

Fall 2023 | Volume 89, Number 3

THE SEEING EYE®

# GUIDE

A MAGAZINE FOR FRIENDS OF THE SEEING EYE







## A Seeing Eye Perspective

In 1928, Morris Frank traveled to a dog training school called Fortunate Fields in Vevey, Switzerland, to be matched with the first Seeing Eye® dog, a German shepherd he called Buddy. He was eager to bring Buddy back home to show America that a person who is blind really could travel, with independence and

dignity, on bustling sidewalks and across dangerous streets.

The owner of Fortunate Fields, an American named Dorothy Harrison Eustis, said Morris and Buddy had to not only get to their destination, but then, just as importantly, go inside.

“You must not forget that signs saying ‘No Dogs Allowed’ are almost everywhere – in restaurants, hotels, office buildings, and stores,” said Dorothy, who a year later would co-found The Seeing Eye with Morris. “If the blind man’s dog can’t be with him in the places he has to go, of what value is it to him? And what about restrictions on trains, streetcars, and buses? If a person can’t use his dog to get to work, it’s obvious he can’t hold down a job. How will it ever be possible for the organization to succeed unless the guide dogs are welcome in all public places?”

Morris devoted the rest of his life not just to Seeing Eye dogs, but to equal access. Within 10 years of his return to the United States, all major train lines, most airlines, and most major hotels had changed their policies to allow guide dogs. By 1956, every state had passed a law ensuring that a person with a guide dog could go anywhere any other member of the public could go. The federal Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990, included guide dog access as well. Similar laws have been passed in Canada’s 10 provinces and three territories.

But even today, despite these laws, all too often our graduates encounter barriers to access: Restaurant staff who claim dogs aren’t allowed due to health code regulations; rideshare service operators and cabbies who refuse to pick up people with guide dogs, claiming allergies or a fear of dogs; or hotel managers who try to charge an additional room cleaning fee.

All of this is illegal, and The Seeing Eye has an Advocacy and Government Relations Specialist, who also is a graduate of our program. She was a practicing attorney for 12 years and now uses her legal background to advocate for our graduates by helping them understand their rights as guide dog handlers, directing them to appropriate legal resources when their rights may have been violated, and working to effect changes in policies and laws that create barriers for guide dog handlers.

The Seeing Eye provides information about access laws in the United States and Canada on our website at [www.SeeingEye.org/rights](http://www.SeeingEye.org/rights), and we also have created a free app providing this information. The Seeing Eye Advocacy App is available for download from the Apple App Store and we are working on versions for additional platforms.

With a Seeing Eye dog, a person has the ability – and the right! – to go anywhere. And The Seeing Eye will be here to continue Morris Frank’s legacy of ensuring equal access for all.

Sincerely,

**Margaret E.L. “Peggi” Howard, D.Litt.**

President & CEO

The Seeing Eye

# CONTENTS

- 1 Letters to the Editor
- 2 Graduate Story: Sofia Pantel del Cueto
- 4 Teens Experience Guide Dogs Through SESY
- 6 Puppy Raisers Family Day
- 8 News Highlights

**ON THE COVER:** Seeing Eye graduate Sofia Pantel del Cueto with her Seeing Eye dog, a black Labrador retriever named Roselle, visited Seville, Spain, while on vacation. Photo courtesy of Sofia Pantel del Cueto. See story on Page 2.

THE SEEING EYE GUIDE | Fall 2023 | Volume 89, Number 3



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**Dear Seeing Eye,**

On May 11, 2017, a little bundle of fluff was brought home at seven weeks old. His name was Domino. His ears were too big to stand up on their own so they flopped down to the sides of his head. After all these years of begging and pleading and negotiating with my mom, my dream of being a Seeing Eye puppy raiser was coming true. I was so excited to finally have a dog to bring on outings, which is my favorite part of the program because I am able to show everyone the amazing dog I am raising and to maybe even inspire others.

