**Graduate Council Bios 2024**

**Pat Leahy and Guiding Eyes Hogan**

Council President

Hi Fellow Graduates, Pat, and Hogan here. We’re looking forward to continuing our work with the Guiding Eyes’ family. It’s an honor to serve as Council President for the 2024-2025 term. For the past 30 years, I’ve been fortunate to have guide dogs help me navigate daily life. Guiding Eyes for the Blind provided all four of my exceptional guides. My current pup Hogan and I were matched in June of 2018. We live on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

I grew up in Timonium, Maryland and have been blind since birth (with just a little bit of peripheral vision). Hogan grew up in the Cleveland suburbs with his great puppy raisers, Jeanne, Vicki, and Larry. A big shout-out to all those hard-working puppy raisers and thank you for your dedication!

Over the years, I’ve served Members of Congress and a Cabinet Secretary. I currently work for the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, ensuring elections across the nation are secure and accessible. During my free time, I enjoy meeting up with friends, volunteering at the local American Legion, gardening, working out at the gym, performing stand-up comedy, and playing the harmonica and drums.

As for Hogan, he likes his commute to the office on the DC subway, playing fetch in the long hallway at the office (shh, it’s our little secret), and chilling at the park. Most of all though, Hogan loves being a guide dog and hanging out with me. Like he always says, “Being a guide is fun work and a cool career.” Please reach out to us with any questions or just to say hi.

Contact Pat and Hogan

Washington, D.C.

Email: Pat.r.leahy@gmail.com

**Judy Mathews and Guiding Eyes Lyons**

Council Vice-President

Hello, fellow graduates! My name is Judy Mathews, and I have been part of the Guiding Eyes family since 2014, when I was blessed to be partnered with my second guide dog, a mellow yellow fellow named Keats. I live in Colorado Springs with my husband, Casey, my current guide, Lyons, my retired guide, Keats, and our adopted retired PTSD dog, Spike. Lyons is a very curious and spunky black lab. He was raised in Lyons, New York, by his fabulous first family, the Kesels. He was the school mascot for Lyons Senior High School, where Tara Kesel teaches social studies. Lyons was a special-named puppy, named for the school and community, as well as a Pathfinder Dog, which indicates that someone included Guiding Eyes in their estate planning and was able to follow Lyons’s progress through training. I was born in Cuba, grew up in Florida, and lived there until 2020 when we moved to Colorado. I have my bachelor’s degree in music therapy, and my master’s in visual disabilities. I have been in the field of vision rehabilitation since 2003, and currently work for the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as an Assistive Technology Specialist. I enjoy spending time with family and loved ones, reading, music, coffee, shopping, traveling, hiking and tandem cycling, playing all types of games, and getting out and about with Casey and Lyons. Lyons enjoys a good meal, as any self-respecting Labrador does, tugging, squeaking his toys, or heartily chomping on his bones, exploring, guiding mom anywhere she needs to go, especially to the nearest coffee shop, and playing with his buddy, Keats.

I keep a guide dog blog where I occasionally write about our adventures. Feel free to check it out at:

JudysDogBlog.WordPress.com. - this link opens in a new tab

I am honored to be serving on the Grad Council and look forward to connecting with each of you at some point. Feel free to reach out to me if I can ever be of assistance or support.

Contact Judy and Lyons

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Email: PawsitiveJ@gmail.com

**Pam McGonigle and Guiding Eyes Mary**

Council Corresponding Secretary

Greetings GEB Graduates,

My name is Pam McGonigle, and my guide dog is Mary. Mary is my third guide dog from Guiding Eyes, and she follows in the footsteps of Kirstie, my first guide dog, and Maida my first running guide. Mary and I were matched in April of 2023 and reside in Ardmore, PA where we live with my husband John, my son JT, and Maida.

During the day I serve as the Director of Development & Communications at Overbrook School for the Blind where I lead a team in all aspects of fundraising and communications.

I enjoyed a long career as a Paralympic track athlete, so I enjoy all things athletic, especially running, weightlifting, and hiking.

It is an honor to have been selected to serve on the Graduate Council and I look forward to serving you. Please reach out if I can be of assistance or if you’re a running guide team and are looking for ideas or tricks of the trade. I’d love to hear from you. I believe working together will strengthen the community as well as allow each of us to grow individually.

Contact Pam and Mary

Ardmore, PA

[P\_mcgonigle@hotmail.com](mailto:P_mcgonigle@hotmail.com)

**Alex Reese and Guiding Eyes Ballou**

Council Recording Secretary

Hey GEB Community. I am Alex Reese, one of your new graduate council members! I received my first guide dog, Ballou, in November 2022. I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia and received my B.A. in Mathematics from Wake Forest University. I was diagnosed with uveitis when I was 14 years old. It was a slow decline over the last 19 years, but I lost the remainder of my sight over a year ago due to uveitis and glaucoma. I moved to New York City in 2015 once I stopped driving. I work at a media agency where I have spent the last 9 years doing national television buying for Subway and General Motors. I am also passionate about stand-up comedy, playing cards, fishing, going to concerts and the Atlanta Braves! I am so grateful for everything the GEB community has done for me. I am so excited to serve on the council and look forward to making more new friends! Please reach out to me anytime if you have questions or just want to chat!

Contact Alex and Ballou

New York, New York

Email: alexreese518@gmail.com

**Ashley Townsend and Guiding Eyes Lolly**

Hello, Guiding Eyes Family!

My name is Ashley Townsend, and my guide dog’s name is Lolly—formally known as Ms. Pop. Lolly is my second guide, and my first from Guiding Eyes. We were matched in May of 2022, and she has been infusing every aspect of my life with joy and freedom ever since. She is an exuberant black lab running guide who is bright and adventure-loving—and has a reputation for being the perfect combo of goofball and genius.

