Kyle and Hugh: Our 18,000th Match!
On January 21, 2020, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signed a bill designating the Seeing Eye® dog as the official State Dog of New Jersey, a most prestigious honor we were so pleased so accept…

…only the story was buried by reports from the Centers for Disease Control of the first laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19 in the United States!

Very quickly, and quite appropriately, news of the Seeing Eye dog being New Jersey's official state dog was forgotten as we all learned the merits of social distancing, frequent handwashing, and wearing face masks.

But it’s three years later, COVID-19 is no longer dominating the news, and The Seeing Eye has decided it's time to once again announce: The Seeing Eye dog is the state dog of New Jersey!

The Seeing Eye was founded in Nashville in 1929, but two years later we moved to New Jersey and it has been our home ever since. Our headquarters, at first located in Whippany, moved to Morris Township in 1965. But all that time we have used Morristown to train our dogs and instruct our students. The town's bustling downtown, historic train station, and busy streets are the perfect classroom.

With students coming from across the United States and Canada to our campus, we enjoy New Jersey’s four seasons. Whatever the weather is like where graduates call home, they can be sure their Seeing Eye dogs have experienced it, be it winter snow or summer heat!

We also introduce our dogs to the many different environments New Jersey has to offer, from horse stables and working farms to stadiums, airports, and of course, malls!

New Jersey also offers convenient access to New York City, where we take our dogs for a sort of “final exam” – to paraphrase Hoboken's Frank Sinatra, if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere – before being matched with an incoming student.

And of course we have many puppy raisers in New Jersey – but the Garden State also has wonderful neighbors, and we are so grateful for our puppy raisers in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and New York.

As was famously said by our Trustee, Gov. Thomas Kean, “New Jersey and you… perfect together.” New Jersey has been the perfect home for The Seeing Eye and we are honored that the Seeing Eye dog is our state dog.

Sincerely,

Margaret E.L. "Peggi" Howard, D.Litt.
President & CEO
The Seeing Eye
Dear Seeing Eye,

I grew up in Morris Township. My parents both worked, which was unusual back then. In 1956, I was a slightly chubby, insecure adolescent with not a lot of friends, but with an abiding love of all four legged creatures.

When errands or appointments required my presence at the office where my mother worked, I would take the bus to Morristown and hang out until my mom was ready to take me to whatever that day's journey required. On one of those Morristown days, mom told me that a new tenant had moved in on their floor and that I might be interested to know that he had a dog with him. She thought that I might be able to meet the dog if I was really polite and didn't make a pest of myself. I didn't need any further encouragement. I tiptoed around the corridor and peeked into the office and lo and behold, there sat a man at his desk and behind that desk was a large dog bed and on it sat the most beautiful German shepherd I had ever seen. I just stood there and stared. How I wanted to pet that beauty, but I didn't have the courage to say so. Just as I was about to tiptoe away, a booming voice shouted “Well, what the hell are you waiting for, come on in!” and that was my introduction to Morris Frank. It wasn’t until I entered his one room office that I realized that he was blind and that his dog was his guide. I was stunned into silence. Morris wasn’t about to tolerate that for one minute. That’s the way he was.

Morris was generous with his time that day. He introduced me to Buddy and told me that when a Seeing Eye dog was not in harness and his handler said it was ok, that you could interact with the dog. I immediately sat down on the floor by Buddy’s bed and spoke to her. She looked me right in the eye and leaned forward and planted a doggy kiss right on my nose. I was in heaven. Morris and I talked for about a half an hour that day. He told me that this dog was Buddy number three for him and that each one before had also been named Buddy. He told me about his life before guide dogs and how things had changed for him after Buddy entered his life. I told him that I wished I had a buddy to give me that kind of confidence and he reared his head back and laughed his giant “hee haw” laugh that was his trademark. I would come to know that laugh many times over the years of our friendship. He told me that over time, I would grow into my confidence. Of course he was right.