As heartbreaking as it felt to watch Domino leave, I knew that it was important for him to go back to The Seeing Eye headquarters to proceed with his training. From the start I understood that he would never be our permanent pet, though sometimes I hoped he could be, I knew that he had a job to do. He wasn't born to be an ordinary house pet. He was born for a purpose.

From this experience I learned very quickly that it is an extraordinary feeling to know I helped transform someone's quality of life for the better. I believe this experience along with my experience of raising two other dogs has made me the person I am today, a person who strives to help others. I feel that these experiences are something I will always carry with me and continue to apply throughout my life. I could not be more grateful for this program, I can't imagine who I would be without it.

**Eva Lanius**



**Dear Seeing Eye,**

Throughout my puppy raising experience, I have learned many different values. The most important one is responsibility. Raising a puppy, as many probably know, is not as easy as it sounds. You are responsible for their well-being at all times. It's a living being so you have to ensure that it receives nutrition and exercise so that it stays healthy. You have to ensure that you feed your pup whatever the recommended amount is for their age and size. You have to make sure that they are taken outside to relieve themselves and perhaps get a walk in. You have to play with them so they can get their energy out. You have to ensure that they are clean and aren't unhealthy. You also have to train them in basic commands like sit, rest, down, come, and so on. Remembering that this dog was born for a purpose makes having responsibility a very important value.

I will one hundred percent use the values that I learned as a puppy raiser in my adult life. I plan on becoming a New Jersey State Trooper, so the values such as responsibility are very important for my career.

**Ryan Quinn**

*Editor's note: Eva and Ryan received Seeing Eye Service Scholarships for their participation in The Seeing Eye Puppy Raiser Program. See story on pages 6-7.*



# OPENING EYES

*Sofia Pantel del Cueto,  
founder of the nonprofit  
Abre Tus Ojos,  
challenges perceptions*

Sofia and her Seeing Eye dog, a black Labrador retriever named Roselle, are frequently seen around the island of Puerto Rico as she spreads awareness about the capabilities of people who are blind or visually impaired through the nonprofit organization she founded in 2014.

"Abre Tus Ojos, which means 'Open Your Eyes', initially began as an online resource to raise awareness about the existing services, opportunities, and information available for people with visual impairments like me," Sofia said. "It has evolved and now I go into schools, offices, and governmental and private agencies to talk about the importance of inclusion, how best to provide spaces for people with disabilities, and a little of my life story and raising awareness about Seeing Eye dogs. My nonprofit now serves to amplify the voices of many others working for the independent living movement in Puerto Rico. We provide information about everything occurring on the island that can benefit the population."

Sofia and Roselle are often off the island as well, as Sofia travels throughout the United States and even to Europe for work as well as for fun. Sofia and Roselle recently returned from a trip to Spain, where they visited Seville and its beautiful marina on the Guadalquivir, and also to Los Angeles.

"We also enjoy gardening and going to the beach together, even though Roselle is the only Labrador retriever I know that doesn't like getting wet!" Sofia said.



Above: Sofia Pantel del Cueto with her Seeing Eye dog, a black Labrador retriever named Roselle. Photo by Ama Dog Photography of Puerto Rico.

Left: Sofia and Roselle on the Guadalquivir riverfront promenade in Seville. Photo courtesy of Sofia Pantel del Cueto.



"Roselle is a great guide. She carefully maneuvers us around the obstacle filled sidewalks on the island," she said. "She is a very happy dog, always either sleeping or wagging her tail in pure delight. She enjoys sunbaths in the morning with our housecat, who snuggles with her. She is very sweet and enjoys soft plushy stuffed animals to play and cuddle with."

In addition to being the founder and CEO of Abre Tus Ojos, Sofia is on the board of three other nonprofits in Puerto Rico that promote independent living for people with disabilities and gender equality.

"My Seeing Eye dog helps me not only get to my meetings or talking engagements safely and securely, but also helps me demonstrate what service dogs are; one of the many ways they can help the community of people with disabilities; and the importance of respecting a working team by not distracting their service dog," Sofia said.

Sofia said she first heard about The Seeing Eye from a cousin. At the time, Sofia was getting a master's degree from Seton Hall University in New Jersey while working as an intern in New York City.

