



# Special Gifts

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT GUIDING EYES FOR THE BLIND

Issue #3

**"Your dog will guide you, love you, and protect you."**

**Every Guiding Eyes graduate has a story. Each one, in its own way, describes acts of courage, determination, and faith.**

*Max Edelman's story was featured in the July 29, 2009 issue of USA Today.*

"I was blinded in a Nazi concentration camp at the age of 21, and arrived in America with my late wife in 1951. We worked and raised two sons, and now, at 86, I have five grandchildren. For most of those years, I depended on a white cane. My problem, although I was reluctant to admit it, was that I had a fear of getting too close to dogs.

But the day I retired, I decided to apply for a guide dog at Guiding Eyes for the Blind. I so much wanted the freedom a dog could give me; I had to make the attempt.

Charlie, our class supervisor, had a few cheerful welcoming words for the twelve of us that arrived in Yorktown Heights in May 1990. But afterwards, I took Charlie aside and said, 'I would like to have a guide dog. But because of my negative experiences with dogs, I am not sure I could ever bond with one.' Charlie asked to hear my story.

'I am a Holocaust survivor,' I said. 'In one of the Nazi concentration camps I was in, the commandant had a big, vicious German Shepherd. Sometimes, when he entertained guests and wanted to show how cruel he could be, or how vicious his dog was (or both), he told a guard to bring a group of inmates into his courtyard. Once, before I was blinded, I was in that group. I watched as he chose one of us to stand apart. Then he gave the dog the command, 'Fass!' meaning 'Fetch!' With one leap, the dog grabbed the victim by the throat. The man died in just a few minutes, and the dog returned to his master for his reward. More than four decades later, nightmares about this still torment me,' I confided to Charlie.

After a moment of reflection, Charlie said, 'No human being is born evil; some become evil. No dog is born vicious; some are trained to be vicious. Give us a chance to prove to you that our dogs will guide you safely, love you, and protect you.'

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**Carmina Martire** was brimming with excitement as she entered the Assistive Technology Center. She was about to show her new guide Darien to her family in Rome, using the Skype webcam.

**Pawel Wdowik** came from Poland to receive Ferd, a black Labrador retriever. Pawel is director of a government agency that serves the disabled. Today he and Ferd proudly and safely walk to work and take business trips all over the world.

Traveling for eleven hours from Brazil to Guiding Eyes for her first guide was quite a feat for **Christiane Soares**. Her nervousness quickly subsided when she met her dog Yvonne and realized that the staff would do everything possible to make them a successful team.

*Carmina  
Martire and  
Guiding  
Eyes  
Darien*

Carmina, Pawel, and Christiane are among the dozens of international students who choose Guiding Eyes for their guide dog training, and who call Guiding Eyes their "other home."

# Guiding Eyes Around the World

As an acknowledged leader among guide dog schools, Guiding Eyes for the Blind is asked to share its knowledge and expertise to improve the health, quality, and training of guide dogs worldwide.

**One example of our global collaborative spirit** is in the area of breeding. Guiding Eyes regularly provides puppies to other schools and trains their staff in our leading-edge breeding practices, such as cryogenics and trans-cervical insemination.

**We offer our knowledge**, gathered over three decades, to help emerging schools build breeding colonies. Close cooperative relationships with a few select guide dog schools allow us in turn to reach out to them, when needed, to share their breeding stock, because the dogs will also possess the qualities that we covet in our guide dogs.

## Lending a Helping Hand: The Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind

From 1953 to 1970, Professor Dr. Rudolphina Menzel, a psychologist and dog trainer, prepared guide dogs to assist blind Israelis. Guiding Eyes for the Blind was the first US guide dog school to supplement Dr. Menzel's work by opening its Training Center doors to more than 120 Israeli citizens.

When Dr. Menzel passed away in 1970, there was no one in Israel to continue her work and Israel was left without a guide dog school.

Thus, after decades of cooperation and serving the Israeli blind, Guiding Eyes was called upon to assist in establishing a guide dog program in Israel.

Today, the *Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind* is a thriving institution, and Guiding Eyes continues to provide it with exceptional, purpose-bred puppies.

# Volunteers

## Guiding Eyes' Precious Resource

Every year 1,400 people volunteer to support our programs and services. Their enthusiastic donation of time, energy, and expertise allow us to provide significantly enhanced programs and services with minimal expense to our organization.

For the last 14 years, more than 500 puppies have been cuddled and cared for in the Kellogg family's home in Westchester County, New York. The Kellogg's nurturing will prepare these pups, should they possess the ideal traits, for training as Guiding Eyes dogs. Today, the Kelloggs are foster parents to Fedora, a brood from our breeding colony.

