



STAGES OF  
*The Seeing Eye*  
JOURNEY



STAGE 2:

# *Puppy Raising*



The  
Seeing  
Eye®

## Where we are in the life stages (2 of 5)



Age range of a dog in this stage  
7-8 weeks to 13-16 months old

# ***Introduction:***

**T**he Seeing Eye journey involves more than a wonderful dog. It takes an entire village of caring, dedicated professionals, volunteers and donors, as well as a tremendous amount of resources, time, energy and patience to help a puppy become a dog that will transform the life of person who is blind or visually impaired. Come along with us as we explore each stage of The Seeing Eye journey and the many contributing factors to a working guide dog team's ultimate success.

# *It Starts With A Car Ride*





**W**hen a Seeing Eye puppy reaches the age of seven or eight weeks, they leave our campus. They climb into a car to travel to the home of a volunteer puppy raiser.

# *What Is A Puppy Raiser?*

**T**he puppy raiser is an incredibly important part of a Seeing Eye dog's journey. Our mission can only be accomplished with their help. A puppy raiser commits to providing a loving and nurturing home environment for approximately one year. They get the dog off to a good start by teaching the puppy basic obedience, house manners, good behavior, and providing socialization.

## **Did You Know?**

-  In 75 years of puppy raising, we have had thousands of volunteer puppy raisers.
-  Seeing Eye puppies are raised primarily in New Jersey, New York, eastern Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

# *Can I Become A Puppy Raiser?*

**A**nyone who lives within the area mentioned can apply to be a puppy raiser. They must have the time to make the year-long commitment and be able



to provide a safe, stable home environment for a puppy. The locale doesn't really matter. Puppy raisers live in urban, rural or suburban settings. Anyone wishing to raise a Seeing Eye puppy must first attend meetings of a local puppy raiser club for several months before they are approved to receive a puppy.

# ***The Paw-fect Fit***



## **Puppy Raiser Checklist:**

- 🐾 Can you expose the puppy to the world?
- 🐾 Can you attend club meetings on a regular basis?
- 🐾 Can you spend enough time with a puppy?  
Either at home or at work?

# Join The Club!

**W**hether you are raising your first Seeing Eye puppy or your fortieth, it's good to have the support of people who share similar experiences. That's why all Seeing Eye puppy raisers belong to a club in their county. Each club is run by a volunteer leader— a more experienced puppy raiser who has received specialized training. The clubs offer the puppy raiser the support, training and the guidance necessary to raise a puppy



The Seeing Eye way. At club meetings puppy raisers share ideas and information, work on training techniques, and participate in socialization outings.



# *More Than 75 Years of Puppies*



**T**he Seeing Eye's Puppy Raising program was founded in 1942. Initially all Seeing Eye puppy-raising clubs were aligned with 4-H, the nation's largest youth development organization. Due to an increased interest in adults raising puppies some clubs are not affiliated with 4-H. In addition to children and their families, we also have puppy raisers who are college students, retirees, and everything in between.

# *The Importance of a Puppy Coordinator*

**O**ur puppy development staff includes 6 coordinators for puppy development. Each puppy coordinator oversees 7 or 8 puppy raiser clubs. The coordinator is always just a phone call or email away, night and day, to answer questions or provide assistance.



# All You Need Is Love

**m**any animal trainers use treats or food to train dogs, but we ask our puppy raisers to use only patience



and praise. If the puppy has difficulty understanding what it must do, we recommend giving the dog time to process what is wanted. When the puppy obeys, even if not perfectly or by chance, we still give it praise. Using this approach, the puppies catch on quickly and become eager learners.

# *Equipping Raisers for Success*



**B**efore puppy raisers receive a puppy, they receive a comprehensive folder containing information, commands, tips and guidelines. Although the puppy raisers are all volunteers and receive no pay, The Seeing Eye pays veterinary costs and gives raisers a stipend for food and other puppy expenses. The raisers are responsible for providing toys, bedding and any other supplies for their puppy.

# *When The Call Comes*

Once they've received some training through a puppy raising club a potential puppy raiser waits for the call that a puppy is available. Because the number of puppies we have fluctuates, a raiser may wait 2 weeks or 6 months for that call. But once it comes, a Seeing Eye staffer makes arrangements to drop the puppy off at the house.



# *The Adjustment*

**A**lthough, they've been away from their mom since weaning, it's definitely an adjustment for the puppy to be in a new home and away from their littermates. Luckily, their new human family fills that void quickly.



# *Puppies Unleashed*

**W**hen the puppy raiser receives a puppy at 7 weeks, the puppy can already sit on command, has been



exposed to leash training, and has begun to go outside to relieve herself. She's eager to learn and ready to go!

We ask our puppy raisers to use a few specific commands in training their pup. When a puppy jumps up on people or furniture, the command is, “off!” And instead of “stay,” we use the command “rest.”

# Get Out There

**W**e ask our puppy raisers to try to expose their dog to as many situations as possible, so they take the dogs nearly everywhere they go. The puppies become familiar with shops, malls, parades and traffic. Many puppy raisers even take their dogs to their local house of worship. The dog learns to lie quietly at the feet of its raiser in meetings, cars, trains and buses. Some airports even allow puppy raising clubs to practice boarding and going through security with their puppies.

