

TALES FROM THE SEEING EYE



“*They* showed me how to
put the harness on the *dog*,

and we started down the road.

As my legs stretched out

and my shoulders went back

and my head went up

and the wind blew in my face,

I knew I had my *independence.*”

Morris Frank

WE ARE PROUD TO SHARE THESE AMAZING STORIES.

JIM KUTSCH & Vegas



*M*y name is Jim Kutsch, and in 2006, I became the first graduate of The Seeing Eye to be named its President and CEO. I was teamed with my first Seeing Eye® dog, a German shepherd named Sheba, in 1970; in 2013, I was teamed with my eighth, a German shepherd named Vegas. The picture shows me with my arm around Vegas standing in front of a background of green bushes.

Since 1929, The Seeing Eye has been partnering people who are blind or visually impaired with dogs we have trained to guide them. Seeing Eye dogs are renowned the world over for their intelligence, loyalty, and gentleness. We have created more than 16,000 Seeing Eye partnerships, and each one is an amazing, inspiring, and unique story. We wanted to share a few of those stories with you, featuring recent graduates of The Seeing Eye.

We hope you enjoy these stories, and remember, thanks to your generous support, The Seeing Eye is creating new amazing stories of partnerships every day. ■

SYLVIA APONTE & Warren



*S*yilia Aponte of Bayamón, Puerto Rico, was the first blind person to graduate from the Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico with a bachelor of music in voice performance. She went on to receive a master's of music from the University of South Carolina, and now is pursuing her Ph.D. in English linguistics from the University of Puerto Rico. She is fluent in Spanish, English, and French, and also speaks some Italian and German. "When you study opera, it helps to speak the language," she says.

The picture shows Sylvia smiling as she crouches down to hug her second Seeing Eye dog, a black Labrador/golden retriever cross named Warren. The lawn of The Seeing Eye campus is visible through the rails of a black metal railing behind them.

Sylvia says a Seeing Eye dog really helps her get around the crowded streets of Puerto Rico. But the benefits go beyond navigation and independence.

"Having a Seeing Eye dog with me not only makes me feel safer, but also somehow... cooler! I love my dog and having him with me. These dogs change the way you feel about yourself. It's about independence and mobility, but also, having a dog is fun and exciting! And just because you're blind doesn't mean you shouldn't have some fun and excitement in your life!" ■

PHIL LEVIN & Fred



*P*hil Levin hasn't let blindness get in the way of living a full life.

"I've run the Boston Marathon, I've gone skiing, I've cut down trees, I fix fences on our farm," Phil said.

But how do you do all that without being able to see? "I fall sometimes," Phil says, "and then I get up."

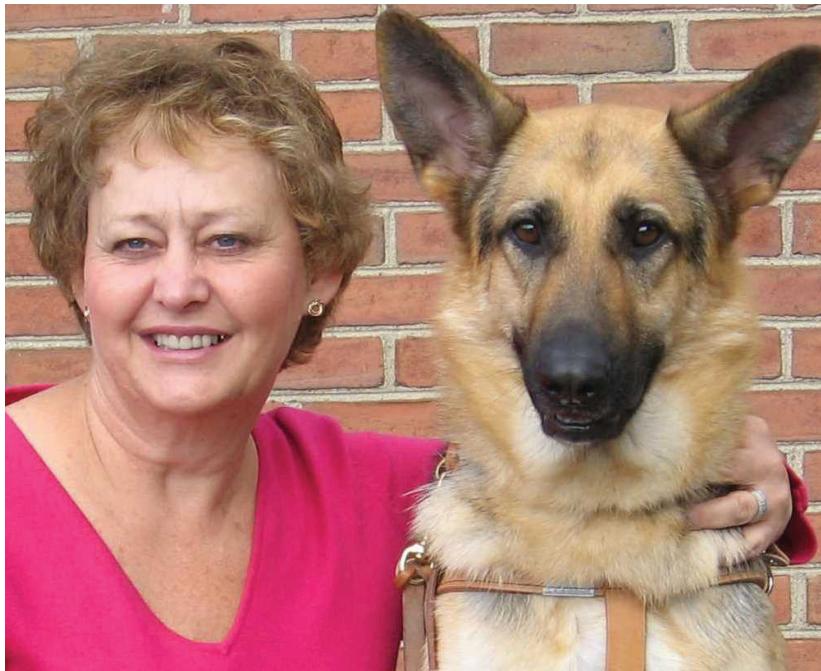
The photo shows Phil, an attorney from Manchester, Maryland, smiling as he crouches next to his first Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador retriever named Fred, inside the Dorothy Harrison Eustis Lounge at The Seeing Eye.

"With Fred I can walk the same speed I did 25 years ago, and that is priceless," he said.

The first time Phil ran the marathon, in 2004, he had enough vision he could make out other runners if he got too close to them. He didn't use a sighted guide, but carried a white cane—more as a signal to the other runners. The second time, in 2009, he needed to run with a partner, and his daughter Kelly volunteered. They wore matching T-shirts: His said "Blind Runner", and hers said "Seeing Eye Daughter".

