



**Guiding
Eyes**
for the Blind

THE JOURNEY OF A GUIDE DOG

OUR MISSION

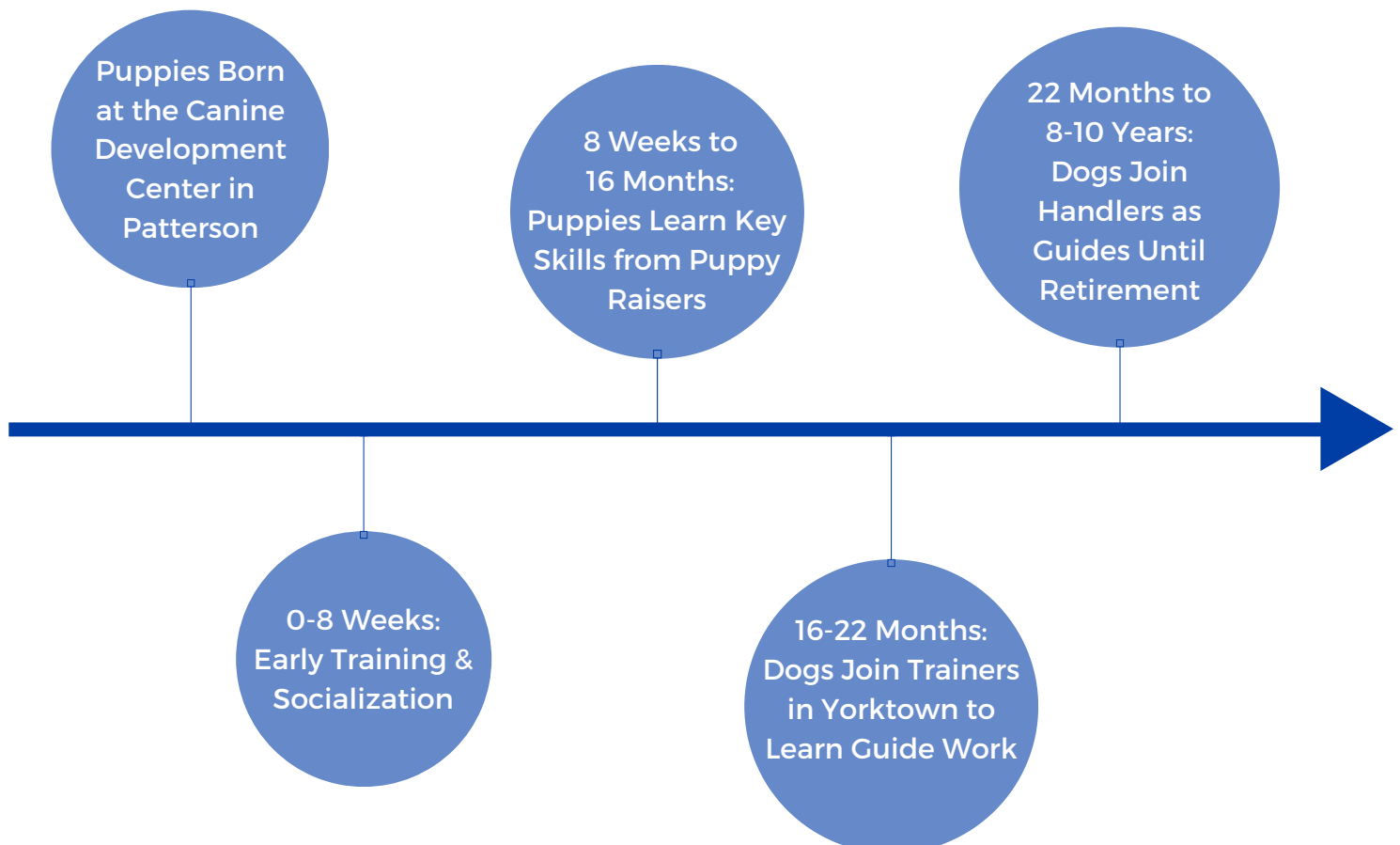
Guiding Eyes for the Blind provides guide dogs to people with vision loss. We are passionate about connecting exceptional dogs with individuals for greater independence.

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.

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.



JOURNEY AT A GLANCE





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FROM "PUPPY WITH A PURPOSE" TO GUIDE DOG

How do adorable puppies become Guiding Eyes dogs? The “magic” begins at our Canine Development Center in Patterson, New York.

THE GUIDING EYES BREEDING COLONY

In 1993, we became the first guide dog school in North America to establish a state-of-the-art reproduction program with cryogenics and transcervical insemination. We share our expertise generously with and at no charge with guide dog schools around the world, and we're proud to be the international leader in guide dog breeding.

