

## Guiding Eyes

### Woman wants to give back to the Guide Dogs of the Desert

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She lost her sight while in college, but she still has vision.

That is the philosophy Sandy Esposito has lived her life by.

When Esposito was 20, she woke up one morning blind because of a retina detachment. "Thankfully, I come from a family, where the word, 'can't' does not exist," Esposito said. "I just knew that life needed to go on."

So she went back to school, finished her bachelor's and a master's degree at a school on

Long Island, N.Y. In order to do the work, she hired classmates to read to her so she could do her homework.

But it would have been harder if the Lions Club hadn't have stepped in to help her by providing a Braille writer to take notes and a printer to do term papers for the professor to read them.

Esposito decided she needed a guide dog so she sought help from the Lions Club, who sponsored her first one. Since then, she has had several dogs.

"My last guide dog was raised by a family right here in Cañon City," Esposito said. "That's how I first came to Cañon back in 1997."

She said when she first was learning to deal with losing her eyesight, she never questioned why.

"I never asked why me because there are people in the world dying. What makes me special? The question is not why me, but why not me," Esposito said. "Some people believe in self; some people believe in a higher power or whatever. My faith has carried me. The reason why I don't ask why me is because I believe in the big scheme that there are purposes for everything that happens. Nothing happens by accident. Even if it sounds horrible, I decided I was going to take life and run and have a great time."

At the same time, she wants to give back to Guide Dogs of the Desert in California, who helped her through her trauma. It was a former trainer, who helped with the training of her dog, Bobbie while living in New York after Esposito could not attend the class in California because of a family illness.

"In lieu of the fact this is such a tiny little school, I was overwhelmed by the fact that they really do this," she said. "Once again, I called upon the Lions and other organizations to help" with the trainer's expenses while he stayed in the area. She said there is no cost for anybody who needs a guide dog. Those who go to the school for training receive room and board without cost.

But it takes \$3,000 to sponsor a guide dog and another \$1,000 to provide the equipment for the guide dog.

"My heart's desire was to give back to this precious small school," Esposito said. "I don't want to be a high maintenance person. I want to be a high impact person."

To do that, she decided to give back to the Guide Dogs of the Desert, where her trainer is a Vietnam vet, who trained dogs in the military. After his discharge, he questioned what he would do, but when he saw a student with a guide dog, he knew it was his calling. Recently, the school began training veterans returning from Iraq, Afghanistan and Desert Storm, who were blinded by military action.

Esposito challenged the residents in Cañon City to help meet her goal. To get the ball rolling, the Sunrise Lions presented a \$300 check Tuesday to sponsor a guide dog.

In New York, she already had sponsored nine dogs "with a lot of help from our friends," Esposito said. "There's a lot of people out there who still need a dog."

Two months ago, she and her husband, Joe, moved with Bobbie to Cañon City, where she began contacting organizations to raise money to sponsor a guide dog at Guide Dogs in the Desert in California.

To learn more about Guide Dogs of the Desert, visit [paradeofpuppies.org](http://paradeofpuppies.org), click on team page then click on Team Cañon City, where they can donate \$10 and up or by calling 1 (516) 987-4988.

"Where there's a will, there's a way," Esposito said.



Four-year-old yellow lab guide dog Bobbie leads owner Sandy Esposito through a parking lot Thursday.

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