Morris and I remained in touch throughout the rest of his life. He was diagnosed with leukemia a few years before he passed. He stayed at home through the end, with Lois and Buddy by his side. Lois invited me to come and visit Morris about a month before he died. I sat by his bed which was set up in the front room of his house and we reminisced. He threatened me with dire bodily harm if I started blubbering. I held it back until I was well away from the house out of respect for our friendship.

He has been gone from my life for 42 years now, but my memories of him shine as brightly as though he were just around the corner in his office waiting for me to tiptoe by to say hello. Every time I see a guide dog working with its person, every time I see the puppies learning the ropes, I think of him with a smile on my face. My love for Morris has blossomed into my love for The Seeing Eye, a blessing in every respect and priceless.

Ellie Benz

To submit a letter to The Guide, please email news@seeingeye.org.
Paralympic athlete Kyle Coon recently returned to The Seeing Eye for his third Seeing Eye dog, a male black Labrador retriever named Hugh.

After graduating from The Seeing Eye on December 15, they returned home to Colorado for just 36 hours before taking five planes over three days to visit a friend in British Columbia.

“He handled the travel like an absolute champ, which was incredible,” Kyle said of his new guide.

When he’s out of harness, Kyle said Hugh is very chill and relaxed, but as soon as the harness goes on, he’s bouncy, excited, and eager to work.

Kyle, who finished fifth in the Paratriathlon at the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo, has won three gold medals and two bronze medals in the World Triathlon Para Series and is the 2022 USA Paratriathlon National Champion. As fast as he is, though, he said Hugh cuts his travel time in half around campus at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, weaving around people, guiding up and down the stairs, and smoothly navigating any obstacles.

The Paratriathlon is a 750-meter/0.47-mile swim race followed by a 20-kilometer/12.4-mile bike race and finally a 5-kilometer/3.1 mile run. Kyle races with a sighted human guide while Hugh takes some time off.

Paralympian Kyle Coon logs a lot of miles, with and without his Seeing Eye dog Hugh

By Miranda Meade
Kyle also has run marathons and Ironman triathlons, crossed the United States on a tandem bike, and climbed mountains.

Kyle’s training day typically starts at 6 a.m. with breakfast in the training center’s dining hall. Five days a week, Kyle and Hugh next head to the pool, where Hugh has a designated spot by Kyle’s corner of the pool.

“He’s so calm,” Kyle said of Hugh’s demeanor in the pool area. “People splashing in the pool doesn’t seem to faze him at all.”

After swimming, the pair heads back to the dining hall before hitting the training room for a bike or a run. Three days a week they head off to strength and conditioning training after lunch, or head to a sports medicine appointment. During Kyle’s isometric strength training, which requires him to lie on his back, Hugh will often get face-to-face with him as if to say, “You’re on my level now!”

Kyle said Hugh has earned his nickname “Coach Hugh” because he’s always keeping an eye on things while Kyle is training and undergoing medical treatments. “He is funny and always so curious,” Kyle said.

That’s just the start – Kyle and Hugh have numerous travel plans in the summer and fall, including Florida, California, Montreal, France, and back to British Columbia for a few months. Hugh brings Kyle so much confidence in navigating through the cities and through airports when they travel, whether it be for speaking engagements, races, or visiting friends and family.

Looking back to his first guide dog, a golden retriever named Tyrone, Kyle noted that the hardest part was trusting both the dog to do his job and himself to handle the dog well. As a handler for 13 years now, this has gotten much easier. “Even though we’ve only been together for three months now, Hugh is solid and just does everything so well,” Kyle said. “Building that trust with the dog was the hardest thing initially way back in the day, but now Hugh makes it easy.”

Since the first graduating class of two students in 1929, The Seeing Eye has tracked how many teams it has produced. Kyle and Hugh are the 18,000th partnership.

“It really was quite an honor to have that designation, to be that partnership, representing it,” Kyle said. “It’s amazing to think that in 94 years of being in existence, The Seeing Eye has produced 18,000 partnerships and I’ve been part of three of those. It’s so incredible to me.”

