INSIDE: Golden Girl
A Seeing Eye Perspective

Puppy raisers have been part of The Seeing Eye family since our founding – actually, since before our founding, as Dorothy Harrison Eustis used a similar model at Fortunate Fields in Switzerland. Breeding and training German shepherds for use in police work, Dorothy did not want her newly whelped puppies to spend their formative years in kennels and dog runs. Instead, once the puppies were weaned, they were given to local farmers who would raise them. There, each puppy would learn good house manners, basic commands, and how to behave around people and other animals. Then, the families were asked to do the impossible: to give those wonderful puppies back!

Nearly 90 years later, puppy raisers are still doing the impossible. Every year, approximately 500 puppy raiser families welcome our adorable 7-week-old puppies into their homes. And it’s a good thing they’re adorable, because as you can imagine, those first few months can be difficult. Shoes get chewed, rugs get stained, and fur gets shed. Usually twice a month, the puppies are brought together for puppy raiser meetings, where they learn how to interact with other dogs and humans. They must demonstrate obedience, such as sitting or lying down on command, not jumping on people, and waiting patiently without fussing or crying… all important traits they will use later in their adult life.

And then… a little more than a year later, when the dog is finally a perfect little lady or gentleman… the dogs return to our campus in Morristown, New Jersey. Puppy raisers tell us it’s hard to let them go… but when they hear the stories about our graduates and their amazing accomplishments, facilitated by the confidence and independence bolstered by a Seeing Eye® dog, they know it is all worth it.

Or perhaps that dog will go onto fulfill another destiny. Some of our dogs go into law enforcement, sniffing out suspicious packages or searching for contraband in prisons. Or as a therapy dog, bringing comfort to people who are sick. Some of our dogs listen patiently to children as they read aloud, helping them improve their reading skills. Others serve as ambassador dogs for us, visiting schools, businesses, and other groups that are interested in learning more about The Seeing Eye.

But it all starts with puppies… and puppy raisers.

However you support us – whether it’s by raising puppies, volunteering on campus, or your generous financial donations – thank you. Your dedication and devotion is what makes all of this possible.

Sincerely,

James A. Kutsch, Jr.
President & CEO, The Seeing Eye

ON THE COVER: Becca Meyers won three gold medals and a silver medal while setting two world records in swimming at the Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro in September. She kisses her Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador/golden retriever cross named Birdie, on the campus at The Seeing Eye.
Dear Seeing Eye:

I have known my dog Siri for a year and he is the best friend I could ever want. It’s amazing how time has flown, almost as amazing as Siri flies me through the environment, getting me safely from point A to B with joyful exuberance.

To know Siri is to experience a sweet, intelligent, and thoroughly beautiful spirit. The people who raised this animal should be commended and I am so grateful for such solid training of Siri. He is easy to understand and very well-mannered.

When we are in public and not moving, say at a restaurant, people don’t even know he is there. This is quite a feat considering his stunning good looks. When we are moving, he leads with the utmost of confidence, so long as he knows where he’s going. Even if he doesn’t, he is a pretty good guesser. On the rare occasion we get lost, it isn’t for long and I’m never alone.

In closing, I just want you to know I am doing my best to take great care of this dog because I love him. Thank you so much!

Thomas J. Whalen Jr.
Seeing Eye graduate

Dear Seeing Eye:

On Saturday, August 6, we said goodbye to our beloved yellow Lab, Kit. We adopted her from your program back in April of 2004. But, that was not the beginning of the story.

When I was in high school and college in the late 1960s and early 70s, I did part-time work, mostly in his Park Square Building office, for Morris S. Frank. For many years as a side assignment to my after school job at William E. Seely, Inc., I assisted Mr. Frank in his insurance business. It was there that I got to know him, learn more about his role in The Seeing Eye, and observe his relationship with his Buddys. Little did I understand way back then just how the depth of the bond between this man and his dog would resonate in me decades later.

