



GUIDING EYES FOR THE BLIND MONTGOMERY REGION

Training Center & Offices
611 Granite Springs Road
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
800-942-0149
www.guidingeyes.org

Canine Development Center
361 Routes 164
Patterson, NY 12563
845- 878-3330

Featured Stories

Raisers of the Month-
Fuji, Frito, Lentil, Lightning
Montgomery Graduates-
Minnie, Idaho (more info), Loki
GEB President Featured in Magazine
Montgomery College Visit
Norwood School Visit
Holy Redeemer School Festival
Welcome New and Repeat Raisers
Fun Places to Go

Raiser of the Month

May-June 2024

Fuji...She is our top dog!

It all began in August 2022 when I attended a lecture on service dogs given by Oasis, a continuing education program for seniors. The main speaker was Montgomery raiser Terri Binder. Terri had Mishkin with her, a GSD that she and fellow raiser Amy Thaler would co-raise. Also present with their respective pups were Bobbie Havel and Jane Santy.

All four volunteers had already successfully raised several pups. It wasn't until Bobbie mentioned to the class that she had a cat at home that I felt a glimmer of hope that I could be a raiser while I had two aging dachshunds at home.

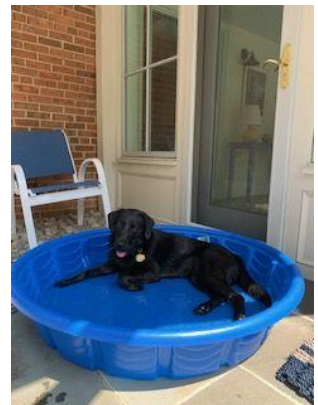


I was steered towards the GEB website which was super informative. One thing led to another and in December 2022 Fuji arrived. Fuji was full of energy and I couldn't imagine at the time she would become one of my best pals and closest companions. Yet both happened!



Early on we launched a walking program in which we drove to Georgetown (Fuji's favorite), Kalorama (Mary's favorite), or the National Cathedral to take a morning stroll. We discovered that at 8 am every morning the Naval Observatory played a recording of the national anthem during morning colors. The sound reached all three areas. It was an added incentive to hit the pavement early. For the few moments that the music played, we were reminded that we were not alone.

As time went by Fuji became the initiator of our walks. To this day I'm careful about looking directly at her when we're sitting at home because the head will go up and she'll all but say "shall we go for a walk"? The dachshunds taught her to take turns and Fuji brought them an abundance of treats. We learned to see life through Fuji's eyes. Had there always been so many bunnies in the backyard? For Fuji happiness was soaking in her private pool, licking moisture off a blade of grass, and gazing upon a full dinner dish. She introduced us to new experiences and adventures.



She is our top dog

Mary Beale – Fuji's Puppy Raiser



Raiser of the Month

Frito...It's been an adventure from the word go!

A Letter of Appreciation

Dear Frito,

When I spotted two yellow pups across the IKEA parking lot on pick-up day, my first thought was "Oh boy. Is mine the calm one or the crazy one?" Yellow #1 sat quietly in the grass, while Yellow #2—the smallest of the bunch—strained at the end of her leash, bouncing and cavorting with a black pup (your sister, Fuji).

You bounded into my life that day, and it's been an adventure from the word go.



I know it was tough growing up in downtown Bethesda with all its noises, smells, and activity, not to mention all the dogs. Sigh. So Many Dogs!

I'm proud of how hard you've worked in and outside of class, and I'm grateful that you introduced me to the generous and funny dog lovers who make up the Montgomery Region volunteers.

I get a kick out of your inquisitive head tilts, signature paw lift, and the little jig you dance when you're happy. I will never understand why you sprawl on the floor with just your back feet on your bed or sleep perpendicular inside your kennel. I love that you've always slept until I wake you up in the morning and that I've only ever heard you bark three times. My condo neighbors thank you for that, too. You've charmed everyone in the building.



