

THE SEEING EYE®

# GUIDE

A MAGAZINE FOR FRIENDS OF THE SEEING EYE



REMEMBERING



Betty  
White



## A Seeing Eye Perspective

My name is Peggy Howard, and since December I have been serving as Interim President & CEO of The Seeing Eye. But I'm not new to this wonderful organization, having been on the Board of Trustees since 2009.

This is our Spring issue, and Spring is a beautiful time here at The Seeing Eye. The flowers are blooming at our campus, and our students have happily switched to shorts and sneakers from the heavy coats and boots we all wore this winter.

And at last it feels like we are emerging from the COVID-19 epidemic, with our class sizes almost back to what they were two years ago. The local, state, and federal restrictions have largely been lifted, with masks no longer required to be worn indoors. Of course, we are still taking sensible precautions to keep our students as well as our staff as healthy as possible.

Later in this issue, we have an interview with Dotty Casabianca, one of a handful of people who can claim they have worked with a Seeing Eye® dog for eight decades. Dotty attests her longevity to her daily walks

with Ellie and her six previous Seeing Eye dogs. I am sure she's right! This Spring, as the days get warmer and longer, I hope you are able to take advantage and walk in the sunshine as our graduates do.

It's been 13 years since I first joined The Seeing Eye's Board of Trustees and seeing students on campus taking their first steps with their new partners still thrills me every time I see it. The Seeing Eye has touched so many lives, from our graduates to our volunteers to our puppy raisers to our staff, and especially to you, our donors. You have helped make all this possible with your generous support.

Thank you, and safe travels!

**Margaret E.L. "Peggi" Howard, D.Litt.**

Interim President & CEO  
The Seeing Eye

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**ON THE COVER:** *Betty White greets a Seeing Eye dog at a Seeing Eye event. The Seeing Eye mourns the passing of the comedian, actor, and champion of animal welfare. See story on Page 2.*



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Dear Seeing Eye,

The past two weeks have been humbling, touching, tearful, and the overall experience has been nothing less than amazing. The generosity of The Seeing Eye where I have been staying while training with my third Seeing Eye dog is off the charts. The amount of training that you receive along with all the support services that you and your dog are armed with has me teary and feeling thankful.

This letter is to those of you who supported my decision some 14 years ago to take that first step and apply for a Seeing Eye dog, when I was unsure and questioning the decision. This letter is for those of you who have seen the budding partnerships with Handy and Odif, my two retired Seeing Eye dogs. This letter is for those of you who helped out with rides to the veterinarian, offers to dogsit for vacations, or just to hang out and witness confident travel in motion. This letter is for those of you who see Seeing Eye partnerships evolve and respect the hard work that goes into each step we take. This letter is for those of you who get it, who understand and support all working partnerships. This letter is for those of you who witness the concentration and intensity that goes into each route and path we forge when embarking into the unknown ahead of us. And this letter is for those of you who are uncertain if a Seeing Eye dog is right for you. I thank so many of you who have been along the journey.

I've had the pleasure to return to New Jersey three times now and each experience builds upon the last. From my first instructor to my current instructors, the amount of professional experience and thoroughness in each lesson is so awesome.

If you are an adventure seeker and love to travel, but travel anxiety still creeps up from time to time, and of course if you like dogs, I tell you that training with a



Seeing Eye dog is an experience that can't be beat. I will never see myself dogless.

Working a dog helps tremendously with travel anxiety and venturing to new places. A dog by your side as you stride seaside, and up mountains, and into coffee shops, and many other places, is ridiculously fun and comforting.

My newest Seeing Eye dog, Italy, is a 65-pound ball of loving fur in motion. He stands 23 and a half inches tall and with big brown loving eyes. He hails from the Labrador/golden retriever cross variety.

Here's to a great class and to future adventures.

**Rich Rueda**

*Seeing Eye graduate*

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*If you have a letter you would like to submit for consideration for publication in The Guide, please send it to [news@seeingeye.org](mailto:news@seeingeye.org)*

## Thank You for Being a Friend... of The Seeing Eye

The Seeing Eye mourns the passing of long-time supporter Betty White, who passed away on December 31, just 18 days shy of her 100th birthday.