"Once I started researching The Seeing Eye, the history and the reputation of the school really drew me in," she said. "I am a lifelong animal lover, but a cat owner – I've never had a dog. I was reassured when I started the application process and learned about the training and the follow-up support the school provides."

She first came to The Seeing Eye in 2012 to be matched with Beta, a German shepherd. "I am of Greek descent, so even her name felt like fate," Sofia said. "She was not very excited to meet me, in typical German shepherd fashion.



“ Once I started researching The Seeing Eye, the history and the reputation of the school really drew me in. ”

But that first walk I had with her was incredibly freeing. She was so fast and smooth, and I felt like we were flying. In that moment, I knew this was the right choice for me.

Navigating the streets of New York City with her was truly a liberating feeling. We felt invincible, like we could take on the entire world. She taught me so much about being a good dog mom and a guide dog team."

Beta was at Sofia's side for many important milestones, including the founding of Abre Tus Ojos in 2014. "And she had a special spot at my wedding," she said.

Beta retired in 2018, and a few months later Sofia returned to be matched with Roselle. "Many of my friends and family joked that the next dog would be the opposite of Beta. Beta was a big personality, incredibly expressive,

very graceful, and always asserted her independence as many German shepherds do. When I was greeted by a wiggly black Labrador on dog day, she was indeed the complete opposite of Beta. Roselle jumped in my lap and couldn't stop giving me kisses. She is definitely a great fit."

The two dogs do have one thing in common, Sofia said: each is a great guide dog! "They are incredibly different from each other, but each one was truly the right fit for what I needed at that moment in my life."



Top: Sofia and Roselle speaking to students in Puerto Rico.

Photo courtesy of Sofia Pantel del Cueto.

Above: Sofia and Roselle walking alongside a historic stone wall in Seville.

Photo courtesy of Sofia Pantel del Cueto.



# Teens Experience Guide



**This summer, from August 14-18, we held The Seeing Eye's Seminar for Youth (SESY) program for the first time in more than a decade.**



Through SESY, The Seeing Eye hosted 10 teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18 from all over North America to our Washington Valley campus. They lived in residence in our dormitory and ate meals in our dining room while learning how to care for and be guided by a Seeing Eye dog.

"The SESY program is a great introduction for young people about what it means to work with a guide dog," said Dave Johnson, The Seeing Eye's Director of Instruction and Training. "It's real, hands-on experience. Working with a Seeing Eye dog can be life changing."

The students worked one-on-one with Seeing Eye instructors, first learning routes using their white canes in Morristown, then traveling those same routes while being guided by a Seeing Eye dog. They also attended lectures where Seeing Eye graduates spoke about the experience of working with a guide dog.

*If you are a teenager who is blind or visually impaired, or know one who might be interested in a future SESY program, please contact us at 800-539-4425 and ask for Admissions.*



# Dogs Through SESY





# CELEBRATING PUPPY RAISERS!

*"Puppy raisers are the heartbeat of The Seeing Eye," said Peggi Howard, President & CEO of The Seeing Eye.*

Those puppy raisers – more than 500 in all – welcome 7-week-old puppies into their homes and teach them how to be good dogs. They go to all sorts of interesting places – malls, airports, stadiums, buses, trains – as well as to regular puppy club meetings. And then, after 14 to 16 months, the puppies go back to The Seeing Eye to begin their formal training as Seeing Eye dogs.

"Lots of people say, 'I could never let that puppy go,'" said Christine Higham, the Linda Feinne Roth Manager of Puppy Development. "And understandably there are tears. But when you learn about the people these dogs will be helping, and the difference the dogs will make in their lives, we want to do it all over again."

Every summer, The Seeing Eye says thank you by inviting those puppy raisers to our Washington Valley campus for Family Day, where they get a chance to meet each other, tour the campus, attend presentations from staff, and hear from Seeing Eye graduates whose lives have been changed by these amazing dogs.

This year, nearly 900 people attended Family Day on August 12, 2023.