When he’s not competing, Kyle is a motivational speaker and also is an author, having recently published the memoir Discovering a Life Without Limits: How Cancer Took My Sight, Blindness Gave Me Vision, and the Mountains Let Me Live, available through Walnut Street Publishing.

As an athlete, Kyle seeks only the best for himself and expects the best of himself in return. “I only partner with the best organizations and The Seeing Eye, in my humble opinion, is the best guide dog organization out there for me. The fact that I can help represent the work that The Seeing Eye does is a real honor.”
When Morris Frank was being matched with Buddy, Dorothy Harrison Eustis observed that a Seeing Eye dog isn’t of much use if not allowed to accompany her handler inside restaurants, hotels, and public transportation... despite the ubiquitous presence of “No Dogs Allowed” signs.

For the next 50 years, Morris would tirelessly campaign for the right to bring Buddy and her successors anywhere he was allowed to go as a member of the general public. In one famous exchange, Morris and Buddy were stopped while trying to board a train. “You can’t bring that dog on board!” a conductor said. Morris just laughed. “You’re absolutely right – she’s bringing me!” With that he stepped around the flummoxed conductor and took a seat, with Buddy calmly lying at his feet.

Thanks to Morris’s lobbying efforts, “No Dogs Allowed” signs have been replaced with “No Dogs Allowed – Except Service Dogs” across the United States and Canada.

The Seeing Eye continues to advocate for our graduates. In March, we released The Seeing Eye® Advocacy App, a free app that provides information about U.S. and Canadian laws that ensure people with guide dogs have access to public areas and are protected from interference from people and other dogs.

The app is currently only available through the Apple store, but an Android version is in development. To download the app, go to www.SeeingEye.org/AdvocacyApp.

In addition, in November, The Seeing Eye’s dog attack and interference survey was published by the Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness. This survey, conducted in October 2019, was an update to an earlier survey performed in 2011.

In the survey, Seeing Eye dog users were asked about interference, which is the intentional or unintentional distraction of a Seeing Eye dog team by a member of the public or a dog either leashed or uncontrolled. This interference can range from deliberate, sustained eye contact with the dog that can cause a distraction to an attack on the guide dog and/or handler. The survey found 89 percent of handlers had at least occasional interference from people and 78 percent reported interference from dogs.

To review the full results of the survey, go to www.SeeingEye.org/interference.

Cynthia Bryant, J.D., LL.M.,
was elected Chair of
The Seeing Eye Board
of Trustees at its
December meeting.
Her first meeting as Chair
was at the March 9 meeting.

Cynthia Bryant
is first graduate to lead Board of Trustees

Cynthia, who worked for the U.S.
government for more than 20 years as
a special counsel, is now a mediator,
negotiator, and diversity practitioner. She
has a Bachelor of Arts from Bradford
College, a Juris Doctorate from the
University of Kansas, a Master of Laws
from American University, and is a
three-time graduate of The Seeing Eye.
The resident of Chevy Chase, Maryland,
is currently working with a Seeing Eye
dog named Summer, a yellow Labrador/
golden retriever cross. They graduated
from The Seeing Eye in July 2017. She
was matched with her first Seeing Eye
dog, a black Labrador/golden retriever
cross named Royale, in March 2008,
and her second was a black Labrador
retriever named Sophia.

“The Seeing Eye has been a part of my
life for 15 years now. When I first came
to The Seeing Eye, I’d never had a dog
before... in fact, I was afraid of dogs,”
Cynthia said. “Now I can’t imagine my
life without one.”

She is the first graduate of The Seeing
Eye to serve as the Chair of the Board of
Trustees. (Seeing Eye graduate Dr. James
Kutsch Jr. served as President & CEO
from 2007 to 2019.) Cynthia also is the
first person of color to serve as Chair,
and is the first woman to serve as Chair
since our co-founder, Dorothy Harrison
Eustis, held the dual title of Board Chair
and President from 1929 to 1940.

