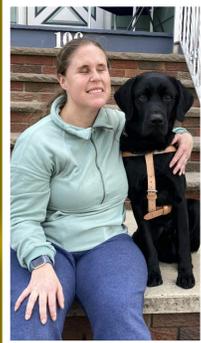


PARTNERS

TALES FROM THE SEEING EYE





“ My Seeing Eye *dog* has changed my life.

She gave me back the *confidence*

I had lost. And she believes in *me*

as much as I believe in *her*. ”

- Tiffany Baylor, Seeing Eye Graduate

WE ARE PROUD TO SHARE THESE AMAZING STORIES.

MARGARET HOWARD, PH.D.



*G*reetings from The Seeing Eye! I'm Peggi Howard, Interim President and Chief Executive Officer of the first guide dog school in North America. The photo shows me holding a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross puppy named Patrick.

Each month at The Seeing Eye, we bring people who are blind or visually impaired from across the United States and Canada to our campus to learn how to work with and care for these amazing dogs. Each team that graduates is better prepared to navigate the world.

All of us – our staff, our volunteers, and our supporters – play a role, directly or indirectly, in creating each team.

I hope you will enjoy these stories about just a few of the remarkable people who have graduated from The Seeing Eye. It's the ongoing support from people like you that makes it possible for us to fulfill our mission: To enhance the independence, dignity, and self-confidence of people who are blind through the use of Seeing Eye® dogs.



BLAINE DEUTSCHER & *Oskar*



*B*laine Deutscher of Calgary, Alberta, first came to The Seeing Eye in August 2015 to be matched with a female German shepherd named Kacy. Blaine plays blind hockey, using a larger puck that contains ball bearings so players can audibly track its movement. The photo, taken in 2016, shows Blaine on a bench as he changes in the locker room, laughing as Kacy jumps up into his lap to give him a kiss on the face!

Blaine recently returned to The Seeing Eye to be matched with his second Seeing Eye dog, a male German shepherd named Oskar.

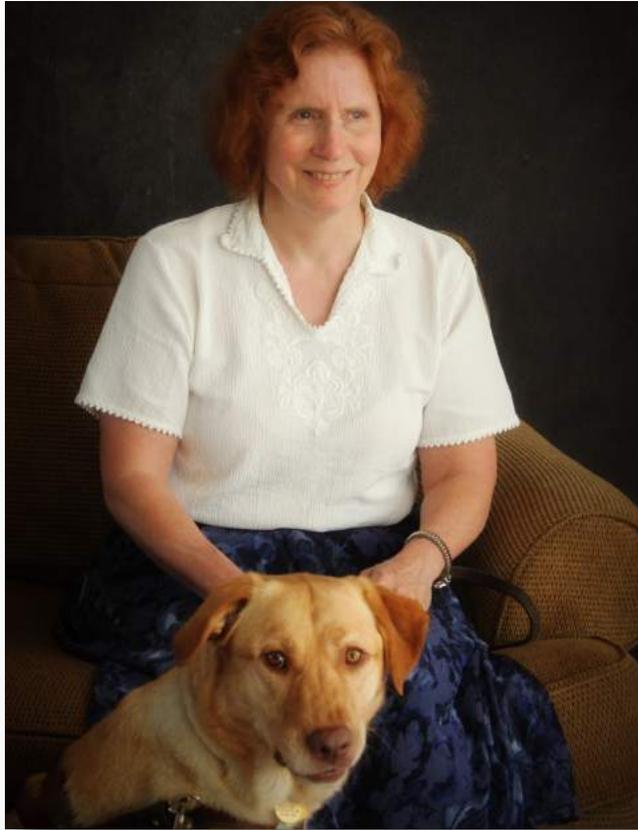
“Oskar and I haven’t done a whole lot due to the pandemic, but once things open up and get back to normal, he will accompany me to various tournaments in Canada, and we will travel more,” Blaine said.

In addition to hockey, Blaine also enjoys playing golf, doing carpentry, going to beer tasting events, camping, and spending time at the lake.

“Oskar loves to play fetch, so anytime I can get the football out and throw it around, he’s like a kid in a candy shop,” he said. “He’s a huge goof and loves to make people laugh.”



KAREN KENINGER & *Jimi*



*W*hen Karen Keninger got her first Seeing Eye dog, she “danced down the sidewalk” reveling in the sense of independence she could finally enjoy. “I was 16 and it was extremely freeing.” And six Seeing Eye dogs later, “it still is.”

Karen notes, “much like people,” how different each of her seven Seeing Eye dogs have been. Jimi, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross, was her seventh and present match. The photo shows Karen sitting in a chair with Jimi standing in front of her.

In reviewing their 10 years together, Karen says it turned into a true partnership. “For nine of those years, Jimi handled the city of D.C. well with its traffic and people and noise, and he was great on the metro, too; all of which made my life pretty easy.”