## Did You Know?



Puppy raisers are encouraged to take dogs on stairs and elevators to give them practice, but only professional Seeing Eye trainers can take puppies on escalators.



# Keeping Your Home Safe

All young dogs like to chew and can destroy articles of clothing, carpets and even furniture. Some puppies chew on unexpected things such as remotes, cell phones, car keys, sewing needles, socks and even thumb tacks! We ask puppy raisers to supervise them closely and divert the puppy's attention with appropriate toys.



“There’s nothing that encourages neatness like having a young dog in the house!”

**PEGGY GIBBON**

Director of Canine Development

## Did You Know?

Spritzing chair and table legs with “Bitter Apple” spray may keep dogs away from them. They don’t like the taste.

# *Preferences and Timing*

Sometimes a puppy raiser has a preference for the gender, breed and color of the puppy they receive.



We encourage everyone to be flexible with the puppies they get.

Occasionally a new puppy is delivered to a raiser while the older puppy is still living with them. It's an advantage since the older puppy can teach the new puppy things. Some puppy raisers prefer the overlap so they are never dogless.

# Dogged Determination

If there is something significant that will keep a dog from being a guide then it's best for the puppy, the family and the program for us to make that decision early. However, we work hard with each individual puppy and family to resolve any problem they may be having. Sometimes we can move the puppy to another family, and the puppy may do better in that situation. We work with as many options as we can.



# Plan B

**A**bout 65% of the dogs make it through the entire Seeing Eye program. If a puppy does not graduate from the program, the family who raised the puppy is offered the first option to adopt. We'll share more about the adoption process in a later stage.



# *Vest In Show*

Once a dog reaches six months, they reach their first important milestone – the opportunity to receive their vest. The puppy raiser must demonstrate in a public place that their puppy can follow commands and behave well. When puppies are “vested,” they are allowed to wear a special Seeing Eye vest. Up until then, they wear a little bandana that identifies them as a Seeing Eye puppy.

The Seeing Eye vest helps the puppy get used to wearing something on their body and eases the transition to wearing a harness during formal training.



# *The Puppy Promise*

**W**e ask each of our puppy raisers to take “The Puppy Promise.” That’s a pledge they make not to go searching for the puppy or the puppy’s new owner once they graduate. In this way, we consider it a “closed adoption” in a sense.



Why do we have this policy? We don’t facilitate or encourage contact because we are a strong proponent of privacy for both parties. Once the dog graduates, the puppy raiser gets a letter and a graduation photo and a note that tells a little about the person and their life.

# *Why Do They Do It?*

**A**s you can see from this photo book, raising a puppy is a challenging and fairly selfless thing to do. It's a lot of work that benefits someone the puppy raiser will never even meet.



Most puppy raisers consider what they do a civic service. They also receive the enjoyment of having a young dog in their home and the knowledge that they're doing something incredibly special for someone else. The dogs would not be able to do the great work they do if they didn't have this essential background in a loving home.

# A Boost of Confidence



**P**arents of children who raise puppies go on and on about how much their children learn, grow and gain confidence through the experience.

*“Raising a Seeing Eye puppy is a great way for children to experience the value of giving back to the community, or a project for people who are retired and looking to contribute their time to a good cause.”*

**PEGGY GIBBON**

Director of Canine Development at The Seeing Eye



# How Do They Do It?

**A**s you might imagine, it can be difficult to relinquish a dog you've loved and raised for a year. How can the volunteers bear to do it? We'll let the puppy raisers answer that question themselves.



*“Of course it hurts. They become a part of your life, a part of your family. But from the beginning, you know it’s not your puppy. Your mission is to make this dog the best potential guide they can be. You are raising them to be a wonderful partner for somebody.”*

**-TRACY CRIMMINS**

Hopatcong, NJ 3-time puppy raiser

# Our Amazing Raisers



“ I’ve had people to say to me, ‘Oh, I bet you want your puppy to fail, just so you can keep her for yourself.’ That’s the opposite of how I feel! It’s like sending your kid off to college. Of course you love them, but you absolutely want them to leave you and succeed. That’s the mission. If the dog didn’t make it, that would be enormously disappointing.”

**MIRANDA MEADE**

Randolph, NJ 6-time puppy raiser

# Celebrating The Families

Each August, The Seeing Eye holds a big Family Day Celebration on campus to thank all our puppy raisers. We make sure to keep it fun and educational. Instructors give dog-training exhibitions. We have informational tables and videos, and we always make sure to have Seeing Eye graduates present.

“*There’s a lot of gratitude for the sacrifice the families make. The entire staff and the graduates feel a very real commitment to thank those who got a dog off to such a great start. We couldn’t offer these superstar guide dogs without their help.*”

**PEGGY GIBBON**

Director of Canine Development at The Seeing Eye

# *The Exclusive 21 Club*

**A** third of puppy raisers have never done it before. But two thirds of the families are repeating the experience.

Once you raise your 21st puppy, you are granted admission into a very elite club. The 21 Club has 47 members. Each member receives a commemorative engraved plaque and special recognition at Family Day.

Some legendary Seeing Eye puppy raisers include Virginia Knoll, who is currently awaiting her 66th puppy! And Evelyn Henderson and her family of 26 foster children who raised more than 200 puppies!

# Off They Go!

Once the puppies reach 13-16 months old, they return to our campus to begin their professional training... and a whole new adventure begins.

*That's Stage 3: Training!*