I forgive you for guzzling pool water at Doggy Dip Day, and then throwing up your breakfast all over the pool deck. (Allison, Carson, Jake, and Sandra [a.k.a., my clean-up assistants], I hope you've forgiven Frito, too.)

I appreciate how gently you play with the very youngest puppies and take treats with a soft mouth. I smile every time a sitter sends a photo of you spooning their dog.

Frito, thank you for being affectionate, spunky, silly, enthusiastic, exuberant, spirited, and smart as a whip. And thank you, sweet girl, for healing the heartache left by J.B., my canine sidekick of 16 years.



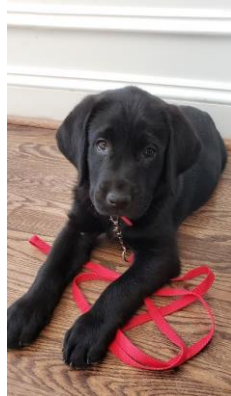
I've been so lucky to raise you. Love, Julie

P.S. Thanks also to Fred and Catherine, Michele, Jane, Miriam, Candy, Stacey, Alan and Carolyn, Mary, Kelly, Brian, Karen, Elaine, Ann, Tina, and Jennifer for the sits, pack walks, and advice. You are the inner circle of the Frito Fan Club.

Raiser of the Month

Lentil...she shared her toys with Tappi.

Lentil is a gentle black lab with a sweet personality. She is friendly and playful with our two older dogs (Pepper and Tappi). At puppy playtime, she runs fast with her friends and she always comes home tired and goes straight to her kennel for a quiet rest. She enjoys new experiences and challenging outings. She really likes her toys and to play 'tuggy' with other dogs.



The most amazing thing about Lentil is how she is interacting with 12-year old Tappi, our second Guiding Eyes dog who is now retired. Tappi came back to us from New York City at Thanksgiving last year. She had been diagnosed with two aggressive cancers and was not expected to live more than a month or so. She appeared to be weak and listless, but when Tappi came into the house Lentil immediately seemed to know that Tappi was sick. She started to cheer her up with attention, sharing her toys to keep her moving, and snuggled against Tappi to keep her warm.



Tappi while in training

Lentil and Tappi snuggling



Guess What?... Tappi is still with us, stronger than ever and moving well. And we attribute it all to Lentil's empathy and compassion.

Outside the house, Lentil likes going to restaurants, the library, grocery stores, the airport, and the bank. The last one is a favorite since she sometimes gets a treat there.



We love you Lentil. Thank you for your loving attention to Tappi. We wish you success and we all will miss you.

Love Bobbie and Jim Havel – Lentil's raiser family

Raiser of the Month

Also returning in June for his IFT testing is Lightning, raised by veteran raiser CJ Sturges.

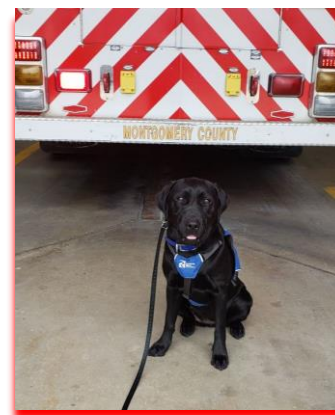


Minnie is a Montgomery K-9 Graduate



Minnie in her early stages of guide dog training.

During Minnie's initial training to be a guide dog she visited a local fire house in Gaithersburg. There must have been something really memorable for Minnie seeing the red fire truck as she graduated in April as an accelerant detection K-9 with the Connecticut State Police.



Congratulations to Bobbie and Jim who stated "We think Minnie is in the perfect career"!

Idaho Is a Montgomery Graduate

Additional information about Idaho's graduation was recently posted to the GEB website that the newsletter would like to add to this edition.

Hugo is active in his community, speaking to others with vision loss about his experiences. He is also involved with the National Federation for the Blind.

As a former cane user and first-time guide dog handler, he emphasizes that the choice is up to the individual, as to which is most suited to them. He also shares that being visually impaired can be a brand new start.