Karen recently retired after serving as Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, a division of the Library of Congress, for nine years. Coincidentally, Jimi is set to retire soon, too.

As she prepares for a new Seeing Eye dog, Karen considers the expected adjustment. “The partnership of dog and handler is like a dance that has to be established with each new pup,” she said. After she gets a new Seeing Eye dog, Jimi will remain with her, now a companion instead of a guide dog.



SIOBHAN LEAHY & *Presley*



Siobhan Leahy lives in a two-family home with her husband, Kyle – also a Seeing Eye graduate – their young son, James, her parents, a bunny, and four Seeing Eye dogs – two working, and two retired!

The photo shows Siobhan smiling as she sits on her front stoop with her current Seeing Eye dog, a black Labrador retriever named Presley.

Siobhan was matched with her first Seeing Eye dog when she was 17; it was something she had been looking forward to since childhood. She had always loved animals, especially dogs, and she credits her “super-supportive mom” with using that knowledge to prepare Siobhan for a future that would include a Seeing Eye dog.

Siobhan says Presley is “a calm, chill, guy and a hard worker, too.”

Siobhan is a social worker for a career and life skills guidance program for blind and visually impaired teens developed by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind.

Siobhan credits The Seeing Eye with helping her become independent. But equally important, she serendipitously met her husband, Kyle, on campus in 2011 when both were students. And in 2015, they got married on campus too. So the school has a truly special place in their hearts!





Seeing Eye graduate Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcinski – and her Seeing Eye dog, Joey – recently starred in an immersive theatrical experience called *Alien/Nation* at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

“It was an incredible experience!” said Nancy, who is the assistant program manager for an independent living center. “The audience were literally in their cars, driving through the production.

“They used an app which allowed them to hear our dialogue, which was prerecorded with music, so we lip synced what we had said. I was sitting in a pastoral site, up on a hill, there were trees and a brook behind me. I had a desk, a keyboard, a glass of water, some knitting materials. And of course Joey was with me, and of course he was the star!”

The photo, from the production, shows Nancy seated in a rocking chair as she does a needlepoint. Her rocking chair is on a rug, which is outdoors in a grass field. Joey, a golden retriever in harness, is lying at her feet.

“Some dogs couldn't handle the chaos of a production, but Joey is chill. He's very chill,” Nancy said. “He's like, ‘yeah, whatever.’ He had his own credit in the program and everything.”





*D*r. Suzanne Ament believes she had the first Seeing Eye dog to visit the Soviet Union.

In the early 1990s, Suzanne was pursuing her Ph.D. in Russian History at Indiana University. From September 1990 until June 1991, she lived in the Soviet Union while doing research at the Moscow Conservatory. The photo shows Suzanne and her first Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador retriever named Sparkle. The photo was taken by Barbara Allen, Suzanne's research assistant who went with her to the Soviet Union, and shows Suzanne crouching in the snow with Sparkle in front of the Observatory Building in Gorky Park in Moscow.

“Dog food was not sold in the U.S.S.R. at the time, as Russians cooked for their dogs,” Suzanne said. “Purina donated 500 pounds of food for us, but it was misdirected. We later learned it was initially sent to Iraq where Desert Storm was underway. We wondered what the Marines thought -- worse than MREs? Luckily I had taken a large supply of dog food with us, and eventually we did get the 500 pounds of food through the U.S. Embassy.”

Suzanne, now a professor of Russian history and world history at Radford University in Virginia, is working with her fourth dog, a black Labrador retriever named Ulla.



SCOTT HARTMANN & Dylan



Scott Hartmann is not a glass-half-empty kind of guy... he's not even a glass-half-full kind of guy. For him, the glass is overflowing -- that's how positive he is about life. The photo shows Scott, wearing a Red Sox cap, smiling as he stands next to Dylan, a black Labrador retriever in harness.

Scott, who lives in Boston, was initially an accountant, but the progression of retinitis pigmentosa, a genetic eye disease, "made the detail work too hard to do." So he applied his acumen with numbers in another direction, becoming a day trader.

Eventually Scott made the decision to come to The Seeing Eye and be matched with Kramer, his first Seeing Eye dog.

"That's when my life really started to improve," Scott said. "And ever since then I've never thought about the past."

Scott's enthusiasm spikes when he talks about getting Kramer, a black Labrador retriever, as "my bridge to independence."

Scott says his new match, Dylan, is a "true professional." He thrives on their daily 5-mile-long walks, and keeps a close eye on Scott even as he rides his exercise bike. The pair can be pretty adventurous, too. Sometimes they'll hop a train to spend the day by the sea.



PAULINE DOWELL & *Dora*



“*M*y biggest passion, and sort of what I swirl my life around, is sailing,” said Pauline Dowell, who not only sails for fun, but lives on a sailboat in Boston Harbor with her first Seeing Eye dog, Dora, a black Labrador retriever.

