



STAGES OF
The Seeing Eye
JOURNEY



STAGE 5:

Adoption (Retirement)



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



Average age range of a dog in this stage
is up to 11 years

Introduction

The 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 a 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.



Success



Seeing Eye dogs have an immense amount of responsibility. As a result, 60% of dogs born at The Seeing Eye go on to be matched with a person who is blind or visually impaired. In the world of guide dog training, that is a very high success rate.

What might prevent a dog from being matched?

Health Issues



Dogs are scrutinized for any potential health problems that might place a burden on the graduate financially, or may ultimately

jeopardize the dog's long-term ability to work efficiently and comfortably.

Behavior

Although rare, Seeing Eye dogs are sometimes removed from the training program because they are unable to get over a specific fear (such as thunder), distraction (chasing squirrels), motion sickness, or issues like protectiveness or suspicion of strangers.

The Career Change Club

Forty percent of our dogs may not graduate, but that doesn't mean all that vigorous training goes to waste! Many go on to other types of service careers — providing protection, care, and comfort in all kinds of settings. Keep reading to find out more about “The Career Change Club”!



The Career Change Club: Path 1

Back in the Arms of the People Who Provided Their First Home



Even though becoming a pet is not often the first thing that comes to mind when you think of a career, we consider the role

pets play in our lives to be very important. That's why if a dog doesn't make it through our program, they are first made available for adoption by their original puppy raiser. Since these dedicated volunteers have put so much work, energy, and love into the puppy, we want them to have the opportunity to welcome that dog back into the family.

The Career Change Club: Path II

Service Careers

Because our dogs' pedigree and medical history make them excellent candidates for further training, some are adopted by groups that rely on service animals. We're pleased when this happens, because these are working dogs who have been bred, born, and trained to have a job.

Our former dogs perform many services:

-  Hearing, seizure and diabetic alert
-  Search and rescue
-  Detection (explosives, drugs, currency, electronics)
-  Certified therapy dogs (for visiting nursing homes and hospitals)
-  Security



The Career Change Club: Path III



Public Adoption

With their friendly, outgoing nature, these dogs make wonderful pets — so some are made available for public adoption. Wait times depend on how specific the adopter is about their preference.

Not surprisingly, there is a minimum of a one-year waiting list to adopt one of these Career Change Club Members.

The Golden Years



Those Seeing Eye dogs who are matched with a person who is blind or visually impaired eventually reach the stage when they can no longer work. The average age range when a dog retires is between 9 and 11 years old.

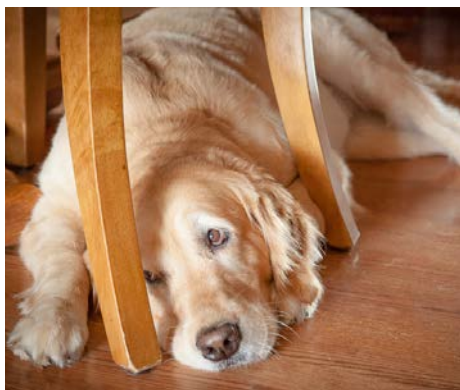
***And after years of faithful service,
each of our retirees is happy, loved,
and well cared for in their
“Golden Years!”***

Always a service dog...

Having a retired service dog can create some new challenges for people, such as restrictions on renting apartments or staying at hotels.

Owners of service dogs have legal rights that protect them from bans on access to housing, employment, and other benefits and services.

In New Jersey, a recent law allows retired service dogs to maintain this protection. We hope other states will follow suit.



Making the decision



Dogs are owned by their graduates, who ultimately choose what happens with their “retirees.” They want them to enjoy their later years, and not work past the point that their health would be compromised, but it’s still a difficult and emotional decision. After years of collaboration and companionship, an indelible bond forms — and when that partnership ends, there is a grieving process.

We're here to help

Some owners call on The Seeing Eye to help make the retirement decision, at which point we send an instructor for an evaluation — free of charge thanks to our generous donors.



There are times when we determine that the dog is still healthy, loves being on the job — and retirement would be a disservice for an animal who was bred, born, and trained to work. Other times, we observe that the dog is slowing down or having difficulty climbing stairs — and the decision is made to “hang up the harness.”

What happens next?

Path 1

The dog stays with their graduate

Those graduates who have the resources — a large enough home for two dogs and the financial means — choose to keep their retirees as pets after they are matched with a new guide dog.

Because most retirees are still active and engaged, some become therapy dogs. They visit assisted

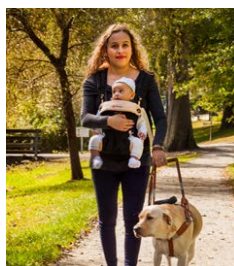


living facilities, hospitals, schools — wherever there are people struggling with loneliness, loss, or illness and can benefit from the healing love of the human-animal bond.

Hetty's Story

From Seeing Eye dog to beloved pet

For 10 years, Seeing Eye dog, Hetty, helped guide Jessica through college, graduate school, and her work as a high school Spanish instructor. In August 2017, when Hetty was 12, it was time for her to retire, but she continued to live with Jessica, her husband, her son, and Jaime, her second Seeing Eye dog.



Read more about Jessica and Hetty in our Day in the Life series on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pg/SeeingEye/photos/>

What happens next?

Path II



The dog is adopted by a friend or family member of the owner

There are many reasons why a graduate may not be able to keep their retired Seeing Eye dog. In many of these instances, though, loved ones adopt the retirees — enabling them to “stay in the family.”

What happens next?

Path III

The dog returns to their puppy raiser

When an owner can't keep and a friend or loved one can't adopt a retired Seeing Eye dog, then we step in to help.



The first people we contact are those who raised the dogs when they were puppies. Many of these dedicated volunteers are thrilled to welcome

back their “charges” — and there have been lots of joyous reunions over the years!

What happens next?

Path IV



The dog is made available for public adoption

If a retiree's puppy raiser is unable to adopt them, then the dog is made available for public adoption. Our staff

members take extra special care to find the perfect placement — seeking out people who have a special interest in adopting older dogs and giving them a home filled with love during their “golden years.”

Everyone can help Seeing Eye dogs

You can make sure that more Seeing Eye dogs are trained and placed with people who are blind or visually impaired — and honor a loved one in a meaningful way.

With your gift of \$250 or more, we'll add your personalized brick to the Path to Independence — a walkway that leads to the front door of our offices in Morristown, New Jersey. Even more important, your brick will be a powerful symbol of the steps our graduates take with their Seeing Eye dogs on the path to independence.



You can make your gift by clicking through this link:
<https://www.seeingeye.org/you-can-help/brick.html>

Stay Up-To-Date

Thanks for taking this journey through all the stages of a Seeing Eye dog's life!

Wonderful people like you provide the training and other resources necessary to enable Seeing Eye dogs to provide enhanced independence, mobility, and freedom to people who are blind.

Here are more ways to stay up-to-date on these wonderful animals:

 **Sign up for email: seeingeye.org**

 **Facebook.com/[seeingeye](https://facebook.com/seeingeye)**

 **Instagram: [@theseeingeye](https://instagram.com/theseeingeye)**

 **Twitter: [@seeingeyeinc](https://twitter.com/seeingeyeinc)**