Betty supported many animal-related organizations, but The Seeing Eye was a particular favorite. Over the years, she attended many fundraising events for The Seeing Eye, and donated items to our online auction, including four "experiences" where she met with our supporters.

In 1997, Betty recorded a radio public service announcement with comedian Stan Freberg about how people using Seeing Eye dogs have the right to equal accommodation on public transportation,

### REMEMBERING



# Betty White



Betty White visited our Breeding Station in 2003. The photo shows her cuddling with a newborn puppy.

including taxi cabs. The PSA was recognized that year with an award by the American Council of the Blind. In 1994, she starred in a video, "Puppy Raisers - People Like You," encouraging people to become Seeing Eye puppy raisers. You can see more pictures of Betty White, play the video, or hear the PSA at [www.SeeingEye.org/betty](http://www.SeeingEye.org/betty).

She was the guest of honor at our 65th anniversary gala, held in 1994, and was presented with the Buddy Award, recognizing those individuals who demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to The Seeing Eye.

Dennis Murphy, who was president of the school at the time, invited Betty to stay at his home rather than in a hotel.

After a very successful event, with Betty enthralled the audience with stories about her love of animals and The Seeing Eye, she returned to Dennis's home for the night.

"At the time, I had two Labrador retrievers, who didn't pass the rigorous training program at The Seeing Eye and so became 'adoptables,'" Dennis recalled. "Linky Boy and Murtas were trained never to enter a bedroom in my house without being invited. So, both dogs slept in a separate part of the house."

The next morning at breakfast, Dennis said, Betty said she had a confession to make.

“While petting Murtas, who now had her head on Betty’s lap, she said, ‘As I was fading off to sleep, I felt a paw on the side of the bed, then two paws, then a dog climbing into bed. So Murtas and I slept together!’”

Ken Rosenthal, who succeeded Dennis as president in 1995, said Betty attended three fundraising events during his 11 years as president.

“Betty White loved animals — all animals. I once saw her bond with a giraffe, who quickly learned which one of us holding out food was the one it wanted to get to know better: Betty White,” Ken said.

“At one fundraising gala in Morristown, toward the end of the evening, she asked for the microphone, took the stage, and said something like this: ‘I want to thank you all for attending and for your support of The Seeing Eye. I am sure that you all have been very generous. But I know you can do a little bit more for The Seeing Eye, and they deserve a little bit more. So, if you will add to what you contributed tonight, I will match each of your additional gifts, up to a total of \$20,000.’”

The matching offer came as a surprise to everyone in attendance – including Ken.

“What she did next was even more of a surprise,” Ken said. “Before she left the gala for her hotel, she took me aside, gave me a check for \$20,000, and said something to the effect of ‘I’ll just pay

you now. I know your supporters will respond.’” And indeed they did.

Betty served on the Board of Trustees of Morris Animal Foundation, an organization that had been founded in 1948 by Dr. Mark L. Morris, Sr. – whose claim to fame was designing a dog food tailored to combat kidney disease in dogs, including Buddy II, Morris Frank’s second Seeing Eye dog. (Indeed, the organization was originally known as The Buddy Foundation.) It was here that she first met both Dennis and Ken, as well as Jim Kutsch, the first graduate of The Seeing Eye to serve as its President & CEO.

“Betty was funny, Betty was very committed and loving of animals, and you can pick any negative stereotype about Hollywood celebrities you want – Betty was not that,” Jim said.

While at a Morris Animal Foundation event in Denver, Betty was staying in the same hotel as Jim Kutsch and his wife, Ginger, who also is a Seeing Eye graduate. Prior to the event starting, there was a tornado warning. Jim, Ginger, and Betty joined other guests waiting out the warning in the hotel’s basement.

“The whole way down, Betty was cracking jokes and making everybody laugh,” Jim recalled. “It was the best tornado warning I’ve ever had.”

After her passing, we were informed that The Seeing Eye was one of the beneficiaries in Betty’s will. We are so grateful for her generosity, advocacy, and friendship. Over the years, there have been several Seeing Eye puppies named Betty in her honor. The newest Betty is a yellow Labrador retriever born on December 26 and now being raised by a Seeing Eye staff member who also is a volunteer puppy raiser for us. You can keep up with the latest news about Betty by going to our blog at [www.SeeingEye.org/blog](http://www.SeeingEye.org/blog).

