

THE SEEING EYE®

GUIDE

A MAGAZINE FOR FRIENDS OF THE SEEING EYE

Cynthia Bryant:
Chair of the Board





A Seeing Eye Perspective

We're frequently asked at The Seeing Eye what's the secret to training our dogs. Seeing Eye® dogs are renowned around the world for their obedience, intelligence, and gentle nature. How do we do it?

The answer is a four-letter word:
L-O-V-E.

From birth, our puppies are given the gentlest handling and care. Calmly and patiently, we introduce them to a variety of sights, sounds, and surfaces. These early exposures, when the puppy is in the reassuring presence of her mother and siblings, help the puppy learn to be unflappable when presented with the unexpected... an important lesson for later in life, because as Seeing Eye graduates can – and do – go everywhere!

Leaving the breeding station, the puppy goes to one of our volunteer puppy raiser families. Once again she learns there's nothing to fear from new experiences, as they are warmly welcomed into the family's home. There are new people to meet, new smells to savor, and maybe even another dog – or a cat! – to befriend. There are rules, too, like where to go "potty" and not to climb up on the furniture. But mostly, there is love. Loving them, as any puppy raiser will tell you, is the easy part.

Soon the puppy goes to her first puppy club meeting, where she meets puppies of all ages, as well as their puppy raisers! Here she learns basic commands like sit, down, and stay (we call it rest). At first, understandably, the puppy isn't sure what "sit" means... but our puppy raiser is patient, and keeps repeating the command. The puppy wants to obey her human, but she isn't sure what to do. Maybe she sits because she guesses right... maybe she sits because she's tired... maybe she sits because she sees all these other dogs sitting.

But eventually she sits, and WOW! The human praises her, pets her, and calls her a good girl! And the next time the human says sit, and the puppy sits, the human praises her even more! All this just for sitting? What a deal!

And that's how we teach them every command, through repetition, patience, and praise.

When the dog returns to The Seeing Eye, somewhere between 14 months and 16 months in age, she has learned maybe a half-dozen commands. Now, working with a Seeing Eye instructor, she will learn many more. She will learn to turn left or to turn right, to find an empty chair, even to guide a person's hand to a door knob or elevator button. She eagerly looks forward to every lesson, because she knows every success is rewarded with pets, praise, and love.

It continues when she is matched with a person who is blind or visually impaired. "The match" between dog and student is one of the most poignant moments here at The Seeing Eye, and we do it every month.

For some, the bond is instant... for others, it takes a little longer. But by time student and dog are graduating from our program and returning to their home somewhere in the United States or Canada, the connection between them is powerful and will only grow over time.

Working together in tandem to navigate the world... and to love and to be loved.

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

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ON THE COVER: In December, The Seeing Eye Board of Trustees elected Cynthia Bryant as its new chair. Cynthia is shown with her third Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross named Summer. See story on Pages 4-5.

Photo by Seeing Eye Apprentice Instructor Dan Hedden.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Seeing Eye,

Thank you to Happy's wonderful puppy raiser and all those who had a part in making Happy such a delightful dog.

She will be kept quite busy, as I am active in my church and sing in the church choir. I love to walk and sometimes do a little low-level hiking. I also love to go out to dinner with friends and attend concerts whenever I get the chance.

Last July, I lost my husband of 28 ½ years after a long journey through dementia. So, Happy and I live alone together and I couldn't have found a better housemate. She is healing my broken heart by leaps and bounds and she is most definitely restoring my zest for life and my ability to move forward with the utmost confidence!

She has a basket full of toys, and so far our favorite game together is tug-of-war!

Most of all though, she is a stellar guide. I live in a mobile home, and even though all of the homes here look quite similar, regardless of where we have been, she always brings me right back to our porch steps without missing a beat.

There are no adequate words with which to thank you for the obvious hard work you did to make her the truly fabulous girl she is today. I am so honored that I was the one chosen to share the rest of her life with her.

Sincerely,

Desi Noller

Seeing Eye graduate



“

*There are no adequate words
with which to thank you
for the obvious hard work
you did to make {Happy}
the truly fabulous girl
she is today.*

”

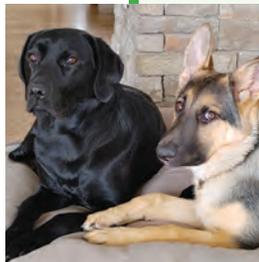
Welcome to The Seeing Eye Heritage Society

The Seeing Eye Heritage Society was founded in 1989 to recognize and honor those individuals who have taken the important step of including a legacy gift to The Seeing Eye in their financial portfolios or estate plans. Members of The Heritage Society have recognized the importance of the continuation of our work with people who are blind and visually impaired and have expressed a commitment to that end by planning a gift which will help provide for the future success of the school.