"I had a Seeing Eye daughter before I had a Seeing Eye dog," he joked. ■

NORMA JEAN SMITH & Juanita



*N*orma Jean Smith of Medicine Hat, Alberta, first came to The Seeing Eye in 1994, when she was matched with a German shepherd named Quoddy. Now she's with her third dog, a German shepherd named Juanita. The picture shows Norma Jean standing next to Juanita, who is sitting on a table. Norma Jean is smiling and Juanita's big ears are sticking straight up!

"I had an acquaintance who had a guide dog, and I was just amazed at her independence and mobility. I talked to a few people, some who went to The Seeing Eye and some who had gone to other guide dog schools, and I did a lot of research, and time and time again I was so impressed with The Seeing Eye. That's the one I picked and I'm so glad I did. I've never met a person at The Seeing Eye who was anything but pleasant, personable, and professional," she said.

"Juanita is such a good worker. She's so focused when she's in harness. She gives me the confidence to go anywhere I have to go. At home, she's such a fun dog. No one can believe she's 7—she's so playful! When she's out of harness, she prances around with this puppy-like gait," she said. ■

JUDITH HAWLEY & Qwella



*J*t's quite appropriate that Judith Hawley lives in Independence, Missouri.

"I'm a very independent person, and I don't like to depend on other people," she said. "I love what my Seeing Eye dog can do for me. I can walk wherever I want, whenever I want, without fear."

The photo shows Judith, wearing a hat, cream colored jacket, white blouse, and black pants, sitting on a black bench with her hands on Qwella, a black Labrador retriever who is her fourth Seeing Eye dog.

Although she lost her sight at age 11, Judith didn't get her first Seeing Eye dog until she was an adult. She said she'd never thought a guide dog would be right for her, until she spoke about it with a guide dog user. "Then I just fell in love with the idea," she said.

"After I got my first Seeing Eye dog, I went to Oregon to visit my sister, on my own. I got off the airplane and I walked right past my sister—I couldn't see her, of course, and she didn't recognize me. My niece said, 'That's Aunt Judith!' My own sister didn't recognize me, because for the first time as an adult she saw me walking with such assurance, with my shoulders back and my head held high. Having a Seeing Eye dog helped me change—no, not change, but become what I really am. I can be the real me: a confident, assured person." ■

BOB VETERE & Jabot



*H*ere's another graduate from an aptly named town—Bob Vetere lives in New Freedom, Pennsylvania!

Bob has been working with his first Seeing Eye dog, a German shepherd named Jabot, since 2009. The photo shows Bob, in a Baltimore Ravens jacket, standing next to Jabot. Bob is holding the leash in one hand and his other hand is on the dog's back.

Bob has worked for Northrop Grumman for 37 years, and is now lead workplace accommodation specialist. He also serves as chair of the U.S. Business Leadership Network's Corporate Advisory Board. He's also a huge Baltimore Ravens fan and a freshwater fisherman.

Bob said people who have never worked with a Seeing Eye dog can't imagine the change it will mean for their lives. "It's like trying to explain to an expecting couple what being a parent will be like—you just have to live it to understand it," he said.

Bob said he decided it was time to get a Seeing Eye dog after taking a new position that would require more travel. "I needed to regain my mobility, independence, and confidence," he said. "I accomplished that and more. Having a dog in the workplace also is a tremendous teaching tool for my colleagues and a great ambassador." ■

KAYLA STACE & Demi



This photo shows Kayla Stace of Saint Anthony, Minnesota, sitting in a gazebo at The Seeing Eye with her second Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross named Demi.

“The first time I took up Demi’s handle, it felt like coming home,” Kayla said. “She’s the perfect dog for me. She’s feisty, she’s spunky, she’s smart, she’s goofy. She’s just perfect.”

Kayla said she was wowed by Demi’s ability to navigate her through the crowded streets of New York City.

“It’s the perfect way to learn to trust your dog. Everything in New York City is exaggerated. There are people everywhere! We went to Times Square and we just went flying through the crowds. Not once did I even brush elbows with anyone. It was amazing.”

But Demi helps her in other ways as well.

“When I’m in a stressful situation, it calms me down to have her there with me. Even if I’m just sitting and she’s using my foot for her pillow,” she laughed, as that’s what Demi was doing at that moment.

“Dogs are wonderful because they love you at the end of your worst day or your best day.” ■

ALYSSA HENSON & *Melody*



*A*lyssa Henson is a 19-year-old student at Northern Illinois University, and she's also a talented pianist.

"My instructor, Brooke, came in with this excited little puppy dog and she said, 'This dog has the perfect name for you.'"

Melody, a black Labrador/golden cross, is Alyssa's first Seeing Eye dog.

"I was sitting in the lounge waiting to meet my dog, and she came in. I knelt down and hugged her and she put her head right on my shoulder. It was adorable," the Missouri native said.

And that's what Melody likes to do every time Alyssa gets down and hugs her, as shown in the picture. Alyssa is on her knees hugging Melody in the Dorothy Harrison Eustis Lounge, and Melody has her head on her shoulder—her way of hugging her back!

