eye is proud to recognize our corporate partners who have made a significant commitment to providing independence for people who are blind or visually impaired through Seeing Eye® dogs.

If your company would like to get involved, please visit [SeeingEye.org/Partner](http://SeeingEye.org/Partner) for more information.

[www.SeeingEye.org](http://www.SeeingEye.org)





1 Seeing Eye Way • P.O. Box 375  
Morristown, NJ 07963-0375

Non Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
S. Hackensack, NJ  
Permit No. 79



# Mr. April!

Lowell, a golden retriever, was “Mr. April” in the 2021 Seeing Eye Puppy Calendar. Who will be this year’s calendar cuties? Your donations will decide!

*See story on Page 8!*



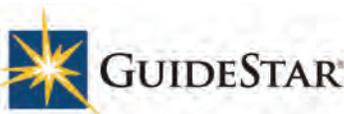
## The Seeing Eye

**President & CEO** Glenn Hoagland  
**Editor** Craig Garretson

**Visit our Website** [www.SeeingEye.org](http://www.SeeingEye.org)  
**Email** [info@SeeingEye.org](mailto:info@SeeingEye.org)  
**Phone** 973-539-4425  
**Fax** 973-539-0922  
**ISSN** 0037-0819  
**Publication Number** 488580



The Seeing Eye produces The Guide® magazine in print, audio, Braille, and electronic versions. Copies are available by request. This issue and past issues also are available on our website. Permission to reprint may be obtained by contacting The Seeing Eye.



Seeing Eye® is a registered trademark for guide dogs of The Seeing Eye, Inc., and is its registered service mark for training dogs as guides and instructing visually impaired individuals in their use and care. The Seeing Eye admits and offers students of any race, color, religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or ancestry all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students of the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or ancestry in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

The Seeing Eye follows the guidelines recommended by the Council of U.S. Dog Guide Schools for the humane care and training of dogs to be guides, and the instruction and graduate services offered to people who are blind or visually impaired.

The Seeing Eye is an accredited member of the International Guide Dog Federation. The mission of The Seeing Eye is to enhance the independence, dignity and self-confidence of people who are blind, through the use of specially trained Seeing Eye dogs.