During these years, I was fortunate enough to accompany Mr. Frank around the Green, to his favorite lunch spots on occasion, and to visit his home and meet his lovely wife, Lois. I remember one day sitting in his home kitchen in Brookside and watched him snap the ends off a colander of green beans. Of course, his fingers were adept at so much work. I remember having him show me photos of himself riding an elephant in India. I remember being in awe of this man’s courage and determination as he strode confidently around town and the world with his dog as his lifeline in the form of his eyes. These times I never forgot.

We were fortunate enough to bring her home with us. The next several weeks were awkward and a little pensive as Kit’s training and the environment in our home came to mesh. I like to say that Kit eventually regressed to the level of my kids, but that is in fact a great insult to Kit. She was in fact as close to the most perfect pet one could ever ask for. In time she fit right in and became a steadfast part of the fabric of our family.

To say that our lives have been profoundly impacted by the addition of Kit to our family is a tremendous understatement. In our eyes and in our hearts she was the finest dog ever. She was completely loved, adored, and indulged in the most cherishing of ways. For every single day that we had her, our lives were better.

Marianne, George, Christin, and Ryan Hanley

Letters to the Seeing Eye

To everyone who helped with “Bring Your Child To Work Day” at The Seeing Eye, THANK YOU!!

I had the best time!

I will never forget such an awesome day I had with the dogs.

Landon Pudlak
On land or in the water, it’s not easy to keep up with Becca Meyers.

The junior at Franklin & Marshall College is a speed demon when she’s working with her Seeing Eye dog, a yellow Labrador/golden cross named Birdie.

“Birdie is amazing,” Becca says. “When it is time to work, she knows it. She takes off! I know when she’s in the zone because she just prances along. I love having her because I don’t have to rely on anyone else to help me, and that is a great feeling to have.”

But Birdie watches when Becca hits the water.

Becca has Usher Syndrome (type1), a genetic disorder that causes hearing, vision, and balance issues. She was born profoundly deaf, but has some hearing due to cochlear implants; she will eventually lose her sight, and has already lost her peripheral vision. “It’s like looking at the world through two straws,” she said. In August 2015, Becca came to The Seeing Eye and was matched with Birdie.

“I always knew I wanted a Seeing Eye dog,” Becca said. “I wanted someone that could be by my side 24/7. I wanted my independence, and I knew if I got a Seeing Eye dog, I would have it. And I do!”

As an adolescent, Becca tried various sports, but she found a home in the pool. By the age of 6, she was swimming competitively; in 7th grade, she wrote a poem saying her goal was to participate in the Paralympics. At 17, she made it there, winning silver and bronze medals at the 2012 games in London.

Becca can’t wear her cochlear implants when she’s swimming, so she can’t hear the starter’s gun (actually a beep). She can see a flash of light that tells her to start, but the light goes off a fraction of a second after the beep sounds, giving Becca a big disadvantage in a sport where the winner is measured in hundredths of a second.

In September, Becca returned to the Paralympics again, this year in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where she set two world records and won four medals – three gold and one silver. Her most thrilling performance was a come-from-behind, world-record setting win in the S13 100-meter butterfly over Muslima Odilav of Uzbekistan, the previous world record holder.

“I have so many emotions running through my head right now and I can’t put it into words. It just feels incredible,” Becca told CNN after winning the gold.

GOLDEN GIRL

Becca Meyers wins three gold medals, sets two world records at Paralympics
“For each race I have a certain song, and if I don’t play that song in my head, I can’t do the race. So last night I was listening to Kelly Clarkson’s ‘Stronger’. I was singing it in my head throughout the entire race,” she told CNN.

Becca couldn’t bring Birdie to Rio, so after winning the gold, she sent Birdie a message via Instagram: “Birdie, mama won you a stuffed animal, a world record, and a gold medal. Thank you so much to everyone for your support!”

Birdie responded with a photo of her sitting proudly next to a sign reading: Congrats Mom!

She also set a world record winning the 400m freestyle.

“Rio was nothing like I have ever experienced before! It was an adjustment, but it was great. The people were so friendly,” she said. “It was really hard for me not to have Birdie. I had to depend on my cane and on other people. It took away my sense of independence.”