Hugo is dedicated to his bible studies and is devoted to his faith and the church. Hugo has a 22-year-old son and a young granddaughter and believes that kindness and understanding are the important qualities that have helped him be an amazing father and grandfather.

Hugo loves listening to music and feels it helps him destress and find a connection with others. He's a former boxer and football player, so he enjoys staying active. The gym is like a second home to him, spending many hours training and participating in powerlifting competitions. He also enjoys going out with friends now and then during his free time.

My instructors Shannon and Dan were very compassionate and very understanding, with a lot of patience. Everything with Idaho was so good. When he and I met a second time he recognized me and was so happy, licking my face. During training, when one of the instructors first took him up an escalator, they said he briefly looked back at me, as if to say, 'Hey, I should be working with him!' My experience with Idaho was joyful.



Congratulations to our very own Montgomery Region GEB Manager, Jeanyne, as she watched her sweet Idaho graduate as a working guide dog.

Loki Is a Montgomery Graduate

Anita and Loki



Anita worked for over 20 years at Texas Medical Center, first as a receptionist/secretary, then a Customer Relations Specialist, and then as an Administrative Assistant. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in music and voice and was a cantorial soloist for 20 years at Temple Beth Torah in Humble, Texas. The daughter of Holocaust survivors, she sings there every year at the Holocaust Remembrance Service. Anita still has her amazing soprano voice at almost 71 years old and has been a performing member of the Houston Tuesday Musical Club for about 40 years. Songs have been written for all four of her Guiding Eyes dogs and in 2004 she recorded a CD, "Friends Forever" to raise funds for the Specialized Training program. In 2021 another CD, "Seeing Through My Heart," was recorded to raise money for the Puppy Raising Program and included the singing of Guiding Eyes graduate Becky and the harmonies of graduate Barbara. Living with mobility issues due to Cerebral Palsy, Anita goes on walks with Loki and works with a trainer each week. Anita lives by her mother's philosophy in life: "Don't give up, don't lose hope, and be positive."

He was specially trained to guide on the right side of his handler and will be working in Houston, TX.

Loki is calm, yet lively, and loves to play and work. He is adorable and affectionate. When you look at him, he wags his tail. He loves to wag. He always has his attention on me and what I may need. In harness, he is serious and knows that he is at work, so at that time he is not thinking about anything else. He pays attention. He understands his job. He gets it.

I read a book, *A Guide to Guide Dog Schools* and at that time, I was a guest artist in New York at the Lighthouse International, and I did not have good cane skills. My Orientation and Mobility instructor noticed that I was veering left when I walked because of my Cerebral Palsy. She said I'd be a lot better off if I had a guide dog and recommended I contact Guiding Eyes. I remembered reading that they had a Specialized Training Program for people with complex mobility issues. I had heard what a wonderful school it was and what it could do for people with multiple issues. They trained a dog to walk on my right side with the right hand holding the harness. It totally changed my life. My guide dogs keep me walking straight.

Independence and confidence are the biggest advantages, I feel, of having a guide dog. I also feel safer with a guide dog, especially when crossing the street. Having a guide dog has allowed me to go out into the community safely. I am enjoying getting out and walking again. We're going to be a stellar team.

Guiding Eyes is excellent when matching a dog to an incoming student. I've been thrilled with all of my guide dogs and the instructors. During this training, Susan was such an amazing instructor. I hear Susan's inspiring words, 'You can do this, and don't overthink it. Just do it.' Her instructions were very descriptive, and her corrections were encouraging. We went to stores and restaurants, and it was very helpful having her work with us where we live. I came away from her training with the attitude 'You got this! Just go do it!'

