

Kids' KOrner

Juniata County Forms Seeing-Eye Puppy Club

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— At a meeting of members and parents on May 18, Juniata County had a first in their 4-H program. Plans for a Seeing-Eye Puppy Club came to complete fulfillment as they voted on a name for the club. After about 10 excellent suggestions, they selected the name, "Future Loving Eyes."

It was plain to see why there was much enthusiasm and excitement at this meeting. Nine boys and girls had submitted applications to receive a puppy from The Seeing Eye, Inc. Each of them will receive a puppy as they become available. Parents appeared to be as excited as their children at the prospect of taking on this challenge.

Kathy Queitzsch, 4-H agent in the Juniata County Extension Office, was in charge of the meeting. She is also the organizational leader of the club. As Kathy pointed out, having these puppies for a year is a family project. They will live in with the family, go in the car with them, and participate in all family events. After a certain age, they can even go to 4-H camp with the 4-H member. All of this is to prepare the puppy for any type of happening when it becomes a working guide dog for a sight-impaired person.

A puppy is taken to the 4-H home when about six weeks old and remains until one year old. Then the dog is taken to a place in New Jersey for three months of intensive training by The Seeing Eye, Inc. By the end of that training, the dog is ready for further

training with the sight-impaired person who will receive the dog if they bond well together.

The meeting took on real meaning for the members and parents as Scott Shreffler of Mifflin County spoke to them about his guide dog, Yuma, who lay under the table at his feet the entire time. Scott told how he had spent 27 days training with his dog in New Jersey. Yuma had been with a family for a year and then received the three months of special training, just like the dogs will that come to Juniata County.

As with all trainees, the first night Scott had Yuma in his room, he was not allowed to leave the room for any reason. The trainers stress that bonding at that time between the prospective owner and the dog is of great importance. If the bonding does not take place, it is likely that the person will need a different dog. It usually takes about a week to see if they are paired well.

Scott told of the stress during training with Yuma, which was morning and afternoon, and then meetings at night. He also listened to veterinarian tapes. Training with the leash and teaching Yuma to heel was done first inside the building. There were four trainees for six people, or a total of 24 working there together.

When Scott took Yuma outside for training in his harness, Scott found that the leash in his hand made her like a "living cane" for him. Eventually he was able to "read" the dog through his harness. Training included getting Yuma up at 5:30 a.m. for bathroom, eating and drinking, and he



Jim and Kathi Keifer and son Ben show six-week-old Mystic, a German Shepherd placed in their Juniata County home by Seeing Eye, Inc.

still has that schedule as well as other regular times throughout the day.

In New Jersey, Scott had to learn, along with Yuma, how to meet emergencies. They would be standing on the curb, preparing to go across the street. The trainers had especially trained drivers drive by within one foot of them, causing Yuma to instantly sense the danger and keep Scott from stepping down. A guide dog will not obey his master's command to cross the street if the dog sees danger, nor will he proceed while walking anywhere if there is a large hole in the ground, or an overhang or anything else which would endanger his master. If the master insists on commanding him to go on, thus overriding the dog's decision, this will confuse the dog and cause problems later.

Whenever Yuma stops when walking with him, Scott stops and feels around with his feet and hands to check out what problems there might be. Yuma is two years old, and Scott finds her to be very obedient even though there is still some puppy in her. Scott is grateful to have Yuma because she has given him his independence again after having used a cane previously. He finds no problem with taking Yuma into stores where he will ask the information desk where he can locate a certain item. In most cases employees will lead the way. Scott simply says, "follow," to Yuma who will then lead Scott in following the employee. When the employee says to go left or right, Scott repeats that to Yuma who then is ready to follow the turning of the employee.

Scott went on to say that it is important for the public to know that they are not to pet or feed a guide dog. Yuma knows that she is not allowed to sniff in a grocery store or restaurant and so is cuffed on the snout as a form of discipline if she does so. "Phooey" is a correction word for her when she is in deep trouble. Discipline is a

very important part of her training, as is affection from her master.

Yuma gets along well with Scott's wife and two children, but no one may pet her except Scott. They have a pet Black Lab outdoors. Homes with guide dogs may have cats or dogs in the house, but they must be introduced to the guide dog outside the house and not on the pets' domain. Guide dogs should not be shown favoritism over the family's pets.

A trainer from The Seeing Eye, Inc. is always on call if Scott should need help with Yuma for any reason.

Also present at the meeting were two adults with the seeing-eye puppies who are in their care. Candy Kirch of Snyder County has a beautiful 12-week-old Golden Retriever named Nickie who has been with Candy for three weeks. This is the seventh seeing-eye dog that Candy has had.

Jo-Anne Brooks of Mifflintown has a handsome one-year-old Black Labrador named O'Malley. This is the thirteenth seeing-eye dog that Jo-Anne has had. When

asked how they can keep these precious dogs for a year or more and then give them up, both women said that they keep in mind such people as Scott who is now independent because of his dog. Seeing the look in the eyes of Scott's mother, as she spoke of the help that Yuma is to Scott, was representative of all of those who have been helped by this program, and makes it possible for them to give up the puppies when the time comes.

It was announced at the meeting that the next day the first 4-H puppy would be brought to Juniata County to the home of Jim and Kathi Keifer and son Ben of RR1, McAlisterville. This writer had the pleasure of going to their home several days later to take photos of the family's six-week-old German Shepherd female, Mystic, who had already stolen their family's hearts.

New members are welcome to join the club. Call (717) 436-8991 and ask for the Extension Office. Ask for Kathy who will be happy to give you more information.

Reuse

There are many ways to reuse the things we no longer need. It's very easy to donate clothes, toys and other things to community centers or social service agencies so that others can use them.

At school, you can help reduce the amount of lunchroom trash by REUSING your lunch containers. You can use the same paper or plastic bag over and over. Using a lunch box and resealable and reusable plastic containers for your sandwich and chips is a better way to avoid waste. A thermos is a great way to carry a drink without having to throw anything away.

Many arts and crafts projects can use items that we might otherwise put in the trash. A glass jar or can is great for pencils, pens, paint brushes... You can decorate shopping bags and use them for book covers or wrapping paper. Used paper or magazines can turn into note pads, a collage, scrap paper or decoration for a box or a card.



Scott Shreffler of Lewistown as he shows his Guide Dog, Yuma, to the Juniata County 4-H Seeing-Eye Club members and family.