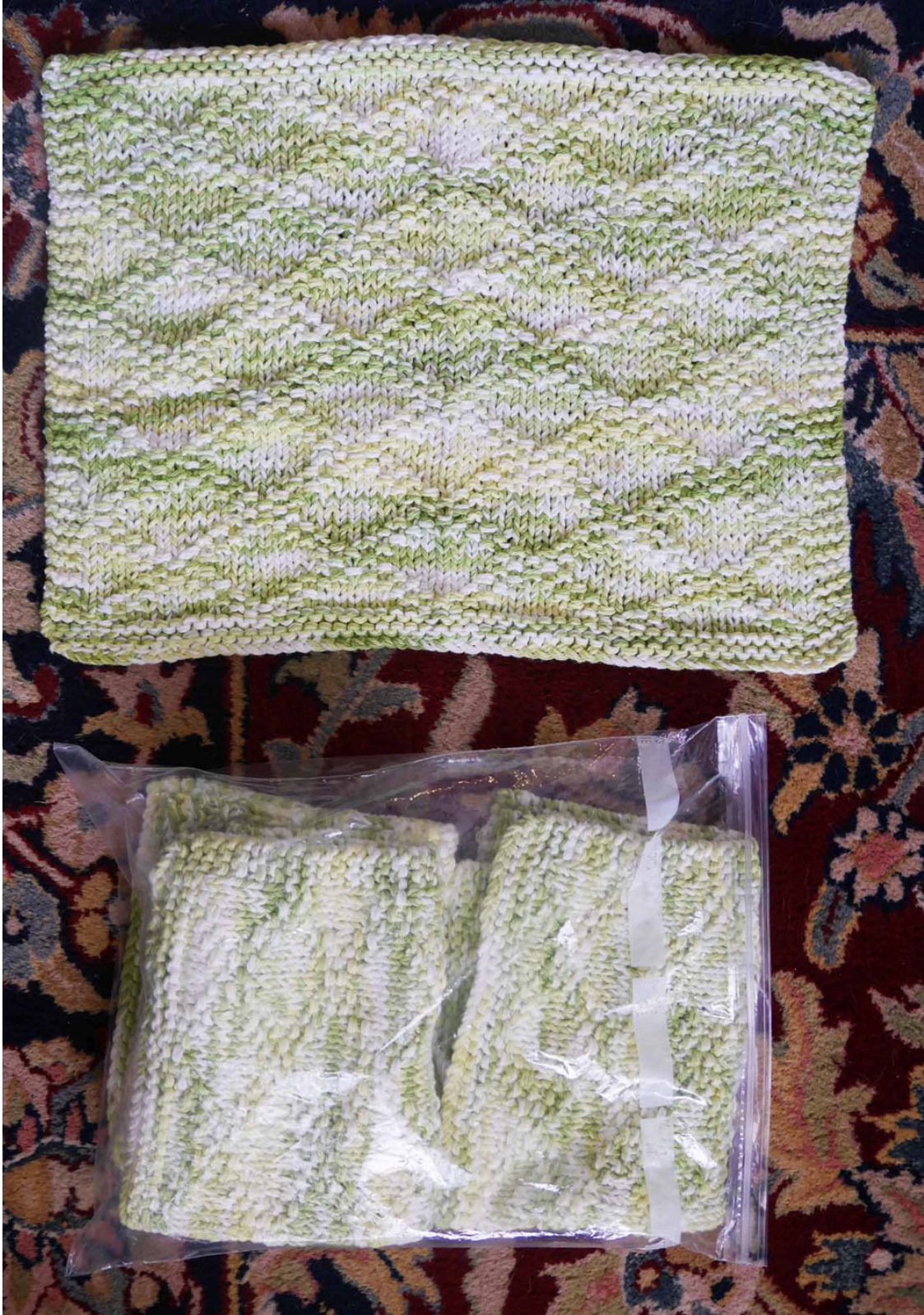


Recipients of Seeing Eye Dogs as well as their raisers are not permitted to contact the other person, but we can communicate anonymously through The Seeing Eye. They examine the letter to make certain that there are no clues to the identity of the sender before forwarding it.

At the Puppy Raiser Club Christmas party on December 11, 2018, Verna got a surprise package. Our club leader called her to the front and presented her with a hand-knit gift of four lovely place mats from the anonymous blind lady who got the eighth puppy that we raised for The Seeing Eye! The following three - page letter was in the package! As you can imagine, a few tears of joy flowed as we read it.





from Hannah's partner:

As I was knitting these place mats, Hannah was curled up beside me; we've established joint occupancy of the futon.