Cynthia is a former member of the
Board of Governors for the University
of Kansas Law School and serves on the
law school’s Diversity Advisory Council.
She is a board member for National
Industries for the Blind, and also is a
member of the National Association
of Corporate Directors, National
Association for Multicultural Education,
National Speakers Association,
Association for Conflict Resolution, the
African-American Federal Executive
Association, and the bars of Missouri,
the District of Columbia, and the United
States Supreme Court.

At its December meeting, the Trustees
also added to the board: Clifford Aaron,
an attorney and Seeing Eye graduate;
Vivek Sawhney, Chief Information
Officer & International Operations for
Natural Resources Defense Council,
Inc.; Susan Sepe, who recently retired
as Coordinator of Special Services for
the Missouri Rehabilitation Services
for the Blind and is a Seeing Eye graduate;
and Josh Weston, the former CEO of
Automatic Data Processing (ADP).
The Seeing Eye thanks its Volunteers

Don MacGowan and Pam Kallas

The co-winners of
The Seeing Eye’s Kirby Award for Volunteer Excellence.
The Seeing Eye is a great place to work… or to volunteer!

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, The Seeing Eye held a reception on September 20 to recognize its many volunteers… and to honor The Seeing Eye’s Kirby Award for Volunteer Excellence co-winners for 2022.

The Seeing Eye has more than 160 volunteers at The Seeing Eye’s Washington Valley campus, Downtown Training Center, and Breeding Station. They perform a variety of duties, including driving vans, helping with dogs, and providing office support.

The Seeing Eye thanked its volunteers at the reception, held in the Ranger Dining Room at the Washington Valley campus. All the volunteers were thanked, in particular those who celebrated one year, five years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, or 25 years of service.

The Seeing Eye also recognized the contributions of Pam Kallas and Don MacGowan, the co-winners of The Seeing Eye’s Kirby Award for Volunteer Excellence. Pam, who also is a puppy raiser who has raised 10 puppies for The Seeing Eye, volunteers in a number of areas, from Donor and Public Relations to Puppy Development to Veterinary Medicine & Genetics. Among her many duties, Pam helps to organize the manuals and other information that is distributed to families that join The Seeing Eye’s Puppy Raiser Program, helps with merchandise sales, and delivers 7-week-old puppies to area coordinators, who then place them with puppy raisers.

Don has been a volunteer at The Seeing Eye for 10 years. Over that time, he has overseen our Pennies for Puppies and Dollars for Dogs programs. The former is an educational and outreach program to schools, scouts, and other youth groups designed to teach students about people who are blind and Seeing Eye dogs. The latter is aimed at civic organizations, church groups, businesses, and so on. Over those 10 years, Don and the other volunteers in the program have raised more than $1 million for The Seeing Eye.

The Seeing Eye thanks Marty Eigen, Thaddeus Expose, and Courtney Sappington for providing live music at this year’s reception.

If you’re interested in volunteering at The Seeing Eye, go to www.SeeingEye.org/volunteer or email volunteers@seeingeye.org.

One Year of Volunteer Service
Eric Freeberg, Matt Frankel, Robert Geiisi, Jeffrey Kontio, Ennis Mittman, Preston Radtke, Sue Tagliaferro, Louise Wisniewski

Five Years of Volunteer Service
Kathy Adams, Mark Barron, Melissa Baumgartner, Debra Brodhecker, Christina Brino, Kathy Daly, Bob Denby, Sharon Kessel, Kathleen Kurek, Barbara Lundsten, Stacey Miranda, Dr. Anna Raska, Wendy Sherid, Jackie Sweigart

Ten Years of Volunteer Service
Marilyn Cianciotta, Linda Colligan, Katherine DiRocco, Holly Duffy, Melinda Gilligan, Katha Griswold, Peggy Grow, Barbara Hightower, Susan Humphrey, Becky Irving, Karen Kane, Wendy Kern, Rob Kneiler, Donald MacGowan, Janet Ryans, Maureen Smith, Thomas Tapen, Margaret Toupet