At the event, The Seeing Eye welcomed as new members of the 21 Club – those who have raised at least 21 Seeing Eye puppies – the Lax family of Maplewood, New Jersey; Trisha Wagaman of Greencastle, Pennsylvania; Margaret Sheneman of Flemington, New Jersey; the Hoff family, also of Flemington; and the Piasecki family of Perkasié, Pennsylvania.

In addition, 23 students were recognized with Puppy Raiser Scholarships. All the recipients are college-bound high school seniors who raised at least two puppies for The Seeing Eye, including one during their junior or senior year, and who attended at least 70 percent of their puppy club's meetings and activities. Each applicant also must submit an essay about what being a puppy raiser meant to him or her.



The Lax family were presented with the 21 Club Award for raising at least 21 Seeing Eye puppies by James Hands, The Seeing Eye's Chief Financial Officer and Director of Administration and Finance, and Peggi Gibbon, Director of Canine Development.

On the next page, Left: Seeing Eye graduate Jeff Bills, with his Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross named Bodine, addresses puppy raisers at Family Day. Seeing Eye graduate Michael Dougherty, seated, also spoke. Mike's dog is a black Labrador retriever named Greta. Middle: Seeing Eye puppy raisers look for Breeding Station photos of their puppies and their puppy's parents. Right: Seeing Eye instructor Ray Engleking demonstrates dog training with Quix, a yellow Labrador retriever in training.





The Seeing Eye thanks Helen Skiba-Powell for sponsoring Family Day 2023. Also making donations were Best Provisions, Demarest Farms, Judy and Rich Dolinko, and Sysco.

If you're interested in raising a puppy for The Seeing Eye, go to our website at [SeeingEye.org/raise](https://SeeingEye.org/raise) or call us at (800) 539-4425 ext. 1769.

## PUPPY DEVELOPMENT'S 2023 SERVICE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

### Sophia Bernstein

Bergen County, NJ  
University of Hartford  
The Fludzinski Foundation  
Scholarship &  
The Sally A. Jumper Scholarship

### Meredith Burt

Essex County, NJ  
University of Massachusetts  
The Edward A. Bragaline &  
The Aaron & Rachel Meyer  
Foundation Scholarship

### Alexandra Byank

Morris County, NJ (NW)  
University of Oklahoma  
The Aaron & Rachel Meyer  
Foundation Scholarship &  
The Emma Kate Brunskill  
Memorial Puppy Raiser Scholarship

### Sophie Cummings

York County, PA  
Penn State University  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship

### Amanda Elizabeth Ditmar

Berks County, PA  
Penn State University  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship &  
The Fludzinski Foundation  
Scholarship

### Brodie Fritsch

Morris County, NJ (NW)  
The College of New Jersey  
The Aaron & Rachel Meyer  
Foundation Scholarship &  
The PETCO Foundation Scholarship

### Molly Gecek

Hunterdon County, NJ  
Salve Regina University  
The Toni Stabile Scholarship

### Mahi Gupta

Morris County, NJ (NW)  
University of Rochester  
The Toni Stabile Scholarship

### Sarah Hwang

Morris County, NJ (NW)  
County College of Morris  
The Bernice Barbour Foundation  
Scholarship, The PETCO  
Foundation Scholarship, &  
The Katherine Ann Engleking  
Scholarship

