

## Guiding Eyes Turns to IBM Cloud to Improve Access and Analysis of Canine Data

**ARMONK, N.Y. - 24 Mar 2016:** IBM (NYSE: [IBM](#)) today announced that Guiding Eyes for the Blind, a non-profit organization dedicated to the breeding, raising, training and placement of service dogs with people who are blind or visually impaired, is adopting the IBM Cloud for better management and faster access to its increasing canine data.

Since its founding in 1954, Guiding Eyes has graduated more than 7,300 guide dogs. But perhaps the most famous is two year-old, “Wrangler,” a yellow Labrador Retriever who gained notoriety over the past year as a regular on NBC’s [The Today Show](#).

Over the years Guiding Eyes has worked to continuously perfect its process for identifying preferred qualities in dogs such as health, confidence, love and temperament. Through its Canine Development Center (CDC), the organization has been a leader in canine genetics research, breeding technology, and behavioral development.

At the core of the CDC is data. Through many generations of selective breeding, the CDC has captured untold amounts of structured information such as medical records and complex genetic mapping. It has also generated volumes of unstructured data from virtually innumerable scanned hard-copy questionnaires that trainers and host families complete about their experiences with the dogs.

Not surprisingly, having collected more than a dozen generations of breeding information, data had become unwieldy to manage, increasingly difficult to access, and even harder to extract meaningful insights.

That’s when Guiding Eyes turned to IBM Cloud. By migrating more than half a million health records and more than 65,000 temperament records on thousands of dogs to the IBM Cloud, the organization will be afforded greater reliability, simplicity, and scalability. In addition, by being on the cloud, Guiding Eyes will be able to provide easier access to colleagues across the U.S., as well as partners and scientists, each of whom will be able

to positively impact research and analysis of genetic and behavioral data.

“People don’t typically think about an organization like ours as a Big Data company, but we cannot succeed or grow without it,” said Thomas Panek, President and CEO, Guiding Eyes. “By collecting information about our dogs over the years, we can dig into the data to pull out meaningful insights about health, behavior, temperament and so much more. However, all of that was becoming increasingly difficult on our legacy systems. By putting it on the IBM Cloud, we will simplify our IT and make our data more accessible for more analysis.”

With all of the efficiencies afforded by IBM Cloud, Guiding Eyes is hoping to improve its screening and breeding processes and eventually improve the current graduation rate of its guide dogs from 36 percent annually. Considering that it costs Guiding Eyes approximately \$50,000 to train a guide dog, any improvements to the graduation rate, no matter how slight, will improve financial efficiencies and make more guide dogs available for those who need them.

IBM Cloud will also enable Guiding Eyes to open up its data to external partners for the first time for additional research support. In January, for example, the organization invited Professor Chris Tseng, Ph.D., and Professor of Computer Science at San Jose State University to analyze its trove of DNA and behavioral data.

Using IBM Watson Personality and Natural Language Processing on IBM Bluemix, Dr. Tseng and his machine-learning students are spending the spring semester analyzing the organization’s vast amounts of structured and unstructured data. By May, the group is hoping to establish a process for identifying data patterns and correlating traits, characteristics, environmental conditions, and personalities – of both dogs and trainers – to help improve Guiding Eyes’ dog graduation rates and to better match young dogs with trainers and ultimately owners.

“Guiding Eyes, is a great example of how IBM Cloud can help organizations innovate new business models and processes that were heretofore unthinkable,” said William Karpovich, General Manager, IBM Cloud Platform. “Through the IBM Cloud, Guiding Eyes is now able to advance even further its critical work in breeding, raising and training service dogs for those in need.”

**For more on IBM Cloud, [click here](#).**

**For more on Thomas Panek, [click here](#).**

**For more about Guiding Eyes, [click here](#).**

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