

## **The Seeing Eye Information for Applicants**

Since its founding in 1929, The Seeing Eye has helped thousands of blind men and women to lead more productive, independent lives with specially bred and trained Seeing Eye dogs to guide them.

Qualified blind people come to The Seeing Eye in Morristown, New Jersey, from all over the United States and Canada with a shared goal: to learn to travel safely and efficiently with the help of a Seeing Eye dog.

After a 26-day course of instruction, they return to their homes, families, friends, careers and hobbies, able to go places and do things independently and with self-confidence.

### **THE SEEING EYE**

The Seeing Eye has placed more than 13,000 Seeing Eye dogs in service to blind people. Its graduates work in dozens of different occupations.

The Seeing Eye breeds its own German shepherds, Labrador retrievers, Golden retrievers and Labrador-Golden retriever crossbreeds. Occasionally, other breeds are acquired through purchase or gift.

The school is located just outside Morristown, New Jersey, which is about 30 miles west of New York City and convenient to Newark Liberty Airport. It is a thriving community with many shops and professional offices. The Seeing Eye setting, on 55 acres, offers optimum training opportunities in both rural and urban environments.

The Seeing Eye is a philanthropy, supported by contributions, trusts, bequests and endowment income. It receives no government aid.

### **TEAMWORK: YOU AND YOUR DOG**

You, as the handler, must know where you want to go, and must direct the dog with the verbal commands, "Forward," "Right" and "Left." The dog stops for steps, curbs and traffic, and leads you around overhanging obstructions, broken pavement, pedestrians and other obstacles. The dog will guide you safely and efficiently, both indoors and outside.

As you verbally direct your dog, his physical response is communicated to you through the harness and its rigid, U-shaped handle, which you hold in your left hand.

As you win your dog's affection, he responds to your commands and control. You reward the dog with verbal praise for work well done. As trust and confidence improve, so does your teamwork. This partnership between the handler and the dog guide is developed through mutual respect, which comes from shared responsibility. The handler needs to know where they are going and how to get there. The dog's responsibility is to get you there without bumping into anything.

When you are in unfamiliar surroundings, you ask directions as any sighted person might. By asking good questions and soliciting concrete details, you build a mental map of the environment. As a result, and in partnership with a Seeing Eye dog, you can travel when and where you wish.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Those individuals selected for instruction at The Seeing Eye must demonstrate average balance, stamina and coordination. Applicants must also have independent travel skills. You must be willing and able to give your dog enough work to maintain his training; The Seeing Eye recommends a minimum of one mile each day. The capacity to absorb and apply instructions in the use and care of a Seeing Eye dog is important. Formal schooling is not a requirement for success with a Seeing Eye dog. Most Seeing Eye students are totally blind or have only light perception. On occasion, The Seeing Eye accepts people with some useful remaining vision, when their vision is found to be unreliable for independent travel purposes. Those with hearing loss may qualify, if they can determine the direction of traffic sounds with reasonable and consistent accuracy.

Blind and visually impaired people who are in their late teens or older and in good physical condition may apply directly to The Seeing Eye.

The application process consists of an application form, three letters of reference, medical information and a personal visit. Once all paperwork is in, a decision is made and you are notified promptly. Class dates are assigned after eligibility is determined. Pursuing an application indicates your commitment to live an active lifestyle.

## **IN-RESIDENCE INSTRUCTION**

Students at The Seeing Eye live in a spacious, comfortably furnished residence during the time they spend at the school learning to work with and care for their dogs. All students have a single room with private bath, telephone, radio/CD player, and LC modified cassette. The entire student residence offers wireless access to the Internet for those who bring their own laptop computers.

The in-residence instruction period is 26 days for a first dog, 19 days for a replacement dog. There are generally 20-24 students in residence each month. Each class is divided into smaller groups conducted by a team of instructors. In most cases, the student/instructor ratio is four to one.

Seeing Eye instructors are men and women who learn their work through a rigorous, three-year apprenticeship. They know how to prepare a dog for guide work and how to teach you to use a dog effectively. You are matched with a dog that has spent the previous four months learning its job. Each dog has been tested repeatedly for responsibility and safety in traffic, and trained to ignore distractions like other dogs, birds, and squirrels. Once assigned to you, your dog lives with you 24 hours a day.

After learning the basics, you receive much of your instruction in downtown Morristown, under actual traffic conditions. You must practice to develop a comfortable working rhythm. By the end of the instruction period, you are prepared to travel anywhere in urban or rural areas, on foot or public transportation.

## **AT HOME**

Your dog serves as your guide because he wants to; his affection for and desire to please you is the foundation of your working relationship. If the dog's attention to duty occasionally wanders, it's up to you to implement the simple steps you learned at The Seeing Eye to refocus your dog's attention on his work. By the time you leave Morristown, you will know how to control and manage your dog at home, on the job, in social situations and elsewhere.

By law, your Seeing Eye dog is allowed to accompany you in all public places and accommodations. Although you may choose occasionally to leave him/her home, your Seeing Eye dog has been taught to behave properly in stores, restaurants, theaters and at parties.

A Seeing Eye dog has been raised in a family environment, and gets along with children, neighbors and trades people. Your family and friends will become fond of him. But he should be, first and foremost, a working dog, responsible for your safety and under your direct control.

You need no special equipment other than the leash, harness and set of grooming tools, which are provided along with your instruction at The Seeing Eye. At home, your dog should have dishes for food and water and a few toys for when he is "off duty."

Dog food and veterinary health check-ups average about \$35 to \$50 (U.S. funds) a month. It takes five to ten minutes each day to brush and comb your dog. Bathing is rarely necessary.

## **AT WORK**

Seeing Eye graduates say that their employers and colleagues welcome a well-behaved, well-groomed Seeing Eye dog.

Following your commands, your Seeing Eye dog will guide you to your office, workbench, or restrooms. During working hours, he can stay near you, out of the way of other people. The Seeing Eye recommends that the dog be restrained in the workplace, thus keeping the dog from getting into mischief or causing embarrassment.

Dogs are very adaptable, and, with consistency, an airing schedule of four to five times a day can be established. You may give him water during regular relief periods, and use your lunch hour for a midday airing.

## **FEE & OWNERSHIP POLICY**

You are expected to assume part of the cost of your training. The amount for which you are responsible is \$150 (\$225 Canadian) for your first dog and \$50 (\$75 Canadian) for each subsequent dog. A nominal charge of \$1 applies to people who have lost their sight in military service to their country. This includes your dog, its initial training and equipment; instruction with the dog; room and board; and round-trip air transportation from anywhere in the United States and Canada. You may make payments over a period of years interest-free in amounts as small as one dollar, so there is never any hardship. The Seeing Eye expects students to pay this cost themselves as their commitment to owning and caring for their Seeing Eye dogs. The ownership policy that The Seeing Eye has maintained since its early history exemplifies the independence of its graduates. When you complete the program, you own your dog. The Seeing Eye does not in any way retain ownership rights; it makes every effort to provide its service to people who are responsible. The Seeing Eye believes that pride of ownership, self-respect and self-esteem are significant factors that contribute to the success that our graduates enjoy.

If at any time you have a question about your dog, The Seeing Eye is only a letter, email, or toll-free phone call away.

We welcome the opportunity to provide you with further information. You can contact us in the following ways:

The Seeing Eye

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Morristown, NJ 07963-0375

Phone 800-539-4425

Fax 973-539-0922

Email: [admissions@seeingeye.org](mailto:admissions@seeingeye.org)

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