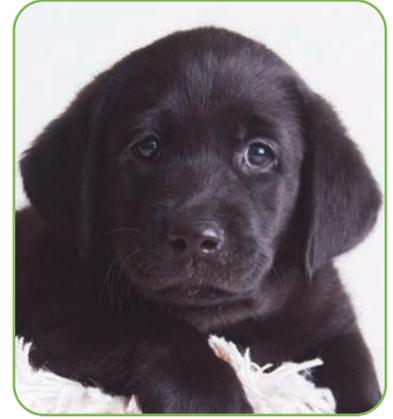


S A Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind



My Eyes Reggie

Written by Robert
Sholto-Douglas-Vernon



Dear Friend of Guide-Dogs

Reggie, a 17 month old Labrador/Golden Retriever cross is my new companion. He is my third Guide Dog.



Reggie is extremely good at the work he has been trained to do but also fits in wonderfully as a pet for our family. His abilities drastically improve my independence, allowing me to live a relatively normal and productive life as a person with visual impairment.

Reggie is responsible for assisting and guiding me from the Centurion Gautrain station to my office (situated in the heart of Sandton) on a daily basis. I am currently employed by Discovery as a Specialist Training Consultant and I am responsible for the training of financial advisors on all our products and financial planning.

The first task Reggie assists me with is finding the Centurion Gautrain ticket window where I purchase my train ticket. He does this simply by me instructing him to find the window. He then guides me to the glass turnstile where we need to tag through to enter the platform. Next we find the stairs up to the platform from which the train departs. Reggie always takes me straight to the end of the platform, as we know that this is the front of the train where, with Reggie's charm, we may just get a seat during rush hour. We take the train every day around the same time and many of our fellow commuters have gotten to

know us. Having Reggie around guarantees conversation from fellow commuters and usually leads to people taking a keen interest in me as well.

Once inside the Sandton Gautrain Station, it is important that Reggie stays focused. He needs to navigate through hundreds of people to assist me to find the escalators. Once successfully navigating the busy station, we still need to walk another 1.5 km to my office. Most of the walk is well paved but unfortunately there is always construction in Sandton. So far, Reggie has been able to safely guide me through this ever-changing construction site.



Two robot crossings are challenging as well, and I have on the odd occasion given Reggie the “forward” cue when it was not safe to cross as cars were turning in front of us. Luckily he has been trained to ignore my cues until the road is clear to cross. Contrary to popular belief, the Guide Dog does not look at the traffic light to decide when to cross. It is the responsibility of the person who is visually impaired to listen to the flow of traffic to make the decision when it is safe to cross. When I hear the parallel traffic pulling away I know that the light has just turned green for me.

After a busy day at the office, I remove the lead and harness and Reggie becomes a wonderful pet. I am fortunate to have a beautiful wife and two lovely young children who adore animals. My kids love to play with Reggie and they have endless fun chasing him around the garden. Being a Labrador/Golden Retriever cross, Reggie cannot resist the pool and sometimes gets lucky when we aren’t paying attention. Reggie is with me most of the time but should he be left at home for some



reason, one can be sure that there will be proof of this; he is the best landscaping artist I’ve ever had!

Reggie is my constant companion. Without his assistance, I wouldn’t be able to live an independent, mobile life. Thank you for being my eyes Reggie!



I hope that you enjoyed reading about the partnership between Robert and Reggie.

Your continued support enables us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the people we serve.

Warm regards

Executive Director



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