Legacy gifts make up a large portion of the donations received by The Seeing Eye each year, for which we are most grateful. Gifts of this nature secure the future of our mission, providing ongoing services to our graduates and new students.

It is very possible that you are eligible for membership in The Heritage Society, but haven't let us know. If you have created a bequest in your will or trust, or named The Seeing Eye as beneficiary of a charitable trust, a retirement plan, or a life insurance policy, you are eligible to become a member of The Heritage Society! We want very much to be able to say "thank you" and include you in The Heritage Society events.

Please take a moment to inform us of your intention by calling 800-539-4425 ext. 1950 or email donate@SeeingEye.org.



Across these pages you will see the names of those individuals who have informed us of their extraordinary commitment to enhancing the independence, dignity, and self-confidence of people who are blind through the use of Seeing Eye® dogs by providing for The Seeing Eye in their estate plans. Thank you!

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36 members wish to be anonymous

CYNTHIA BRYANT

takes the gavel

NEW CHAIR READY TO LEAD
THE SEEING EYE TOWARD ITS
100TH ANNIVERSARY





AS A CHILD, Cynthia Bryant never imagined her life would be so intertwined with dogs. As an 8-year-old in Kansas City, Missouri, Cynthia went outside to look for her cat – and instead was nearly attacked by a loose dog.

“He was known around the neighborhood as a dog that would bite people,” recalled Cynthia, who was sighted as a child. “I was calling for my cat, and this dog came running. When you’re 8 years old, a dog’s teeth are right at face level. I ran back inside and just barely made it.”

Fortunately, Cynthia – and her cat! – avoided tragedy that day, but of course after that Cynthia wasn’t a dog person... not until nearly 40 years later.

“I love dogs now. The bond I have with Summer, it’s just indescribable. We’re like that old married couple that finishes each other’s sentences. I know what she’s thinking, and she knows what I’m thinking,” she said.

“It’s a partnership, and we’re in it together. When I say to her, ‘Ready to go, baby girl?’, she gets on her feet with her tail wagging, eager to get into the harness, ready to go wherever we’re going. I love her, and she loves me.”

Cynthia was in junior high school when she was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a genetic eye disease that causes deterioration of the retina. But she retained most of her eyesight through college.

“I didn’t even think about using a cane until I was almost 30, and I didn’t even think about getting a guide dog until I was in my 40s,” she said.

Cynthia at the time was an attorney working for the federal government and living in Washington, D.C. “I was a fairly good cane user and I had enough vision I could navigate the city,” she said. “But my vision deteriorated to the point I no longer felt safe on the Metro. And it was becoming more difficult to get around at night. I felt like my life was becoming restricted.”

Cynthia researched guide dog schools and decided to come to The Seeing Eye because graduates own their dogs when they graduate from the program. “The ownership policy was very important to me,” she said. “After all, I wanted a guide dog in order to maintain my independence.”

She was matched with her first Seeing Eye dog, a black Labrador/golden retriever cross named Royale, in March 2008. “The first time I picked up that harness and said, ‘forward,’ my first thought was: ‘What have I gotten myself into?’ We were flying!” Getting a Seeing Eye dog made a profound difference in her life, Cynthia said.

“Once again I could go wherever I wanted to, whenever I wanted to, without reservation or hesitation,” she said. “If I wanted to go to the grocery store or meet someone for dinner, I didn’t have to think about it – I could just go.”

After working with Royale, Cynthia returned to The Seeing Eye to be matched with Sophia, a black Labrador retriever.

Cynthia, who retired from the federal government in December, worked for the Federal Communications Commission as an attorney, mediator, and trainer. While working for the FCC’s Office of Native Affairs and Policy, Cynthia and Sophia visited tribal lands throughout the country in an effort to provide better broadband access.

“We were on a flat boat on the Klamath River, and Sophia was standing up at the helm with her nose in the air. Eagles were flying overhead and salmon were jumping because it was spawning season. The Klamath people were on the shore gathering berries, and later we ate fresh-caught salmon roasted on wooden skewers over an open fire that had been prepared by the tribal leaders as their greeting to us. I have never since tasted anything like it,” Cynthia said.

Since July 2017, she has been working with her third Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross named Summer.