The four medals she took home from Rio join an already crowded trophy case that includes the two from the 2012 Paralympics. She also has four gold medals and three silver medals from the International Paralympic World Championships, four gold medals and one silver medal from the Pan Pacific Para-Swimming Championships, and she holds multiple world records. Earlier this year, she won USA Swimming’s Trischa L. Zorn Award, recognizing a swimmer with a disability for outstanding performance, and was named to the NCAA All-America Team in 2016 after finishing sixth in the nation in the 1,650-yard freestyle. In 2015, she won the ESPY Award for Best Female Athlete With a Disability.

After returning home, Becca was invited with other Paralympians to the White House, where she met President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Vice President Joe Biden.

“The White House was an incredible experience I will never forget,” she said. “The President shook my hand and said, ‘Thank you for all you do and congratulations on your accomplishment in Rio.’ Michelle Obama gave me a hug and Joe Biden said, ‘What a smile, what a smile!’ It was pretty cool.”

During downtime, Becca said that Birdie loves to play catch and chew on her bone. “But most of all, she loves being by my side and snuggling with me.”

After graduation, Becca said she hopes she can be an ambassador to children and their parents who are struggling to cope with the challenges in their lives. “I want to show them that there is hope, and that there is something – sports, music, something – for everyone.”

And, of course, she’s going to keep swimming.
“Our puppy raisers are amazing,” said Jill Jaycox, the Linda Feinne-Roth Manager of Puppy Development. “To raise a puppy for a year, and then give it back – that’s not easy. It’s truly a selfless act. You may never meet the person whose life will be changed by this Seeing Eye dog. But you know you are making the world a better place.”

The puppy raisers attended presentations such as “Follow a Dog In Training” presented by Assistant Director of Instruction and Training Jim Kessler and Master Instructor Brian McKenna; “A Day in the Life of a Seeing Eye Breeding Station Assistant” by Dr. Dolores Holle, Director of Canine Medicine & Surgery and Attending Veterinarian, and Maria Hevner, manager of the Canine Clinic & Breeding Station; “A History of Guide Dogs – A Long View” by Lukas Franck, Senior Consultant for Special Projects; and graduate presentations by Tricia Ebel, Kathy Murray, Cindy Reilly, and Tony Swartz.

In addition, 42 students were recognized with Puppy Raiser Scholarships. All the recipients are college-bound high school seniors who raised at least two puppies for The Seeing Eye, including one during their junior or senior year, and who attended at least 70 percent of their puppy club’s meetings and activities. The scholarships are not based on academics, but rather on community service. Each applicant writes an essay about the effect being a puppy raiser has had on his or her life.

Many of the scholarships were made possible by gifts from or in the name of Aaron & Rachel Meyer Foundation; Anton and Augusta Birkel Foundation; Bernice Barbour Foundation; Bernice Delmont; Bruce J. Heim Foundation; David M. Crowley Foundation; Edward A. Bragaline; Emma Kate Brunskill; Fludzinski Foundation; Hermione Foundation; Josephine Aresty; Katherine Ann Engleking; Michael J. Kosloski Foundation; PETCO Foundation; Sally A. Jumper; Sandy Hill Foundation; Vincent Stabile; and Toni Stabile.

Special thanks to Allergan Foundation for sponsoring Family Day this year, and to Bella Faccia Painting, LLC, Best Provisions, Demarest Farm, Johanna Farms, Judy and Rich Dolinko, Herr’s, Pechters, and Sysco for their donations.

If you’re interested in raising a puppy for The Seeing Eye, go to our website at http://www.SeeingEye.org/Raise.
Seeing Eye Senior Manager of Instruction & Training Jan Abbott praises a Seeing Eye dog in training for successfully guiding her through an obstacle course. Martha Castenschmidt, area coordinator for Hunterdon, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren counties in New Jersey, congratulates a scholarship winner.

Seeing Eye Puppy Raiser scholarship winners who attended this year’s Family Day.