*Right:* Betty White gets a kiss from a breeder dog at The Seeing Eye Breeding Station.

*Below:* Jim Kutsch, and his Seeing Eye dog Vegas, at a fundraiser event with Betty White.



*Above:* Betty, a yellow Labrador retriever born on December 26, is the most recent of several Seeing Eye puppies named in Betty White’s honor.

# EIGHT DECADES, SEVEN DOGS, ONE WOMAN!

## Dorothy Casabianca

is one of just 10 active graduates who has worked continuously with Seeing Eye dogs since the 1950s.

A year before she arrived at The Seeing Eye, Dotty went for a walk with a friend who had a Seeing Eye dog.

"My friend Rose Marie had a Seeing Eye dog, and I visited her and met her beautiful German shepherd, Rinnie," Dotty said. "I walked with them and I was so impressed. That was it. I said, 'OK, this is the route I'm going.'"

Dotty's first class was in the Whippany House, The Seeing Eye's home from 1931 to 1965. She arrived on February 14, 1959, and soon after was introduced to a small German shepherd named Pal.

"My sweet little Pal," Dotty reminisced from her home in a quiet residential neighborhood in Bronx, New York, near bucolic Van Cortlandt Park. "She was

not just a Valentine's Day present, but also a birthday present. My 18th birthday was the day before!"

Pal had been returned to The Seeing Eye after briefly working as a guide dog with another handler.

"She had been with a man who unfortunately passed away," Dotty said. "She was perfect for me. I didn't know what I was doing, but Pal did. She taught me everything that she knew. I got the message, right up the harness, that she knew what she was doing. I just had to hold on and let her do the work. I felt like I had wings on my feet!"

According to Seeing Eye records, there are only 20 people still working with Seeing Eye dogs who graduated while we were housed in the Whippany House.



"It was two to a room, and all the women shared the same bathroom, and there was one phone, in a closet," Dotty said. "But I loved that old house."

Ten years later, on August 9, 1969 – three weeks after the moon landing, and six days before Woodstock was held – Dotty returned to The Seeing Eye, now in our present location in the Washington Valley section of Morris Township.

"The new building is wonderful because it has nice, long corridors, so you can get a sense of the dog's gait even before you get outside," she said. "And now you get your own room and your own bathroom."

Right: The Whippany House, The Seeing Eye's headquarters from 1931 to 1965.



Left: Dotty in her home with her retired Seeing Eye dog, Dixie, and her current Seeing Eye dog, Ellie.

 Pal ...  Hessa ...  Brinka ...  Breezy ...  Eclipse ...  Dixie ...  Ellie

Here she was matched with her second dog, a German shepherd named Hessa.

"It was a big transition from Pal to Hessa," Dotty said. "I went from Pal, who was 4 years old, to a dog that was only 18 months old. It was a big adjustment for both of us."

But a rapport soon developed between Dotty and Hessa. "I called her 'Queen Elizabeth' because she was so prim and proper," she said. "She was a no-nonsense dog. A very serious guide."

After Hessa came Brinka, a German shepherd Dotty called "my first fun dog."

"She was so happy, and so playful. But boy did she know what to do when she was in harness. She was such a smart dog."

In July 1988, Dotty had applied for a dog to succeed Brinka, resigned to the idea that she'd have to wait a few months. But then there was an unexpected opening in the September class.

"I was babysitting my first granddaughter and The Seeing Eye called and asked if I could be there the next day. I said, 'I'm packing my bags now and I'll be there for breakfast even if I have to walk there.'"

There she was matched with Breezy, her first Labrador retriever, under the instruction of Gary Mattoon.

"Gary Mattoon could really get inside a dog's head," Dotty said. "He was so intuitive. He said, 'When something's upsetting the dog, just keep your cool and reason it out. The dog is responding to something. Try to think what the dog is thinking.' I still think of that advice to this day."

*“Each of these dogs gets a piece of your heart. And they become an extension of you.”*

After Breezy, then Eclipse. "Clipsie was my soul mate," Dotty said. "I swear she could read my mind."

Since November 2019, Dotty has been working with her seventh Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador retriever named Ellie.

"I call her Miss Elliekins. She's no bigger than a minute. She weighs 46 pounds," Dotty said. "She reminds me a lot of my Pal."