Montgomery Region Puppy Raisers – Stacey Fannon and Family

Loki is the second GEB puppy that we have raised. We were blessed to have raised his mother Helen during the pandemic. We began our adventure with Loki when he was 8 weeks old. His cuddles and playfulness were a welcomed relief after the long pandemic. Loki grew to be a confident, thoughtful companion and future guide-dog-in-training. Some highlights of our 14 months together included shopping, nature walks, farm visits, sporting events, swimming, and puppy playdates. We wish Loki well on his current and future responsibilities and adventures with Anita. ~The Fannon Family



GEB President featured in Magazine

The following article is a small recapture from an E-mail sent out from Guiding Eyes for the Blind on May 13. To read the entire interview you can go to www.travelandleisure.com published March 10, 2024

I hope you are having a happy Spring! I'm reaching out to share [an interview in Travel + Leisure magazine](#) featuring our President & CEO, Thomas Panek. In the article, Thomas discusses his experiences traveling the globe with his guide dogs. He shares details about his journeys to the temples of Kyoto, Japan, the challenges of cobblestone streets in Germany, and the privilege of touching the marble of the Parthenon in Greece.

You may be interested in how Thomas describes the differences he experienced traveling with a guide dog versus without, and the independence his guide dogs have allowed. Here at Guiding Eyes for the Blind, we are so grateful for your support of our mission to connect exceptional dogs with individuals for greater independence.

Through your generosity, we can provide our services free of charge to people with vision loss. I invite you to read the article and reach out to me via email or at (781) 483-1340 if there is anything I can do to help.

Zabella Sigala
Donor Ambassador

Guiding Eyes for the Blind
611 Granite Springs Road
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
zsigala@guidingeyes.org

For Travel + Leisure's column Traveling As, we're talking to travelers about what it's like to explore the world through their unique perspectives. We chatted with [Guiding Eyes for the Blind](#) president and CEO [Thomas Panek](#), about his experiences traveling with decades-long vision loss. Here's his story...

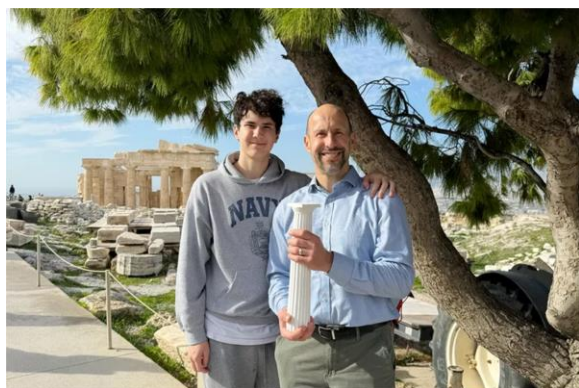
I've Been Legally Blind for Decades — Here's What It's Like to Travel the World on My Own

I started to lose my sight as a young man. Even as a boy, I had trouble seeing at night. Turns out, I have a genetic condition called retinitis pigmentosa. It's the equivalent of tunnel vision that turns to darkness at night. Then you can't see in the day, except in the center, and eventually not at all. It's a common form of blindness, not that blindness is common. It affects people as they age, and they end up needing reading glasses and bifocals. It just happened much quicker for me, and by the time I was about 18 to 20 years old, I was legally blind.

Nonetheless, I've always thrived on travel. I've always managed to go places on my own, but what makes my travels unique is that I've always done so with a guide dog, even before it was popular to have a [service animal](#). My dog does all the navigating, but I've been traveling around the world independently for 25 years, and I've never once gotten so much as a bump.

My dog's job is to make sure I'm on the sidewalk, going around obstacles and pedestrians, and stopping at curbs. Paying attention to traffic is my responsibility. My dog will identify a car turning in my lane and backing up, but I use the same navigation tools you do, either Google Maps or Apple Maps. My phone reads aloud, so I use it just like you do, too, except I listen to the navigation and then my dog takes me from block to block, stopping at the curbs.

When I board an aircraft, my dog will curl up like a piece of luggage. Sometimes, the person next to me will be surprised at the end of the flight when my luggage stands up — they think my dog is a yellow suitcase. That's how good they are; they're quiet and tucked away. The unique thing about having a guide dog is as soon as I exit the aircraft, I'm able to be mobile. My dog knows how to navigate to escalators and elevators and out the airport to a taxi or Uber.