Andrew Ahn
Ethan Alpern
Devon Barnes
Faith Bates
Connor Boland
Samantha Buono
Rebecca Casey
Ian Christensen
Tara Coffey
Mitchell Cook
Corinne Cooper
Ashleigh Cummings
Rhiannon Ditmar
Karen Drake
Katie Drury
Galen Freedman
Kendall Graff
Bryan Griffith
Marissa Higham
Gavin Hoff
Bryan Lederach
Nicholas Makosiej
Taylor Mauk
Mariela McConoughey
Miranda Meade
Katie Mearns
Austin Melnyk
Amanda Meyers
Emily Montgomery
Mark Perry
Ryan Pruss
Kelly Randall
Rachel Rice
Rebecca Salage
Alfonso Santiago
Ryan Saul
Jess Shangle
Courtney Sminkey
Hannah Stolpe
Carly Swirsding
Jennie Thomas
Julia Vidal
Thank you, volunteers!

“We couldn’t do all that we do without you,” said Seeing Eye Chairman of the Board Peter Crnkovich to the scores of Seeing Eye volunteers who gathered on campus on September 22, 2016, for the annual Volunteer Recognition Reception.

The Seeing Eye has approximately 150 full-time staff members and about as many on-campus volunteers, who assist staff members in a variety of tasks, whether it’s walking dogs, driving vans, or helping with office duties. (That doesn’t include the approximately 500 families who donate their time as puppy raisers!)

In addition to the 40 volunteers who were recognized for their 1st, 5th, 10th, or even 25th anniversary of volunteering, Marty Nusbaum was recognized as the 2016 Volunteer of the Year.

Marty has officially been a volunteer for 10 years, though he’s been part of The Seeing Eye family for much longer than that – he is a former employee of The Seeing Eye, where he ran the kennel and the veterinary complex, and his family has raised 17 puppies. And though he’s given The Seeing Eye a lot, he says he’s gotten more than enough back – this is where he met his wife, Nancy, the administrative assistant for Instruction & Training.

“It’s been a mutually beneficial relationship,” Marty joked.

Marty volunteers to speak to groups who visit the campus – The Seeing Eye welcomes visitors almost every Thursday and one Saturday a month. (For more information, go to www.SeeingEye.org/visit). He also serves as a host at the Downtown Training Center, where students in class can take a break between walking routes through Morristown.

“I serve hot or cold drinks depending on the day, answer questions about puppy raising or Morristown or Seeing Eye history, reminisce about instructors they’ve had over the years… generally, it’s a lot of kibitzing,” Marty said. “Anything I can do to make the students feel comfortable and welcome.”

Marty said he plans to continue volunteering for many more years to come.

“The Seeing Eye changes lives. I’m not sure there are a lot of organizations that affect a person’s life as positively, and as dramatically, as The Seeing Eye does,” he said. “It’s quite an honor to be named Volunteer of the Year.”
Celebrating the First Guide Dog Team

One hundred years ago this fall, in October 1916, the first guide dog team graduated from a formal guide dog training program.

There had been other guide dogs before. In fact there’s a mural in Pompeii, believed to be from the 1st century, with what appears to be a blind man being led by a dog. Over the centuries there have been paintings, poems, songs, and stories about dogs leading blind people, including this line from the 1856 poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*: “The blind man walks wherever the dog pulls.”

But there were no on-going programs to produce guide dog teams... not until World War I.

The war brought unimaginable levels of carnage, particularly the use of mustard gas, which left victims with severe eye damage or even permanent blindness. Suddenly there were thousands of young men – sons, brothers, husbands – who needed guides. In August 1916, Dr. Gerhard Stalling created the world’s first school specifically for the training of dogs to guide people who are blind or visually impaired. The first school was in Oldenburg, Germany, and in October of that year, it produced its first graduate: Paul Feyen, a blinded war veteran of the German Army. The dog’s name, alas, is lost to history.

By the end of its first year, the school had graduated 100 teams. Soon it opened branches throughout Germany, producing more than 600 teams per year. However, the school struggled to train dogs of sufficient quality. In 1923, the German Shepherd Dog Association opened its own guide dog training school in Potsdam. Neither school would survive long.

But it was in Potsdam, in 1927, that Dorothy Harrison Eustis saw dogs being trained to guide. What she saw here inspired her to write her famous column for *The Saturday Evening Post*, entitled “The Seeing Eye”. A year later, she would meet Morris Frank, and together they would found The Seeing Eye in 1929, launching a truly international guide dog movement.

