



FACT SHEET

Mission

- Guiding Eyes for the Blind provides guide dogs to people with vision loss. We are passionate about connecting exceptional dogs with individuals and families for greater independence.
- Guiding Eyes is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with all services provided **free of charge**. The organization is dependent upon contributions to fulfill its mission.

The Headquarters and Training Center is located in Yorktown Heights, NY. The Canine Development Center is in Patterson, NY.

Guiding Eyes by the Numbers

- Founded: 1954 by Donald Kauth
- Graduated guide dog teams: over 7,000
- Active guide dog graduates: 1,000
- Guide dogs placed annually: 160
- Volunteers: more than 1,400
- Cost per team (guide/service dog and person): approximately \$50,000 to breed, raise, train, and match a dog as well as to support the team throughout their life time together.

Accreditation

Guiding Eyes is an accredited member of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), the organization that establishes worldwide standards for the breeding and training of guide dogs.

Breeding

- Established in 1966
- Approximately 500 pups are weaned annually: 92% Labrador retrievers, 8% German Shepherds. Some Golden Retrievers are still working as guide dogs.
- More than half of the dogs raised become guide dogs, service dogs, or they join the breeding program. A percentage of the dogs that do not participate in our program become other types of service dogs.
- All Guiding Eyes dogs are "purpose bred" for the health and temperament required to be guide dogs. We collect large amounts of genetic data to help us make the best breeding choices possible.

Updated January 2017

Puppy Raising

- Volunteer Puppy Raisers take pups into their homes when they are eight weeks old, teach basic obedience and house manners, and socialize their pups to everything the world has to offer. They return the dogs (for their In-For-Training (IFT) evaluations) when they are approximately 16-18 months old. Our senior breeding and training staff determine what their next career will be.
- Potential puppy raisers attend orientation sessions (called pre-placement classes) to learn the skills they'll need to start training puppies. They also have the chance to "sit" for a pup as a trial prior to committing to the longer term experience.
- Volunteer Puppy Raisers attend training classes run by Guiding Eyes throughout the time they have their pups.
- Guiding Eyes pays for all veterinary expenses and provides a crate and collar.
- Guiding Eyes has puppy raising regions in twelve states: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, and Ohio.
- **Successive Training and Enrichment Program (STEP®):** This is Guiding Eyes' proprietary relationship-based approach to raising and training our pups – using positive rewards to build a spirit of cooperation and willingness, within the dogs. Dogs raised through this program display significantly increased confidence and focus.

Fostering a Brood or Stud

- Volunteer Fosters provide a permanent home for a Guiding Eyes brood or stud dog.
- Fosters of broods live within 90 minutes travel time of the Canine Development Center (CDC) in Patterson, N.Y. Fosters of studs live within one hour travel time of the CDC.
- They provide a safe and loving home environment, keeping the dog on leash when outdoors, with daily exercise (minimum of walking/running three miles per day).
- Fosters receive training in dog handling, car, and obedience.
- They transport the dog to Guiding Eyes for reproduction and healthcare-related visits and quarterly assessments.

Home Socialization

- Home Socializers bring two puppies, ages six to nine weeks old, to their home for three to five days, to expose them to new sights, sounds, and people.
- Training is provided, along with equipment required for puppy care.

Early Socialization

- Early Socializers introduce Guiding Eyes pups to new environments and experiences within the Canine Development Center facility. These repeated positive experiences help build the puppies' confidence.
- These volunteers commit to socializing for a two-hour period, once a week. Early Socializers learn required skills through orientation class and training sessions.

Other Volunteer Information

Guiding Eyes offers a range of volunteer opportunities that you can perform in your own home or at our Patterson or Yorktown Heights, NY, campuses. On-premise volunteers should be a minimum age of 18 years. Youth under 18 can participate in most of our off-site opportunities with the support of their families. For the most up-to-date information on these opportunities please visit our website: GuidingEyes.org

Veterinary Services

- Guiding Eyes has a full service veterinary hospital at both of its locations, with three veterinarians and four licensed veterinary technicians on staff.
- Veterinary services are provided for all guide and service dogs in training. Puppies raised within driving distance of either of our facilities and all local guide and service dog users receive free veterinary care at either hospital. Guiding Eyes staff liaise with veterinarians around the globe to coordinate veterinary care for our puppies and guide dogs farther afield.
- Guiding Eyes is the only guide dog school in the world with an in-house veterinary MRI.

Formal Guide Dog Training

- Most guide dogs spend four to six months undergoing formal training with a professional instructor. They learn the skills needed to safely guide a person with vision loss such as indicating changes of elevation and navigating around obstacles.
- Guide dogs do not know when to cross the street. Their handlers listen to traffic sounds and determine when it is safe to cross. Guide dogs are taught “intelligent disobedience” and will ignore the command to move forward if a car or other dangerous object is in their path.
- Some dogs remain in training longer, depending on their own learning speeds and their ultimate career path.

Student Training Programs

- In the Residential program, students spend three weeks residing at the Yorktown Heights campus. They learn how to care for and travel safely with their new guide dogs.
- The Special Needs Program is designed to help students who, in addition to blindness or visual impairment, have other physical or developmental challenges, such as hearing loss, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, or muscular dystrophy.
- The Home Training Program takes Guiding Eyes dogs and training to the homes of students who cannot attend the Residential Program. The Home Training staff takes the Guiding Eyes dogs to the student and trains in their home area.
- Accelerated Client Training Option Program (ACTION) and Refresher: These are two separate abbreviated training programs for the experienced guide dog user.
- Additional Programs provide targeted support:
 - Sights on College – for youth
 - Guiding Veterans – for US military and their families
 - Running Guides – for athletes with vision loss; guide dogs are trained to run alongside their handlers thus eliminating the need for runners to rely solely on a sighted partner
- Guiding Eyes works with each student, developing a curriculum that will meet their specific needs.
- Guiding Eyes is known for its extensive post-graduation support of alumni.

Graduation

- Held monthly - graduation ceremonies are the culmination of training new guide dog teams. They are an opportunity for puppy raisers to meet their dogs' new handlers and for all volunteers, donors, and supporters to share in the celebration of new independence.
- Graduations are on Saturdays at 1:15 PM in Yorktown Heights. Specific dates can be found on our website: GuidingEyes.org.

Released Dogs

- All released or retired Guiding Eyes dogs are placed in loving homes.
- Dogs that are not suitable for guide or other service work are released from our program as puppies or during various stages of adulthood.
- Some of our dogs that are released choose to become pets and are available for public adoption. These are known as “released puppies” or “released dogs.”
- The wait for young adult dogs is four years. The wait for an eight-week old puppy is two years for a Lab or German Shepherd. Retired guide dogs may also be available for adoption, but there is also a wait of up to three years.

Fundraising

- All services are provided free-of-charge.
- Guiding Eyes receives no government funding.
- Funds are raised through the following avenues:
 - Response marketing
 - Planned giving
 - Corporate, foundation, and major individual giving
 - Events: annual Golf Classic
- There are many ways to designate gifts to specific areas of our work, including:
 - \$ 500: Sponsor a monthly guide dog graduation ceremony
 - \$ 3,000: Special name a puppy
 - \$ 5,000: Have honor gift on a permanent plaque at Guiding Eyes
 - \$10,000: Sponsor the training of a specific guide dog
 - \$50,000: Sponsor a team from breeding to graduation with life time support