### Mary Kacergis

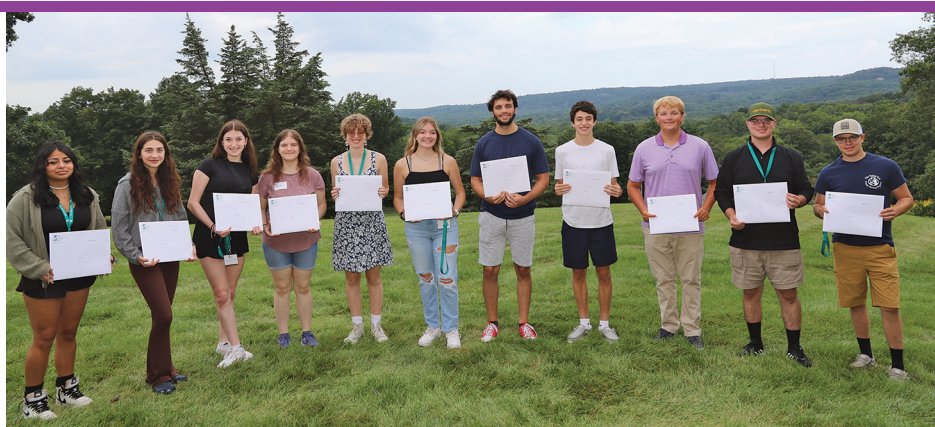
Chester County, PA  
Georgetown University  
The Josephine Aresty Scholarship,  
The Michael J. Kosloski Foundation  
Scholarship, & The Anton and  
Augusta Birkel Foundation  
Scholarship

### Zach Kegerreis

Chester County, PA  
Firefighter Academy  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship, The Fludzinski  
Foundation Scholarship, &  
The Bruce J. Heim Foundation  
Scholarship

### Eva Lanius

Bergen County, NJ  
Johnson & Wales University  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship &  
The David M. Crowley Foundation  
Scholarship



### Brielle Latona

Morris County, NJ (SW)  
Ramapo College  
The David M. Crowley Foundation  
Scholarship, The Fludzinski  
Foundation Scholarship, &  
The Sally A. Jumper Scholarship

### Miriam Lester

Lancaster County, PA  
University of Edinburgh –  
Scotland  
The Hermione Foundation  
Scholarship, The Michael J.  
Kosloski Foundation Scholarship, &  
The Toni Stabile Scholarship

### Marisa Lipari

Essex County, NJ  
Union College  
The Bruce J. Heim Foundation  
Scholarship, The Sandy Hill  
Foundation Scholarship, &  
The William Heady Memorial  
Scholarship

### Katelynn Peterson

Morris County, NJ (NW)  
Moravian University  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship &  
The David M. Crowley Foundation  
Scholarship

### Ryan Quinn

Cumberland County, NJ  
Rowan College of South Jersey  
The David M. Crowley Foundation  
Scholarship, The Sally A. Jumper  
Scholarship, &  
The Aaron & Rachel Meyer  
Foundation Scholarship

### Marisa Sblendorio

Somerset County, NJ  
Albright College  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship &  
The Toni Stabile Scholarship

### Sky Sedlacek

Passaic County, NJ  
Florida Institute of Technology  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship, The David M. Crowley  
Foundation Scholarship, &  
The Aaron & Rachel Meyer  
Foundation Scholarship

### Charlie Skilton

Morris County, NJ (SW)  
Bucknell University  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship &  
The David M. Crowley Foundation  
Scholarship

### Raimee Svetvilas

Essex County, NJ  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
The Edward A. Bragaline  
Scholarship &  
The Toni Stabile Scholarship

### Daniel Tankel

Warren County, NJ  
County College of Morris  
The Toni Stabile Scholarship

### Owen Walsh

Lehigh County, PA  
Penn State University  
The Sandy Hill Foundation  
Scholarship, The Radcliff Family  
Memorial Scholarship, &  
The Anton and Augusta Birkel  
Foundation Scholarship

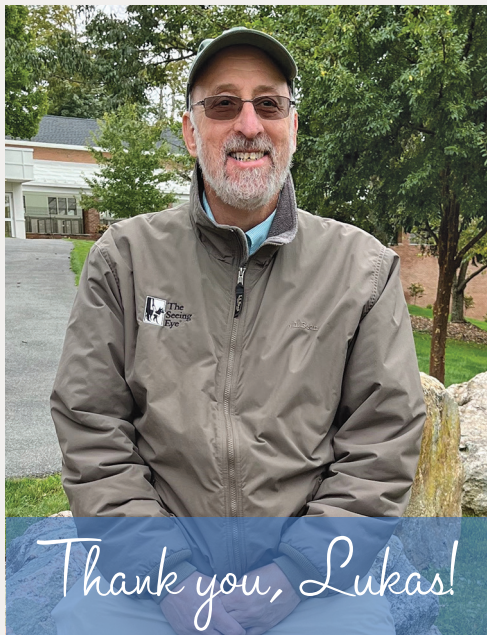


## Lukas Franck Retires

Lukas Franck, who joined The Seeing Eye in 1978, retired at the end of September.