GEB Visits Montgomery College April 29

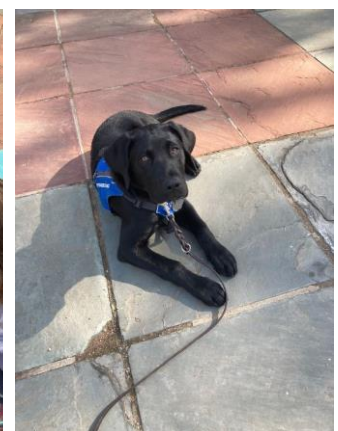
The annual stress-release event was held at the Germantown Campus of Montgomery College. The only stress we had to worry about was whether our GEB dog would behave; the students were very relaxed as they got to cuddle with Chance, Arnold, Lentil and Polly.



GEB Visits Norwood School May 3



Lightning and Arnold visited Norwood Elementary School to speak to a group of very anxious young students who wanted to learn about what a service dog can do and how they, too, have to go to school. Their patience paid off as all the students got to visit with Lightning and Arnold. Thanks to C.J. who talked to the young school students and provided the age-appropriate answers to their inquisitive questions.



GEB Attends Holy Redeemer Arts Festival May 9

It couldn't have been a more perfect day then the opportunity to visit two separate 8th grade student classes and for them to learn, question, then visit the GEB dogs who attended each session. Thank you to Karolyn who shared information about raising guide dogs, with additional stories added by Fred, Margie and CJ, and special thanks to the 4 dogs present, Chance, Quinnah, Arnold and Lightning that were on good behavior and loved being loved by the visiting students.



Welcome New and Repeat Raisers

Good by Arnold...
Since early March, Arnold has been with Margie and Lou as part of the puppy start program and said good-bye on May 22.



...Hello Arnold! He will continue his training with 2nd time raisers Linda and Laura.



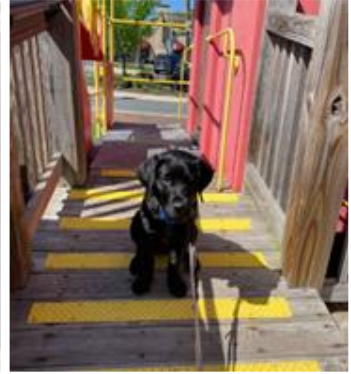
Welcome sweet Jolly, a member of Juniper's litter, and is being raised by veteran raiser Karoline Avard.



Fun Places to Visit



As Arnold gets older he is enjoying the opportunity to explore the curious toys at Mattie Stepanek Park – fun things to do to help build confidence; has figured out how to maximize his treat rewards, starting to do weekly swimming at K-9 Aquatics, and explored the train tracks and underfootings at the train exhibit in Old Towne Gaithersburg that let him experience the noises of a passing freight train and hearing its choo-choo whistle.



Is that a wart growing on my foot? **Wait...** it's a Charlee Bear!

A Trip Down Memory Lane... Unexpectedly having our second GEB pup come home after guiding in NYC for many years, we realized we needed to see our first pup Glossy (now Gwenny) one more time. Gwenny had visited, and even stayed, with us several times over the years. She was doing exceptionally well health wise until recently, as age (almost 14) is catching up with her. So instead of a warm weather vacation, we headed to Seattle. Besides posting 'Puppy - Senior' photos here, I want to mention two things... 1) If you have an opportunity to see your pups in their later years, don't hesitate. It was magical to hug that mature version of the little furry bundle we raised, and it is sad to think we could have missed the chance, if we had waited. 2) Be sure to teach the puppies good manners and skills, because they may come home! Not all, but some grads are casual about such. Don't worry, the pups remember once they are back on 'home' turf.



Send me articles or pictures to my e-mail address anytime!



gebraiser@comcast.net