

The hardest part is 'letting them go'

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dogs must learn to walk on the left side of the owner, and must sleep beside him or her at night, instead of in a crate, Jensen says.

Jensen learned most of what she knows about dog training from her grandmother.

"I always watched her do it," she says.

Besides the actual training, the club also involves taking the puppies on outings, such as to the mall, to baseball games or on trips, Jensen says, which is her favorite part.

Once the training is over, the dogs go back to The Seeing Eye in New Jersey, Jensen says, in which they make a trip to the veterinarian to get their hips, eyes and other body parts checked.

After they are checked, the puppies are sent to a trainer for about four months. If the puppies make it through the training, they then participate in a "town walk" where they are shown to community members. After that, they are placed with a blind or sight-impaired person.

Jensen's favorite part of being involved with the Seeing Eye Puppy Club and training the dogs is going on the outings. And the hardest part is, without a doubt, "letting them go," she says.

According to its website, The Seeing Eye is the oldest existing guide dog school in the world. It is a philanthropic organization whose mission is to enhance the independency, dignity and self-confidence of blind people through the use of Seeing Eye dogs.

Students, who are blind or visually impaired, come from all over the United States and Canada to spend up to a month training with a new Seeing Eye dog. They range in age from 16 to senior citizens, their home environments may be rural or urban, and they may be homemakers, volunteers or judges.

The Seeing Eye: breeds and raises puppies to become Seeing Eye dogs or obtains them occasionally by purchase or exchange; trains Seeing Eye dogs to guide blind people; instructs blind people in the proper use, handling and care of the dogs; and conducts and supports research on canine health and development.

For more information about The Seeing Eye, visit www.seeingeye.org.



Enjoying an outing to the Nye's Bowling alley are, from left, front, Eton Spancake and Marley Swartz; back, Marsha Freed, Jeff Nye, Brea Tussey, Alleighcia Hepner and Jensen Swartz.

Photos submitted by TAMMY SWARTZ



Jensen Swartz, right, her sister, Marley, left, and Caitlin Queitzsch are at The Seeing Eye in New Jersey.

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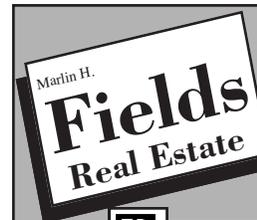


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