Dotty and Ellie go for long walks at least twice a day, whether it's to the store, to church, or just for fun. "She helps keep me moving," Dotty said. "I try to vary the routes as much as I can to keep it interesting for both of us."

And she still has her sixth dog, a 13-year-old yellow Labrador retriever named Dixie – "my Dixie Chick" – who is now enjoying a pampered retirement.

"Each of these dogs gets a piece of your heart," Dotty said. "And they become an extension of you."

Each of Dotty's dogs has been with her through life's milestones – her marriage, her working as a librarian assistant at the Lavelle School, her two sons, her grandchildren, and – as of April 10 – her first great-grandchild, a boy named Flynn.

Dotty's advice to first-time students is to keep an open mind, follow their instructors to the letter, and if they encounter any problems, make sure they call the school and get advice.

"I am so grateful for each one of the instructors that I've had, because each one taught me something very valuable," Dotty said. "You can just tell the instructors love what they do. It takes a very special person to do that job."

"And I also want to thank each and every puppy raiser. They are exceptional people to do what they do. A student can always tell when a dog has been well raised. How much love, hard work, and dedication has gone into that puppy. They make it possible for a match to be successful."

# Retirements & New hires

## New faces at The Seeing Eye as several long-time employees retire

We don't tell our graduates when their Seeing Eye dogs should retire. But sometimes the dogs do! Many graduates have told us they just know when the dog no longer enjoys working, and it's time to put away the harness so he or she can retire.

Once retired, the dog either lives with the graduate, with a friend or family member, or with their original puppy raiser from all those years before. We also have many people who have applied to adopt a retired Seeing Eye dog. There is always a happy home available for our dogs, who after years of guiding can enjoy a happy retirement as a pet.

And our employees retire, too!

Since December 2020, The Seeing Eye has bid a fond farewell and a happy retirement to Lea Johnson, an instructor and then senior manager of apprentice training for 36 years; Karen Hart, head cook, 33 years; Dr. Dolores Holle, Director of Canine Medicine & Surgery and attending veterinarian, 31 years; Carl Willey, Manager of Food Service and Housekeeping, 29 years; Debbie Runyon, nurse, 29 years; Robert Pudlak, Director of Administration & Finance and Chief Financial Officer, 13 years; Mary Keresey, 13 years, breeding kennel assistant; Angela Giusto, senior associate, payroll specialist, 12 years; and Davida Isaacson, senior philanthropic adviser, 10 years.

In addition, Randy Ivens has announced he will retire later this year after serving as Director of Human Resources for 24 years, and Mary Manwaring – a Seeing Eye graduate who has been “The Voice of The Seeing Eye” answering phone calls since she joined us as our front desk receptionist 16 years ago, will retire in the Fall.

We have some new hires replacing those who have retired: James Hands was hired in October 2021 as the new Director of Administration & Finance and Chief Financial Officer; Jeanette Cardines joined us in March 2022 as our Food Service & Housekeeping Manager; Vincent Martone was hired in March 2022 as our new cook; and Ann Marie Muhnicky joined in August 2021 as senior associate, payroll.

And two promotions: Dr. Kyle Quigley, who joined The Seeing Eye in January 2020 as an attending veterinarian, has been named director of the newly named Department of Veterinary Medicine & Genetics, and Brian McKenna is now Wohlers Family Foundation Master Instructor and Senior Manager of Instructor Training.

We wish all our retiring employees – and Seeing Eye dogs – a long and happy retirement!



**JAMES HANDS**  
Director of Administration & Finance  
and Chief Financial Officer



**DR. KYLE QUIGLEY**  
Director, Department of  
Veterinary Medicine & Genetics



**IT'S TRUE!  
THE SEEING EYE HAS CATS.  
BUT NOT FOR GUIDING.**

When Seeing Eye dogs are guiding, they need to ignore distractions, and what is more distracting to a dog than a cat?

Our cats remain in the Main House, where new students arrive every month, are matched with dogs that come from the kennel, then leave at the end of the month with their handlers after graduation. Therefore dogs come and go, but the cats are always there. From the cats' perspective, it's very much "their" home – the dogs are just visitors!

The cats, whether they are darting in and out of offices, weaving among the Seeing Eye teams as they navigate the hallways, or are just sitting and watching, pose a tempting distraction to dogs who must learn to ignore them... an important lesson when they are guiding in public, where a distraction could cause a safety issue.