Fifteen Years of Volunteer Service
Pat Cefalu, Bonnie DiCola, Anita Eigen, Stephanie Litwin, Kathleen Murray, Martin Nubaum, Carmella Passaro, Lucille Roener

Twenty Years of Volunteer Service
Carol Henry

Twenty-Five Years of Volunteer Service
David Bailin

Right: Guests at this year’s Volunteer Reception included, from left, Seeing Eye puppy raiser Bob Emer; Seeing Eye puppy club leader and 2005 Volunteer of the Year Janet Keeler; and Seeing Eye puppy club leader and 2015 Volunteer of the Year Carmella Passaro.
How do you get to Carnegie Hall?

By Don MacGowan

The standard answer is: “practice, practice, practice!” But in Grace Amodeo’s case, the answer is: “join the Masterwork Chorus, and then practice, practice, practice!”

Seeing Eye graduate Grace Amodeo sang Handel’s Messiah in Carnegie Hall in New York City just before Christmas as part of a chorus of 80-some singers, with orchestra and soloists, for a very enthusiastic audience… including her Seeing Eye dog, a golden retriever named Emma. The performance continued a long Masterwork tradition, but was a first for Grace.

Grace has been blind since birth due to Leber congenital amaurosis, a congenital eye disorder that interferes with development of the retina. From preschool to first grade, Grace attended St. Joseph’s School for the Blind in Jersey City, where she learned Braille as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic. In second grade, she transferred to a public school in her hometown of Dunellen, New Jersey.

It was Grace’s good fortune that the school’s chorus and band teachers took an interest in all the students and realized she was musically gifted. Her big break came in fourth grade when she sang a solo from the musical Cats as part of a chorus concert. Through elementary and high school she continued to sing in choruses, sing solos, and play the flute. She began voice lessons at about age 16, learning everything by ear by listening to iTunes, YouTubes, and anything else from which she could learn melodies and words.

After high school Grace attended Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, a school that trains musicians of every stripe – singers, instrumentalists, conductors, composers, and more. She quickly realized that in a college setting she couldn’t rely on learning everything by ear, so she tackled Braille music. Using the same 2x3 characters as Braille text, Braille music is language unto itself, with unique character combinations to signify treble clef, key signature, notes, rests, dynamics, and all else that is part of music notation. It took a while, but Grace became fully proficient in reading and singing music from Braille scores.

The Library of Congress has Braille scores for the choral classics (like Handel’s Messiah), which Grace takes advantage of. But for music that isn’t so well known, or that is newer, she has to take matters into her own hands. She sends printed music to a specialist who enters the soprano notes and words into a computer application which, in turn, produces a file format that feeds into a Braille embosser. The end result is that Grace, who is blessed with perfect pitch and a beautiful, clear soprano voice, is as much a part of the chorus as those who are sighted. Asked how she knows when to begin singing a passage without seeing the conductor, she says she “feels” the singers around her and hears their breathing, which keeps her on track.

Grace’s mother tells Grace that she was born in the right era, which is very true. The combination of her natural gifts, good vocal training, and computer technology makes it possible for her (and, of course, Emma) to stand confidently on the stage of Carnegie Hall and sing for a very appreciative audience.
The Seeing Eye thanks its corporate partners

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

www.SeeingEye.org

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 for more information.

www.SeeingEye.org
LOOK!

It’s almost time to vote!

Jeanie, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross, was last year’s top vote getter in The Seeing Eye Puppy Raiser Calendar Contest! You can vote for this year’s winners by going to www.SeeingEye.org/calendar.

Voting begins June 5!

Photo by Seeing Eye Puppy Raiser Dolores Whalen

The Seeing Eye produces The Guide® magazine in print, audio, Braille, and electronic versions. Copies are available by request. This issue and past issues are also 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.

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