



Betty Persuric's husband, Peter, makes coffee for her. Both are blind, and rely on dogs from Canine Vision Canada to act as their eyes.



Peter Persuric walks with his dog Buddy. Buddy is not your average dog. He is a canine vision dog guide, and acts as Persuric's eyes.

Love is Blind

You leave your house, you go out and you always seem to catch at least one person's attention.

That is what it's like for Betty Persuric. She's blind and has a canine vision dog guide.

A lot of people have never seen a dog guide or think that they are a new thing, but they have been around for quite awhile.

Canine vision or seeing eye dogs have been around for almost 30 years. The Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides has been training canine vision dog guides in their Canine Vision Canada program since 1985. The dogs are trained to guide their handlers who are blind or have low vision.

This includes navigating around obstacles and getting the dogs to places they go to on a regular basis. This gives the handlers more confidence in achieving everyday tasks.

Persuric has not been blind her entire life. She was able to see until the age of 11, when she was playing outside with her brothers and sisters and was hit in the face with a snowball.

Initially she was fine, but soon after, she lost sight in her left eye and gradually lost sight in her right eye a year later. After becoming completely blind, Persuric's parents sent her to a special school for the blind, where she was taught to do everyday things like cooking and cleaning. She also learned how to crochet, knit and sew.

As she grew older, Persuric learned to get around with the help of others and a white cane. She did things every girl did as they grow into a young adult. She moved out of her parent's house, lived independently and even got married. Her husband at the time did almost everything for her.

"He wouldn't even let me cut my own food or pour my own drink I felt like a child," said Persuric.

So she applied for a guide dog from Guiding Eyes for the Blind in the United States.

Shortly after applying for a guide dog, Persuric was matched with a yellow lab named Imarry from the Guiding Eyes for the Blind training facility.

After coming home from their training, Pursuric and Imarry developed a strong bond. She felt much more confident going out and doing things with her guide dog leading the way. Having Imarry made many positive changes in Persuric's life.

Persuric's second husband, Peter, is also blind, losing his eyes in an accident.

Persuric had Imarry for several years. They were a great team and she had the independence she wanted. She was able to go out without another person.

Unfortunately, her guide dog became sick. She developed

problems with her liver, and was no longer able to work and keep Persuric safe. So Persuric had to make the tough decision to retire her guide dog.

Retiring Imarry meant that Persuric would lose the independence that she had gained, so she decided to apply for a new dog.

Her current dog Mac came from the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides. The Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides trains six different types of dog guides and is located in Oakville, Ont. and provides dog guides to people with disabilities across Canada. The foundation don't not receive any government funding. All their funding comes from Lions Clubs all over Canada, Sponsors and donation from the public.

Persuric was approved and in November 2012, travelled to Oakville to meet and train with her new dog.

She was matched with a Canine Vision Dog Guide named Mac. Persuric bonded with Mac male black lab.

"Mac and I clicked instantly," said Persuric. "We started walking and we were in sync it was like I was walking with my old dog."

Persuric and Mac trained together for a month, learning how to walk in sync, going over commands, making sure Mac kept her safe by doing things like alerting her to a doorway and curbs and guiding her through traffic. If it was not safe Mac would stop her.

When Persuric returned home with Mac, she began teaching him new things, including leading her to the bus stop near their house and home after a walk.

Shortly after Persuric returned home with Mac, her husband Peter also received a canine vision dog guide, another black Lab named Buddy.

"Between these two playing and the cat our neighbours must think we have a zoo over here or something," said Persuric's husband Peter.

When she and her dog are out, Mac is all business, but at home he is just like any other dog, loving to play and cuddle.

"Having a dog is like having a toddler. But even though Mac can but a little whiney and crazy, I love him he's like my kid I would trade him," said Persuric.

Photos and Story
By Samantha Hobbs



Peter Persuric, and his black labrador, Mac.



Betty Persuric walks with her dog Mac around her neighbourhood in Belleville, Ontario. Betty is blind, and it is Mac's job to ensure her path is unobstructed.



Betty Persuric's guide dog Mac sits under a table at her monthly White Canines Club meeting. Persuric is president of White Canines Club



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