



**Guiding  
Eyes**  
for the Blind

# FACT SHEET

## OUR MISSION

Guiding Eyes for the Blind provides guide dogs to people with vision loss. We are passionate about connecting exceptional dogs with individuals for greater independence.

Guiding Eyes is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with all services provided completely free of charge. At Guiding Eyes, we rely upon the contributions of our generous donors to fulfill our mission.

We work out of our Headquarters and Training Center in Yorktown Heights, New York, and our Canine Development Center in Patterson, New York.

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.



## BY THE NUMBERS

It takes up to three years and costs approx. \$50,000 annually to breed, raise and train a dog for a person who is blind. Here's a look at some of the facts and figures that make it all possible:

- More than **65 years experience** (we were founded in **1954** by Donald Kauth)
- More than **500 pups** born annually\*
- **92%** Labrador retrievers, **8%** German Shepherds
- More than **10,000 graduated** guide dog teams
- More than **1,000 active** guide dog teams
- More than **150 guide dogs** placed annually\*
- More than **1,400 volunteers**

## FUNDRAISING

All of our services are provided **free of charge** to people with vision loss. Guiding Eyes receives little to no government funding. Our support comes almost entirely from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

There are many ways to designate gifts to specific areas of our work at Guiding Eyes:

**\$500 - \$2,500**

Sponsor a Monthly  
Graduation Ceremony

**\$1,000 - \$2,500**

Purchase a "Paw" on the  
"Paws of Fame" Donor Wall

**\$5,000**

Special-Name a  
Guiding Eyes Puppy

**\$10,000**

Sponsor the Home or Residential  
Training of a Guide Dog Team

**\$50,000**

Birth to Career Sponsorship of  
a Guide Dog Team



## BREEDING, PUPPY RAISING, FOSTERING & SOCIALIZATION

At the [Canine Development Center](#), established in 1966, we "purpose breed" Guiding Eyes dogs for the health and temperament suited for guide work. More than half of the puppies raised become guide dogs, service dogs, or join our breeding program.



### Puppy Raising

[Volunteer puppy raisers](#) take pups into their homes at approximately eight weeks old and teach them basic obedience and house manners while socializing them to everything the world has to offer! Puppy raisers return the dogs at 12-16 months old, and our senior breeding and training staff determine whether the pups are ready for guide dog training or more suited for another career.

- Potential raisers attend orientation sessions to learn the skills they'll need to start training puppies. They also have the chance to "puppy sit" as a trial experience.
- Raisers attend training classes throughout the time they have their pups.
- Guiding Eyes pays for all of the puppy's veterinary expenses and provides a crate and collar.
- Puppy-raising regions span 14 states: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Colorado.

### Brood & Stud Fostering

[Volunteer fosters](#) provide permanent homes for Guiding Eyes brood and stud dogs. These volunteers provide a safe and loving home environment, keeping the dog on leash when outdoors, and ensuring daily exercise. Like puppy raisers, brood and stud fosters receive training in dog handling, care, and obedience, as well as regular check-ups from our veterinary staff.

### Home & Early Socialization

[Home socializers](#) bring two puppies (age six to nine weeks) to their home for three to five days to expose them to new sights, sounds, and people, with training and equipment provided by Guiding Eyes.

[Early socializers](#) introduce Guiding Eyes pups to new environments and experiences within our puppy center for two-hour periods once per week. These repeated positive experiences help build the puppies' confidence.

### Other Volunteer Opportunities

Guiding Eyes offers a range of volunteer opportunities at home or on campus. On-campus volunteers must be at least 18 years old, and youth under 18 can participate in most off-site opportunities with the support of their families. For the most up-to-date information on these opportunities, visit [GuidingEyes.org](https://www.guidingeyes.org).

## SUCCESSIVE TRAINING & ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (STEP)

Guiding Eyes uses a [relationship-based approach](#) to raising and training our pups, using positive rewards to build a spirit of cooperation and willingness. Dogs raised through this program display significantly increased confidence and focus.



## VETERINARY SERVICES

Guiding Eyes has a [full-service veterinary hospital](#) at both of our locations, with licensed veterinarians and veterinary technicians on staff.

- All dogs in training receive veterinary services, as do puppies within driving distance of our facilities.
- Guiding Eyes staff works with vets around the globe to coordinate care for our puppies and guides further afield.

## GUIDE DOG TRAINING



Our guide dogs spend [three to four 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.

### Did you know?

- Each guide dog is carefully matched with his or her handler based on pace, pull, personality, and other critical factors.
- Guide dogs do not know how to cross the street. Their handlers listen to traffic sounds and determine when it's safe.
- 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.

## RELEASED DOGS

Guiding Eyes spends months getting to know our puppies and dogs, to make sure they're suited for guide work. [Just like people, dogs have different personalities and want different careers.](#) (And for some, that means a career as a pet!)

Dogs that aren't suitable for guide or other service work are released from our program and [placed in loving homes through public adoption.](#) These loving, impeccably bred puppies and dogs are in high demand but are well worth the wait.





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## STUDENT TRAINING PROGRAMS



Guiding Eyes for the Blind is proud to offer a variety of programs, so our students can receive the training that best suits their needs.

### Residential Training

Students spend three weeks at our Yorktown Heights campus to learn how to care for and travel safely with their new guide dogs. Students work out of our White Plains Training Lounge, and the teams culminate the program with a trip to Manhattan during the last week of training.\*

### Specialized Training Program

Provides custom trained guide dogs for people who have vision loss as well as additional challenges such as hearing loss or balance issues.

### Running Guides

Guiding Eyes is the only guide dog school to offer Running Guides, training dogs to run alongside their handlers. Running guide dogs expand their handler's exercise options by allowing them to run outside independently.

### Home Training

This program takes our dogs and training staff to the home of students who cannot attend the Residential Program.



## GRADUATION

Graduation is the culmination of training for our guide dog teams. Graduation ceremonies, whether virtual or in-person, [celebrate newly matched guide dog teams](#) and are an opportunity for puppy raisers, volunteers, donors, and supporters to share in the celebration.

Graduation ceremonies are held two Fridays per month. Although these intimate gatherings are not open to the public, a link to the recorded event is provided on [GuidingEyes.org](https://www.guidingeyes.org).



\* These figures represent an average under normal operating procedures. As expected, they differed during the pandemic, when we moved to an all Home Training model, with Virtual Graduations and a decrease in whelping, to keep our students, staff, and volunteers as safe as possible.