BROODS AND STUDS

Only the most exceptional Guiding Eyes dogs become members of our breeding colony. Our team collects massive amounts of genetic and temperament data on all Guiding Eyes dogs, and uses this information to determine optimum breeding matches. Guiding Eyes entrusts the health, safety, and well-being of these dogs to foster volunteers, who agree to take a dog into their home - usually for the dog's lifetime - and return the dog when needed to Guiding Eyes for breeding.

WHELPING

Whelping, the process of giving birth, is one of the most exciting events at the CDC. We work closely with the brood dog to help ensure a healthy pregnancy and delivery, assist her during her whelp, and assure that her medical and emotional needs are met. Our Whelping Kennel team cares for the brood and her pups until the mother is ready to return home to her foster family, and the pups are ready to leave the Whelping Kennel.

BREEDING FOR HEALTH & TEMPERAMENT



Our professional breeding staff look for a set of temperament and genetic characteristics that are most predictive of a dog's potential for success as guide dog. These traits include being medium-sized, healthy, calm, easy to handle, confident and not distracted by other dogs.



EARLY TRAINING & SOCIALIZATION

A puppy's first step in preparing for guide dog work is to develop a bond of trust with a person. Our relationship-based approach begins to build these bonds as soon as our puppies are born. Puppies are introduced to their names as early as three days old, and volunteer socializers massage the puppies in their kennels while "cooing" their names to them. This results in the puppies being more responsive to instruction when it is introduced, and helps to accelerate building the important puppy-person bond.

Puppies, like humans, are more accepting of a variety of stimuli if they are exposed at an early age. From birth to 16 weeks, the pups undergo a period of rapid brain development.

As we start socializing puppies to the human voice and touch, we also begin to evaluate our puppies' temperaments. Some are "natural" guide dog material, while others need specialized training techniques that will enable them to become guide dogs. We look for patterns of behavior that indicate how well the puppy adapts to change – such as quickness of learning, energy level, reactions to noises, and interest in novel objects. Another key indicator is how willing the puppy is to pay attention to people, even when tempted by a scent or another dog.

With careful observation and at least two formal temperament evaluations, we decide on the training program and, sometimes, the career path that best suits each puppy. Puppies demonstrating less adaptability are often the ones who prefer to be cuddled – these puppies make ideal pets. Others with high energy and strong preferences to sniff and pursue their own instinctual interests may be placed as future search and rescue dogs.

PUPPY RAISING



Our volunteer corps of 500 puppy raisers includes caring individuals and families from all walks of life. The relationship and bond between the raiser and pup is part of the foundation for all the life lessons a guide dog needs to master. Raisers provide hours of patient teaching and socialization over a 12 to 16 month period.

As young adults, the pups return to Guiding Eyes for the Blind headquarters for guide dog training. All dogs receive complete physical examinations and must pass a rigorous "In for Training" evaluation before entering the training program.

Our Puppy Raising community is a dedicated one: nearly 70 percent are repeat raisers!



GUIDE DOG TRAINING

At 15 - 18 months old, puppies are passed from volunteer raiser to professional training staff at our Headquarters and Training Center. Each dog is assigned to an instructor, who continues to build the dog-human bond and establish a trusting relationship, and works with the dog for at least five months.

Training is a structured and continuous process, taught in a progression of lessons, each one building upon those before it, with hundreds of repetitions. Dogs are ready for placement with a blind partner when they respond reliably and safely to all work situations they will encounter while guiding.

Training is a continuous process, broken into four key phases:

- **Phase I:** Basic commands, obstacle avoidance, and curb training
- **Phase II:** New environments and unusual surfaces
- **Phase III:** Performing tasks on their own initiative and responding reliably in a variety of situations
- **Phase IV:** Fine tuning, focus in distracting environments, and "intelligent disobedience"

THE GUIDE DOG TEAM

Once a dog is ready for guide work, we work to create thoughtful pairings between students and their guide dogs. Students can select from a variety of training options for the program that best suits their needs, and we provide lifetime support for the guide dog team.

- **On-Campus Training:** Three weeks of on-site training, recommended for most students
- **Specialized Training:** Provides custom trained guide dogs for people who have vision loss as well as additional challenges such as hearing loss or balance issues
- **Home Training:** For those who can't attend the residential training due to work, family obligations, or other personal reasons
- **Running Guides:** A first-of-its-kind option for athletes with vision loss to learn to run guided by their dogs

RETIRED GUIDE DOGS

A guide dog that is retired from service usually lives with its blind partner, or the partner's family or friends as a pet. Sometimes, dogs are returned to Guiding Eyes and placed with their original puppy raisers or another adopter. As with all of our graduates, we are committed to caring for our dogs from the moment of their birth throughout their lives.