Lukas began his career as an apprentice and retired with the title Senior Consultant for Special Projects, but to the staff and students of The Seeing Eye, he will always be an instructor. Over his career, Lukas created hundreds of Seeing Eye teams, and helped as many if not more through follow-up support, meeting with Seeing Eye graduates in their homes across the United States and Canada, or at conventions for organizations of people who are blind, to solve any problems that developed over the course of the partnership.

Capping a career full of awards and accommodations, Lukas received in April the Ken Lord Award, the highest honor bestowed by the International Guide Dog Federation. The Ken Lord Award recognizes the lifetime achievements of an individual who has served the international guide dog movement in an exemplary manner. It is named in honor of Ken Lord, a co-founder of the International Guide Dog Federation and the former CEO of the South African Guide Dog Association. Created in 2002, only 11



people have been recognized with this prestigious honor, including Doug Roberts, now retired, who served as The Seeing Eye's Director of Programs.

Lukas also is a recipient of the AER's Sandy Kronick Distinguished Service Award, the American Foundation for the Blind's Access Award, and is a two-time recipient of the Ethel Bender Award from Guide Dog Users, Inc.

In addition to being a guide dog mobility instructor (GDMI), he also is a certified orientation and mobility instructor (COMS), with a master's degree in orientation and mobility from Western Michigan University.

Over the years, Lukas made many contributions not just to The Seeing Eye, but across the international guide dog movement. Guide dog handlers, long cane travelers, and sighted pedestrians have benefited from his work with traffic engineers to improve safety.

Lukas retired on a Friday... and returned to The Seeing Eye on Monday as a volunteer!

## HOLIDAY CARDS ARE HERE!



This year, we have two card designs." The first is a Christmas card featuring a collage of six pictures, representing each breed and color of Seeing Eye dog. The second features a black and tan German shepherd cooling off in the snow.

Cards can be ordered as is through our online store, or if ordered by November 22nd, they can be personalized with up to two lines of custom text printed inside, with or without return addresses on envelopes. Each box comes with 20 cards and 20 envelopes. This year we are relying on volunteers to assist us with fulfillment of standard cards, while our vendor will fulfill any personalized orders, all shipping directly to you.

Non-personalized cards are \$21 (plus shipping). Personalized cards with blank envelopes are \$29 (plus shipping). Personalized cards with return address **printed on envelopes** are \$36 (plus shipping).

To order these cards from The Seeing Eye, please visit our online store at [www.SeeingEye.org/store](http://www.SeeingEye.org/store).



## The Seeing Eye thanks its corporate partners



Transforming Lives™



**Donate Your Car**

Donating is **easy**, the  
pick-up is **free**, and **your**  
**gift is tax-deductible.**

For more information, go to  
<https://careasy.org/nonprofit/The-Seeing-Eye-Inc>



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



**MERCK**  
Animal Health





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



# Brick by Brick

Are you looking to memorialize a favorite person or dog in your life, or looking for the perfect gift for someone who has everything?

Personalizing an engraved paving stone on The Seeing Eye's Path to Independence is a beautiful legacy for you or a loved one. A gift of \$250 can commemorate a 4-inch by 8-inch brick with room for up to 39 characters; \$500 for an 8-inch square brick containing up to 78 characters; and \$1,000 or more for a 12-inch square paver with up to 128 characters.

*For more information, email [donate@seeingeye.org](mailto:donate@seeingeye.org) or call (973) 539-4425.*



## The Seeing Eye

**President & CEO** Margaret E.L. "Peggi" Howard, D.Litt  
**Editor** Craig Garretson,  
Senior Communications Officer

**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.