Just about every guide dog school in existence today can trace its roots either directly or indirectly to Dorothy and Morris, and to the training techniques pioneered by Jack Humphrey, who would train the world’s first Seeing Eye dog, Buddy.
Jen Armbruster Leads U.S. Goalball to Bronze in Rio

Seeing Eye graduate Jen Armbruster went to the Paralympics for the seventh time this Summer, and won the bronze medal as the captain of the U.S. Goalball team. It’s her fourth medal in the sport, having won bronze in 1996, silver in 2004, and gold in 2008. Jen also is an 11-time national champion and a two-time world champion. In 2008, she also had the honor of being the flagbearer for the American flag during the opening ceremonies in Beijing.

Jen had wanted to follow in father’s footsteps and join the military, but after losing her sight as a teenager due to an inflammation of the optic nerves, she found another way to serve her country.

“To represent your country and put on the stars and stripes is such an honor, and I have been lucky to do it for over 25 years,” she said. “This one was special because I knew our coach, who happens to be my father, was retiring after 20-plus years in the military and 20-plus years as the head coach of women’s U.S. Goalball. So we knew going into this one was our last time together as a coach and as a player representing the United States of America. To end our Paralympic career with another medal was incredible. Now the transition of calling him Dad instead of coach… that’s going to be a hard transition as well!”

Jen, who is the inclusive rec and fitness center coordinator at Portland State University, said she plans on officially retiring from the sport later this year. “This has been my life for over 25 years now, and I know physically my body is telling me it’s time.”

Jen returned to The Seeing Eye last year to be matched with her fourth Seeing Eye dog, a German shepherd named Simon.

“He is my independence for sure,” she said. “To be able to call him over and harness him up after he gives me a quick kiss to the hand is the best feeling in the world.”

Jen Armbruster, left, celebrates with her teammates after winning the bronze medal in Rio.

Jen Armbruster with Simon in front of The Seeing Eye.
The Seeing Eye recognized two long-time staff members with awards this year.

Doug Bohl, Senior Manager of Instruction & Training, retired in August after 29 years of service – though as Doug liked to joke, it took him 40 years to work 29 years. Doug worked at The Seeing Eye from 1976 to 1996, then returned in 2007 for another nine years.

At his retirement, Doug was presented with the Juno Award, an honor bestowed by the instructors to one of their own. The award is a small statue of a Seeing Eye dog – a golden retriever, Doug’s favorite breed – wearing a handmade harness. The dog is mounted on a wooden cube, and inside the cube is a list of the names of all the students Doug taught over his 29 years of service.

“Doug is best known for his statement, “We all come here for the dogs, but we stay here because of the people,”” said David Johnson, Director of Instruction & Training. “Many of the students who Doug worked with talk about how tough he was, but they considered it tough love because they were so well prepared with their dogs. Most people wouldn’t know it, but Doug is a very sensitive guy with strong attachments to his students. We all wish him a very well deserved retirement!”

In addition, Seeing Eye graduate and former Seeing Eye employee Jay Stiteley was posthumously awarded the Morris Frank Award, which is presented to a graduate of The Seeing Eye who personifies, through personal and professional accomplishment, the vigor, ideals, and commitment of Morris Frank, and whose efforts and achievements help to open the doors to independence and opportunity for people who are blind.

Jay served as a field representative for The Seeing Eye from 1994 to 2000 and from 2003 to 2009, traveling across the United States and Canada to visit schools, conferences, conventions, and other groups to talk about the benefits of working with a Seeing Eye dog.

Jay had been matched with his first Seeing Eye dog, a German shepherd named Kurt, in 1971, and with his seventh, a yellow Labrador retriever named Nelson, in 2015.

In September, The Seeing Eye hosted a memorial service for Jay in conjunction with several other organizations where Jay had worked over the years.
Wrap It Up!

Send some holiday cheer with a Seeing Eye holiday card! We have six different versions to choose from, including this adorable golden retriever puppy gift wrapped with a red ribbon.

To order, go to www.SeeingEye.org/store or call us at (973) 539-4425.