“Summer has been with me for six years. In some ways, somehow, she’s even more of a go-getter than Sophia was,” Cynthia said. “She loves to work on the subways and the trains and in the city. She just goes for it. When you tell her ‘good girl,’ you can feel her whole body wagging when she wags her tail.”

In December, Cynthia was elected Chair of the Board of Trustees, the first Seeing Eye graduate to hold that position.

“I am proud and I am humbled by this honor,” she said. “It’s an exciting opportunity, to have a graduate in this position as we head toward our centennial in 2029, and beyond into our second century.”

PUPPY RAISER FEATURE

When you raise a puppy for The Seeing Eye, there's a lot of walking involved. For New Jersey resident Ella Stiso, that was a challenge – she'd just started walking again after undergoing surgery on her knee when they got their second puppy.

Ella, with her parents, Frank and Kathryn, and younger twin brothers, Jack and Dean, had already raised a puppy for The Seeing Eye, a male German shepherd named Ryker. When Ryker was about 7 months old, Ella underwent several surgeries on her knees.

"I was born without the ligaments in my knees to keep the patella in place," Ella said. "I did cheerleading, tumbling, running, all without those ligaments... and I dislocated my kneecap multiple times."

For the duration of Ryker's time with Ella, other family members would walk him and take him to the meetings of the Ocean County Puppy Club, as Ella was in bed and then in a wheelchair.

"He would just stay by my side," Ella said. "He clearly knew something was up.

I would put my knee up on a pillow, and he would put his head on the pillow too."

After Ryker went back to The Seeing Eye to begin his formal training as a Seeing Eye dog, Ella wanted to do it again.

"As soon as I could walk again, I wanted to raise another," she said.

On June 1st, 2020, the family welcomed Masse, another German shepherd. ("I have a soft spot for German shepherds," Ella said.) The world had been turned upside down by COVID-19, but that just meant more time for Ella and Masse to explore the world together.

"It was lockdown, and school was all online, but I was able to walk again, and I'd just gotten my driver's license, so we went everywhere together," Ella said.

The two put on a lot of miles together, and it paid off – Masse is now working with a Seeing Eye graduate in the Midwest. The family has since raised a third puppy for The Seeing Eye, another German shepherd, this one named Yankee.



And Ella is now a straight A student at the University of Alabama, where she's majoring in general business and hopes to one day pursue a law degree. And now she can walk – or run! – just fine on her repaired knees.

"Raising Masse was the greatest thing I've ever done," Ella said. "Masse is my best friend, and I loved him, but knowing he's out there helping someone else, after he helped me so much... I am so grateful I can walk normally now, and I am so grateful I was able to give back by raising him."

If you are interested in being a Seeing Eye puppy raiser, go to www.SeeingEye.org/raise or call us at (973) 539-4425 x1769.

LEARNING TO WALK AGAIN...

with the help of a
Seeing Eye puppy!



Above Right: Ella with Masse, the second puppy her family raised for The Seeing Eye.

Above: Ella between her twin brothers, Jack (left) and Dean (right).

Right: Ella recovering from knee surgery with Ryker, the first puppy her family raised for The Seeing Eye.



TRAVEL PLANS?

Scores of Seeing Eye puppies visit the airport!



In May, Newark Liberty International Airport welcomed 170 Seeing Eye puppies – and more than 200 volunteers – as part of a special program to train puppies for their future travels as they guide people who are blind or visually impaired.

The program partnered The Seeing Eye with the U.S. Transportation Security Administration, United Airlines, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

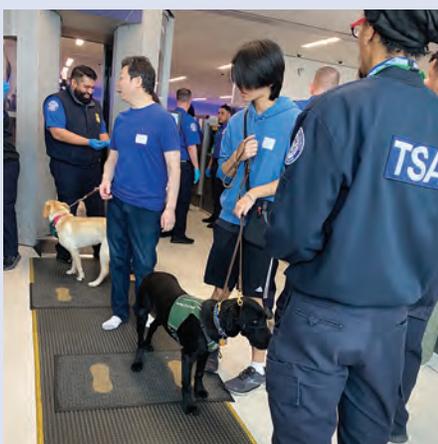
The puppies, ranging in age from 16 weeks to 16 months, walked through Terminal C's baggage areas, checkpoints, and gates, took a ride on the AirTrain Newark monorail system, and visited the airfield, meeting with Port Authority police and emergency personnel, and even getting a demonstration from a bomb-sniffing K-9 unit.