It is because of the Kellogg's dedication that Karl Belanger of New Hampshire has a yellow Labrador retriever named Quasar, who is Fedora's daughter.

Karl is a student at Gotham College in Massachusetts, where he is a business major with a computer science minor. Born blind with optic nerve hypoplasia, he has light perception but no functional vision.

He was partnered with Quasar during his fourth year of high school. This team quickly bonded and mastered navigating their new college campus with ease. In fact, they enjoyed the challenge of traveling to new places so much that they recently vacationed in the Grand Cayman Islands.

For without our volunteers, we could not fulfill our mission to provide superbly bred and trained dogs to blind and visually impaired people around the world.



*Puppy raiser Jee-Sun Han*

**Every Guiding Eyes volunteer helps to make something wonderful happen.** Some volunteers massage week-old puppies at our Canine Development Center. Others take home dogs from our Training Center for the weekend. And we must mention our puppy raisers, the selfless volunteers who take care of our young charges for a year and then return them to us for formal training.

**Not all volunteers choose to work with dogs.** They help with fundraising research, or with supporting our canine database, or with shopping for our students while they are with us in Yorktown Heights. There are a plethora of opportunities for those willing to offer their time.

Effectively and efficiently managing our large and essential volunteer program is a monumental task, but our program is run with near-military precision by Program Manager Vikki Iwanicki and Volunteer Coordinator Katie Scott. They interview, orient, place and schedule our volunteers – and also ensure that our volunteers receive all the support and recognition they deserve.

*Volunteer Jenny St. John*



# Thank You

Thanks to our donors' generosity, Guiding Eyes for the Blind is the first guide dog school in the world to own a veterinary Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine.

Mrs. Marion Levy launched our fundraising efforts for this acquisition. To mark her 90th birthday, Mrs. Levy made a special gift and asked her friends to honor the day by also making a contribution earmarked for the MRI. Her friends enthusiastically accepted her invitation.

Mrs. Levy has adopted many of Guiding Eyes' released dogs and frequently attends class graduations.

Lions Clubs International Foundation and Lions Clubs locally, regionally, and nationally also raised significant funds to support the MRI project.

**"I always look forward to attending Guiding Eyes graduations. It is inspiring to see so many people coming together to ensure the success of each and every guide dog team. I am especially thrilled to be able to contribute to the overall health and well-being of Guiding Eyes' incredible dogs." – Marion Levy**

## YOUR DOG WILL GUIDE YOU...continued from page 1

His words strengthened my resolve. I was determined, I told Charlie, to give myself a chance. Should I fail—it wouldn't be for lack of trying. Charlie decided Calvin, an 80-pound chocolate Lab, would be the right match for me. When I returned home with him after our four-week training period, I found myself struggling to fully relax and forge a bond.

Often, I recalled Charlie's words, 'No human being is born evil, and no dog is born vicious ...'

Slowly, Calvin and I began to break down the invisible barrier between us. Finally, after about six months I began to trust Calvin. Any lingering doubts I had about Calvin were dispelled one day as we stood at a busy intersection, waiting to cross the street. When we stepped off the curb, a motorist unexpectedly made a sharp right turn, directly in front of us. Calvin stopped on a dime. Realizing that he had saved us both from serious injury, I stepped back onto the sidewalk, gave Calvin a hug around the neck, and praised him for a job well done.

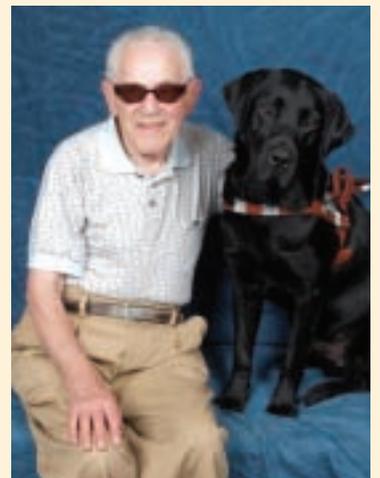
It was the turning point in our life together. After that, the love between us flowed freely and Calvin blossomed.

Calvin retired in 1999, after more than nine years of giving the best he had and then some. He was succeeded by Silas, a 78-pound yellow Lab, that was his mirror image.

And today, nineteen years after I began my Guiding Eyes journey, I have been blessed with Tobin, my third guide dog.

Yes, Charlie. You were right. 'Give us a chance,' you said, 'Your dog will guide you, love you, and protect you.' "

**Max Edelman and  
Guiding Eyes Tobin**



**For more information on any of our programs, or to arrange a visit, contact Nancy Lothrop at 914.243.2211 or [nlothrop@guidingeyes.org](mailto:nlothrop@guidingeyes.org)**

Guiding Eyes for the Blind is a leading nonprofit guide dog school with 501(c)(3) status.

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