My partnership with Hannah is an amazing experience that began even before she came into my life. Hannah is my fifth guide dog. (Most have been German shepherds.) When an instructor came to interview me from The Seeing Eye, although I couldn't imagine continuing without a guide dog, I had serious reservations, especially because I am now fully retired from teaching. By the time the instructor left, I could hardly wait to get to Morristown.

Meanwhile I spent Easter with three generations of a family involved with Labs for Rescue and their four Labs. I was surrounded by an observer, a snuggler, a scavenger and one with a stub of a tail. Once again having my hands on fur gave me incredible joy and peace. Little did I know that this was a harbinger of my extraordinary partnership with Hannah.

Each of my dogs has been special, but unintentionally the standard was set by my first guide dog. Hannah is the only dog who equals that standard. Some of her habits have not changed. "Licorice" is still a perfect nickname for obvious reasons. I did also rediscover that, if I don't eliminate soft toys, Hannah eventually will! She doesn't play with toys a lot. Mostly she likes to present one to me.

More than anything else, Hannah wants to please. I cannot tell you how often she very deliberately makes me laugh! When I praise her for something that she has done exceptionally well, she is ready to prance. I almost never have to correct her. When she guides me, I feel perfectly safe.

Recently I wanted to experience our first snowfall. I walked out into the yard with Hannah. (This is probably something I wouldn't have attempted with my other dogs out of concern that they might not be able to handle this different situation. (Snow, without a path, can be very difficult to navigate for all kinds of reasons including how it changes sounds.) There was a lot more snow than I expected. Hannah quickly learns routines but can smoothly handle new situations such as that one. We both enjoyed our little adventure. Oh, the stories I could tell you!

As you had said in your report, Hannah is incredibly smart. Here is an example. I was visiting my "best forever friend" who is also blind. When I take Hannah out to relieve herself, I generally don't put on her harness. This obviously limits my ability to follow her. When I asked Hannah to bring me to the somewhat unfamiliar porch steps at my friend's house, she had a much better idea. She brought me to the left to the porch railing so that from there I could then very safely locate the first step going off the porch.

We are "out and about" a lot. Hannah is always well-behaved and lavishly admired. For instance, I am a member of the glee club at our senior center. Recently we went to a veterans' coffee house event to honor veterans and to commemorate the end of World War I. There was total chaos; it was very noisy and a "therapy dog" named Rosie was wandering around unattended. Hannah let Rosie get right next to her but didn't pay attention and wasn't bothered by the extreme noise. She is not bothered at all by thunder or fireworks.

We do work with children where I introduce them to Braille and talk about guide dogs. We also give presentations for adults.

Hannah has enriched my life more than I can explain. I plan to be in South Carolina and Florida in January. Without a guide dog I would never want to do this. Because of her skill, Hannah has given me a new sense of independence where I don't require sighted assistance. Hannah is remarkable and has made my life glorious!

Every day I am thankful for the blessing of Hannah and thankful to you for this most precious gift in my life.

I wrote this for the church bulletin shortly after coming home with Hannah.

Hannah is the name of my new guide dog. We are working very hard to develop a beautiful and lasting partnership. I used to do ballroom dancing; how about you? If I couldn't follow my partner or if he didn't know much about dancing, the result could be trampled toes! Whenever I have followed the lead of any of my guide dogs, it has felt like a dance. Hannah and I are learning to dance. We are working to figure out each other. Is Hannah helping me to avoid a garbage bin or a broken part of the sidewalk, or are we in the grass because she's trying to sneak in a glorious sniff? I may give Hannah a signal to go forward into the street, but the judgment is hers. This training is a fine line so that guide dogs will be cautious of traffic but not afraid of it.

Hannah grew to love the family who raised and trained her as a puppy. They introduced her to a variety of experiences. When she was about fourteen months old, she was returned to The Seeing Eye to begin training as a guide dog. There she became adept at learning and devoted to her instructor. Now here she is forming a permanent attachment and settling in to our way of life together.

The most important rule is not to pet her. When she is in harness, Hannah is a working dog. A colleague of mine used to call my guide dog's name. When Fiona turned her head, the woman would say, "Maybe she needs to go back for training." It was obvious who needed the training!

When Hannah is not in harness, she becomes just a dog with still a bit of puppy. She carries her big bone in her mouth and either follows me with it or sits and poses.

I am grateful for your continued prayers and support. I keep thinking of a choir anthem: "Make Me a Servant, Lord." One verse continues, "Give me a willing heart: Ready to go, ready to stay, ready to always obey." That's the message of Hannah. Perhaps hers is a message for all of us? We will dance together to life's music culminating in the theme, not of trampled toes but of total trust.

We thought that you would enjoy reading this wonderful letter. We could not have wished for a better Christmas gift!

Ralph and Verna Harvey