"Melody loves it when we play. She's a wriggly wiggly puppy! If I'm just standing still and not petting her, she'll walk around me in circles and rub against me. I think she might be part cat."

But when the harness is on, it's Melody's turn to perform.

"Walking with Melody, I feel graceful," Alyssa said. "I walk with grace and confidence." ■

RATHA MOEUY & Nala



*R*atha Moeuy of Fall River, Massachusetts, is studying computer networking at Bristol Community College. The picture shows Ratha, wearing a Boston Red Sox baseball cap, a blue shirt, and dark gray shorts, sitting on the floor of the Eustis Lounge at The Seeing Eye. He has his arms around his first Seeing Eye dog, a golden retriever named Nala, who is lying across his lap with her head up to look at the camera.

"I first heard about The Seeing Eye from a teacher in grade school. I thought, 'A dog? Why would I need a dog? A dog won't do anything for me.' I'm a proficient cane user, and I was very skeptical that a dog would be better. I was set in my ways," he said.

"Now that I have Nala, it amazes me how much I've been able to accomplish in such a short amount of time. The ability to maneuver around obstacles without having to stop and identify them, the ability to move at top speed... it's just amazing," he said.

"A cane is just an object. It's a tool. But Nala is a companion. She's always there for me. When we are working, we are very serious, and when we play, we play hard. We're a great team." ■

VINCENT MARTIN & Karson



*V*incent Martin had a plan for getting a Seeing Eye dog. “I decided to get a Seeing Eye dog in 1989,” he said. “But I knew I would have to wait until I was 45 to do it.”

Vincent came to The Seeing Eye for his first dog in 2011... after turning 46.

“I missed it by one year,” he said.

Vincent was a Track and Field Paralympian and wanted to wait until he retired from athletics before being teamed with a Seeing Eye dog.

“My best event was the discus,” Vincent said. “Only one other totally blind person has thrown a discus farther than me. I missed breaking the world record by a few feet.”

The picture shows Vincent with his Seeing Eye dog, a black Labrador retriever named Karson, on the campus of Georgia Institute of Technology. Vincent is studying there to get his Ph.D. in human-centered computing—his fifth degree.

“Karson is an amazing dog,” he said. “I can walk twice as fast as I could before. We usually walk 3 ½, 4 miles an hour. When there’s no one around we’re even faster than that. We fly!” ■

CAROL FLEISCHMAN & Tino



Carol Fleischman, a writer who lives in Niagara Falls, N.Y., first came to The Seeing Eye in 1992 to be teamed with Misty, a German shepherd. She returned in 2001 for her second, a female black Labrador retriever named Nadine, and again in 2010 to be matched with her third, a Labrador/golden retriever cross named Tino. The picture shows Carol and Tino, who has a Lab's short coat but a golden's coloring. She recently published her first children's book, *Nadine, My Funny and Trusty Guide Dog*.

Carol tells the story of a shopping trip with Misty and her husband, Don.

The trio always draw attention from children, who ask their parents questions like: "Mom, why is that dog in the store?" "Mom, is that a dog or a wolf?" And her personal favorite: "But that lady's eyes are open!"

"I trust these parents to explain: 'The lady is giving her guide dog commands. Her dog is a helping dog. They're partners,'" Carol said. "I questioned whether this positive message has been communicated when I heard an adult say: 'Oh, there's one of those blind dogs.'" ■

MIA LIPNER & Weaver



“I’m adventurous by nature,” said Mia Lipner, a San Francisco resident now matched with her fifth dog—a female black Labrador/golden retriever cross named Weaver. “I love trying things I’ve never tried before.”

Like... scuba diving.

“They do have talking gauges and other equipment for people diving in darkness, but they are really expensive,” said Mia, who was certified to dive in a dry suit in Puget Sound when she lived in Seattle. “I rely on my buddies, and you do need two of them. Instead of communicating by hand signals, they draw on my hands. Scuba diving is an incredible feeling. It’s the closest you can get to weightlessness without leaving the planet.”

Mia is senior accessibility specialist/applied accessibility manager for Pearson, which produces educational materials in a variety of formats. The picture shows Mia with a big smile as she hugs a serious-looking Weaver against her body.

“I like going to new places and checking things out. I can always trust the dog to figure out the basics while I am worrying about the big picture —like where we are and where we’re going,” she said.

Mia said they have a great partnership.

“Weaver is very sweet, very smart, and she has an impish streak—which I’m told goes well with my personality.” ■

INSPIRING STORIES

The difference The Seeing Eye makes in the lives of people who are blind can be best explained by the graduates themselves... people who are living their lives—some ordinary and others not-so-ordinary—enhanced by their daily experiences with their dogs.

The Seeing Eye is the world's oldest guide dog school. We breed, raise, and train the world-famous Seeing Eye® dogs, and every month bring blind men and women from across the United States and Canada to our campus in Morristown, New Jersey, to learn how to care for and work with these amazing dogs. We are a charitable organization supported solely by donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

Please help us put "miracles in motion" by visiting www.SeeingEye.org/SupportUs or by calling (800) 539-4425.





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