Kassie Lemons at the auto-book section of the Anderson Public Library recently.

"Don't try to touch him or pet him because he really needs to stay focused on his job," she said. "Everyone is reaching down and getting him and I'm asking for something and he's not listening because he's getting attention from somewhere else — that's a dangerous, dangerous thing."

On June 9, the family got Kingsley, who's a playful black Labrador. Kingsley is the second guide dog Lemons has owned, and both are from Guiding Eyes for the Blind. Kingsley is an in-home guide dog, and Lemons has made some changes to her routine because she really needs to stay focused on his job. Kingsley was six months old at the time, and Lemons said she used a long prosthesis to avoid obstacles she could not see while walking. Having a guide dog gives her freedom. "The dog is an obstacle avoider," Lemons said. "They naturally avoid all obstacles."

Kingsley has been in Anderson for roughly a month and is learning new routes and obstacles in the city. Lemons urged people who see her with Kingsley to be respectful that he is a working dog and not try to interact with him. "Don't try to touch him or pet him because he really needs to stay focused on his job," she said. "If someone is reaching down and getting him and I'm asking for something and he's not listening because he's getting attention from somewhere else — that's a dangerous, dangerous thing."

Lemons, who is seeking a degree in special education, hopes to one day use her guide dog to raise awareness about service animals and teach people their importance. "Be aware there are service dogs here. There are all kinds of service dogs and different types. No touching, no eye contact that would be the don'ts — when he is working. And "No, you can't touch him" is always an appropriate answer."

Kassie Lemons' AIDE

Blind 26-year-old hopes to raise awareness as she trains new guide dog

FAST FACTS

Guiding Eyes for the Blind is an accredited member of the International Guide Dog Federation and a nonprofit organization located in Yorktown Heights, New York.

- The cost to breed, raise, train and match a guide dog and provide support during the animal's lifetime is $50,000.
- Each year the organization creates more than 160 guide dog teams.
- There is no cost for their services to people who are blind or visually impaired.