"These types of opportunities are a win-win," said Tom Carter, the federal security director for New Jersey for the U.S. Transportation Security Administration. "It's a win for the dogs, who have the opportunity to get familiar with the checkpoint experience so that when they come back with the people they are trained to assist, they'll be comfortable in the checkpoint environment. And it's a win for the TSA officers participating in this event because they have the additional opportunity to review and practice our procedures for screening service dogs."

Seeing Eye puppy raisers had been visiting the airport for 25 consecutive years until COVID-19 forced a three-year hiatus.

They even brought their charges aboard a United Airlines jet to familiarize the puppies with the cabin. The Seeing Eye brings people who are blind from across the United States and Canada to its New Jersey campus to be matched with Seeing Eye dogs, and many of them will return home by airplane.



"United's role in this valuable training exercise is just one way we're working to help people with visual disabilities better navigate the travel experience more independently," said Kevin Cumiskey, regional manager, inflight regional training at United Airlines. "We've also made improvements to our United app and inflight seatback entertainment screens and work through Bridge, United's disabilities business resource group, to help create a workplace and travel environment where all can achieve their maximum potential."



Walt Sutton (left) and Lukas Franck (right) with their awards.

Instructors Honored



Seeing Eye instructors Lukas Franck and Walt Sutton were recently honored with two of the most prestigious awards in the guide dog industry.

Lukas, The Seeing Eye's senior consultant for special projects, was recognized with the Ken Lord Award from the International Guide Dog Federation at its 2023 conference, held in April in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The Ken Lord Award recognizes the lifetime commitment of an individual who has served the international guide dog movement in an exemplary manner.

Lukas joined The Seeing Eye in 1978 and is both a guide dog mobility instructor and a certified orientation and mobility specialist. His many contributions and innovations in guide dog training, equipment design, and pedestrian safety have benefited not just Seeing Eye teams, but guide dog handlers, white cane users, and sighted pedestrians around the world.

Walt, a senior manager in Instruction & Training, began his career as an instructor at The Seeing Eye in 1985. (He had previously worked here as a part-time employee beginning in 1979!) In July, he was presented with the Ethel Bender Award from Guide Dog Users, Inc., an organization of guide dog handlers affiliated with the American Council of the Blind.

The Ethel Bender Award honors a sighted person who has provided significant service to the cause of enhancing the well-being of the guide dog and handler community.

"I am humbled and blessed to have my name mentioned alongside so many other wonderful people who have won this award," Walt said.

Follow us on social media!



The Seeing Eye is active on numerous social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Threads, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

For inspiring graduate stories, historical moments, guide dog industry news, and of course, adorable puppy pictures, please follow The Seeing Eye, and like and share our posts!



For the first time since 2011, The Seeing Eye is having an open house! Come tour the campus, meet our instructors, and see our dogs.

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED.

The open house will be on the afternoon of Saturday, September 23, 2023.

For more information, go to www.SeeingEye.org/openhouse.

The Seeing Eye thanks its corporate partners



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



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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.

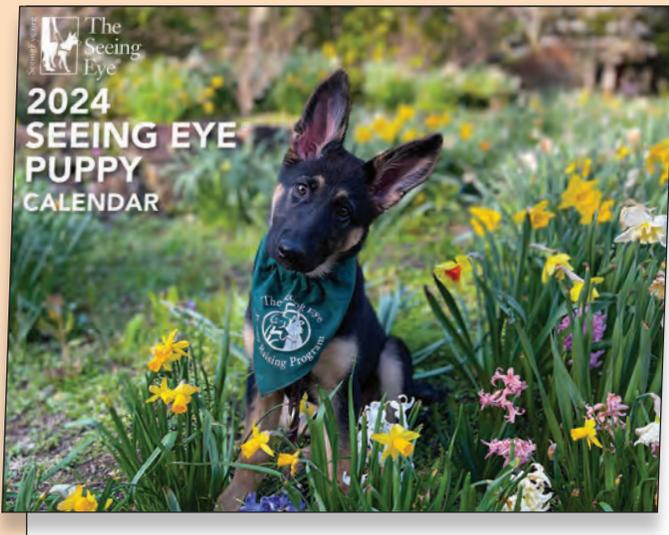
If your company would like to get involved, please visit SeeingEye.org/Partner for more information.

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The Seeing Eye

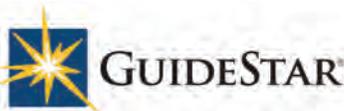
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The Seeing Eye follows the guidelines recommended by the Council of U.S. Dog Guide Schools for the humane care and training of dogs to be guides, and the instruction and graduate services offered to people who are blind or visually impaired.

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.