We live in Denver, Colorado and enjoy long walks on our neighborhood trail, navigating the hustle and bustle of the city, and hiking in the beautiful mountainous terrain. Our little family consists of me and my awesome fiancé Matt, Lolly, and Maya the cat. My interests include singing, all things music and theater, playing with animals, cooking, and being outside. I am a music therapist and licensed clinical social worker with a passion for working with individuals with complex trauma in my own private practice as well as facilitating group therapy for individuals in recovery. As a licensed therapist and guide dog handler myself—I am passionate about the journeys of gratitude, grief, and growth that we all face with our guides. I am here to support you in your journey as it unfolds.

I am so honored to serve on the Graduate Council and to be a part of the Guiding Eyes Family! I can’t wait to get to know you and hope that you will reach out any time!

Ashley & Lolly Pop

Contact Ashley and Lolly:

Denver, Colorado

Email: Ashleytownsend421@gmail.com

**Mariana Canalizo and Guiding Eyes Einstein**

Hello, everyone. My name is Mariana. I live in Miami with my second amazing guide dog, a yellow lab named Einstein. His name truly fits him—he is such a smart boy!

Einstein and I love to travel, go to the park and the beach, go kayaking, and do pretty much anything that keeps us outside and having fun! Einstein and I have been a team since February 2022. I've been part of the GEB community since 2019, when I got my first guide dog, Hodge.

I am currently a student of counseling in rehabilitation at UMass Boston. I have also been a client and a volunteer at different organizations that provide services to individuals with vision loss. After experiencing the magnificent changes those services brought to my life, I was motivated to become a counselor in rehabilitation and be part of someone else's path to a more independent and satisfactory life. This is why I love GEB's mission and community so much. I am extremely happy and thrilled to be part of this community and now part of the graduate council.

Please feel free to reach out to me and Einstein.

Contact Mariana and Einstein

Miami, FL

Email: mcanalizo14@gmail.com

**Jose Lopez-Masso and Guiding Eyes Louis**

Dear fellow graduates!

I was born in Venezuela, but I spent much of my youth in Germany. I ultimately earned my MBA from the Business School of Hamburg and a Juris Doctor in International Private Law from University Andres Bello in Caracas, Venezuela.

I then followed in my father’s footsteps and became a diplomat. I served for five years as Head of the Venezuelan Diplomatic Mission in Germany, where I was responsible for moving the embassy from Bonn, the site of the West Germany capitol, to Berlin, the location of the new United Germany capitol, among other duties.

I suddenly lost my vision at age 31 due to glaucoma followed by multiple, unsuccessful surgeries and left my successful life in Berlin and moved to South Florida. I came to the Lighthouse of Broward for assistance shortly thereafter, in 2002. The Lighthouse provided me with the tools and training to help me regain my independence. After six years as a client, I stepped into the role of Director of Development at the Lighthouse and was promoted to VP of Strategic Initiatives and Development in 2018.

During my journey, I found peace of mind by having a guide dog. My first canine companion was Clemens in 2003. Nine years later, I was happy to have Hartley as my new guide dog and friend. In November of 2022, Louis joined our family.

All my treasured puppies came from Guiding Eyes for the Blind, for which I am extremely grateful. Clemens and Hartley were great friends. And my new dog, Louis, is a well-loved companion. I bonded closely with them all – and they all have significantly helped me in my life.

Since 2013, I have been very proud to serve on the Royal Caribbean Advisory Board representing special needs passengers and assisting with ADA issues. And now, I am truly honored to serve on the Guiding Eyes for the Blind Council. Thank you for this meaningful opportunity.

Contact Jose and Louis

Deerfield Beach, Florida

Email: redescal@hotmail.com

**Tina Reisner and Guiding Eyes Kahlua**

Hello, fellow grads! My name is Tina Reisner, and I live in Salt Lake City, Utah! My love for Guiding Eyes runs deep as I have been part of the GEB family for fifteen years! I am working with my second guide dog, a German shepherd named Kahlua, who became my partner in 2018.

I serve as the leader of a guide dog division in Utah and have enjoyed connection, networking, and advocacy work with my state NFB Affiliate.

I have a master's degree in rehabilitation teaching for the blind and work as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, where I get the opportunity to meet some dynamic, amazing blind/low-vision consumers!

Some of my hobbies include running, swimming, singing, traveling, and hiking. You will most likely find Kahlua and me hiking in a canyon or traveling somewhere exciting! I am grateful to serve alongside some dynamic individuals on the Guiding Eyes Grad Council and am looking forward to connecting with each of you!

Contact Tina and Kahlua

Salt Lake City, Utah

Email: Tinabell92@gmail.com

**Tim Utzig and Guiding Eyes Alisa**

Hello fellow Guiding Eyes graduates, my name is Tim Utzig, and I am the proud handler of Alisa, an 8-year-old yellow Labrador. I got Alisa in 2017, and she helped me to graduate successfully with majors in Journalism and Political Science. I am currently studying for a Master's in Podcasting in London, which has led to the launch of "Taking Off the Shades" the podcast. I love playing Goalball, running, tandem biking, watching sports, traveling, and going to Dunkin.

Alisa and I have traveled all over the world together, from London, Dublin, and Paris, to Los Angeles and the Bahamas. She is a small 50-pound Labrador with a lot of spunk and drive. I look forward to seeing even more of the world with Alisa! I am excited to have the opportunity to serve on the Guiding Eyes for the Blind Graduate Council and look forward to the chance to interact with all the great graduates.

Contact Tim and Alisa

Washington, DC

Email: thetimutzig@gmail.com