For seven years, The Seeing Eye's two resident cats have been Crosby and Nash. Unfortunately, Crosby recently passed away. To replace him, we adopted two kittens, a boy and a girl from the same litter, from FOWA Rescue in Wayne, New Jersey. We named them after our co-founders, Dorothy Harrison Eustis and Morris Frank.

They are both black and white, but "Dot" is predominantly white, and "Mo" is mostly black. The kittens were born on September 30, 2021, and so far have been learning the tricks of the trade from the veteran Nash.

# Seeing Eye... Cats?



*Above:* Nash has been dutifully distracting Seeing Eye dogs for seven years.

*Left:* Mo, left, and Dot, right, are our newest distraction cats.

# THE SEEING EYE VISITS

# Florida

Marcus Engel and his Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador retriever named Elliott, joined The Seeing Eye’s Director of Donor Public Relations, Deborah

Morrone-Colella, at an event held February 22, 2022, at The Colony in Palm Beach, Florida. The event was hosted by long-time Seeing Eye supporters Herbert and Joann Roemmele.

Marcus was the keystone speaker at the event and shared his inspiring story of his life with Seeing Eye dogs with more than 80 members of the Palm Beach Round Table. The author of an autobiography, *After This...*, Marcus was matched with his first Seeing Eye dog, a black Labrador retriever named Dasher, in 1995; he’s been working with Elliott, his fourth, since 2017.

On February 28, Seeing Eye supporters Ron and Christine Krawczyk hosted an event at the Imperial Golf Club in Naples. Deborah attended with other members of The Seeing Eye’s Donor & Public Relations team as well as Brian McKenna, The Seeing Eye’s Wohlers Family Foundation Master Instructor and Senior Manager of Instructor Training; Katie Letson, an area coordinator for the Puppy Raising Program; former Seeing Eye Trustees Dr. Anthony DeCarlo and Chris Coughlin; and Seeing Eye graduates Vickie Curley (with her German shepherd, Astro) and Lois Mills (with her golden retriever, Sandy). More than 60 people were in attendance.



Above: Herb Roemmele, left, with Seeing Eye graduate Marcus Engel and his Seeing Eye dog, Elliott.



## New Trustees Elected

THE SEEING EYE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTED FOUR NEW MEMBERS TO ITS RANKS AT ITS BOARD MEETING ON DECEMBER 16, 2021.

**DR. REBECCA GREEN** is the founder of Veterinary IM Consults, and is an internal medicine consultant for Rayne Nutrition. She lives in Scotch Plains, N.J., with her husband, three children, and a small terrier.

**MARGARET “PEGGY” GROW** has been a Seeing Eye volunteer for 19 years, has raised 12 Seeing Eye puppies, and oversaw more than 80 volunteer human-animal teams as part of Morristown Memorial Medical Center’s “Soothing Paws” program. She lives in Morristown with her husband and their three dogs.

**THOMAS MACKENZIE** is a partner in KPMG USA and currently leads KPMG Global Solutions Group – Audit. He lives in Ramsey New Jersey, with his wife and two kids and their three dogs.

**DR. CHARLES VITE** is a professor of neurology at the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, and is a member of several scientific advisory boards for rare diseases. He lives outside Philadelphia with his wife, three boys, three horses, five dogs, and eight cats.

Also at the December meeting, the Trustees thanked for their service on the board Dr. Anthony DeCarlo, Dr. Stuart Fine, and Dr. Vicki Myers-Wallen at the conclusion of their terms as Trustees.

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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)



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## PROUD Puppy Raisers!

Last year, on May 29, 2021, four Seeing Eye puppy raisers graduated from the University of Delaware, where they are members P.R.O.U.D. – Puppy Raisers of the University of Delaware.

*From left, Emily Sauer with Iggy, a male black Labrador/golden retriever cross; Zoe Seitz with Gem, a German shepherd; Grace DeRosa with Zilla, a chocolate Labrador/golden retriever cross; and Becca Nussenbaum with Happy, a black Labrador retriever.*



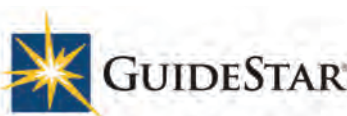
### The Seeing Eye

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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.