The photo shows Pauline laying on her back in a rubber dinghy floating in Boston Harbor. Dora, wearing a red canine life jacket, is in her lap. Pauline is leaning forward to kiss Dora. Behind them in the distance you can see the Boston skyline.

“I’ve always loved boats, I’ve always loved sailing, and I absolutely love the water,” Pauline said. “I had met a lot of great people through the organization Boston Blind Sailing, and I said to one of the sighted guides I had made friends with that I wish I could live on a boat. And he said, ‘Why don’t you?’ I found a really great boat for sale, and seven years ago I moved in.”

Living on a boat is an adventure every day, Pauline said, though the Boston winters can get cold. “I wish I was in the Bahamas!” she said. “It does get pretty cold in the winter time, but the boat has a really good heating system, and I have a very warm snuggly dog.”



LORI HYSERT & Galileo



*L*ori Hysert of Edmonton, Alberta, first came to The Seeing Eye as a teenager in 1978. She's now working with her eighth Seeing Eye dog, a German shepherd named Galileo. The photo shows Lori smiling as she stands proudly alongside Galileo.

After retiring from a job with the Canadian government, Lori now operates her own massage therapy practice. When she's not working, she enjoys traveling.

“Galileo supervises the house when I'm massaging, and he is the most awesome companion when I'm traveling,” Lori said. “His favorite pastime when not working is playing catch and kick with his ball that has frog-like features that we call Clarence.”

Lori noticed Galileo was distracted by the sight and sound of skateboarders, as she often walks past a skate park. She asked The Seeing Eye for advice on what to do, and our instructor advised she de-sensitize Galileo by getting him a skateboard... but not to ride. Lori got Galileo comfortable by pushing one of his toys around on it, and Galileo quickly discovered a skateboard was nothing to worry about.

You could say Galileo has learned to... roll with it!



ROBERT HALL & *Richard*



*R*obert Hall of Chicago, Illinois, was matched with his first Seeing Eye dog, a German shepherd named Digger, in 1977; he recently returned for his sixth, a yellow Labrador retriever named Richard. The photo shows Robert smiling with his arm around Richard, who is in harness.

Robert is a professional musician who, prior to COVID, frequently toured the country. Nowadays he's not touring, but he's still recording. Most recently, he wrote and recorded a song called "We're In A Pandemic."

"I consider this piece my patriotic gesture to the health and humanity of our vastly changed world," Robert said.

Robert's wife, Heloise, also is a Seeing Eye graduate; she is currently working with her sixth Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross named Ernie.

"We are doing just great," he said. "We go for our daily walks in the evenings after they have dinner and before Heloise and I have dinner. We have three dogs in the household: Richard, Ernie, and my retired Seeing Eye dog, Aura. Ernie and Richard love wrestling and trading toys back and forth."



MARTHA RUETHER & Brooke



*M*artha Ruether came to The Seeing Eye to be matched with Brooke, a black Labrador/golden retriever cross. The photo shows them waiting to cross a New York City street. As part of our training, students can experience the hustle and bustle of New York City... perhaps the ultimate challenge for a Seeing Eye team! As the song says, if you can make it there, you'll make it anywhere.

“Such an indescribable feeling to be able to walk a busy city with ease!” Martha said. “Love this little nugget!”

Martha swam for Team USA in the 2020 Paralympics, which were held in Tokyo. When she’s not competing, Martha is a graduate assistant with a collegiate swimming and diving program while pursuing a master’s degree in school counseling.

“I wear a few different hats and Brooke is great at rolling with the punches!” Martha said. “We’re currently working through an internship for my master’s in my final year, coaching college athletes, and taking various classes while swimming myself... though a little less right now since getting back from Tokyo!”



JIM SADECKI & Titan



*J*im Sadecki, who stands 6' 4", needs a big dog – and was matched with a large German shepherd aptly named Titan!

The photo shows Jim being guided by Titan as he walks on his 33-acre cow farm in Burlington, Connecticut, while carrying a chainsaw. There are always chores to be done on a farm!

“Titan takes me through the woods to a cabin that I have,” Jim said. “He guides me when I’m able to bring my chainsaw to split firewood for the winter.”

Jim served for 10 years in the U.S. Air Force, including three tours of duty in the Middle East. He left the service in 2004 at the age of 28 to return home to his family’s working farm and help care for his ailing dad and spend more time with his two young children. Shortly after his return, he lost both eyes in a construction accident.

Jim says Titan has one unusual talent: “He sings, but only to one tune: ‘The Joker’ by The Steve Miller Band.”



INSPIRING STORIES

The difference The Seeing Eye makes in the lives of people who are blind is best explained by the graduates of our program – people whose lives are enhanced by their daily experiences with their dogs.

The Seeing Eye is the world's oldest guide dog school. We breed, raise, and train our 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 by visiting www.SeeingEye.org/SupportUs or by calling (800) 539-4425.

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