

Harness & Leash

Edition 33

Message from David Locklin, Director of Programs

The LDB Alumni Facebook group is up and running! As announced in the last issue of Harness & Leash, we created a Facebook group just for you, our alumni. Within the first three weeks over 200 clients have joined the group. We are excited that the group is so well received. For those of you who have not yet joined, hop on the band wagon! There has been a lot of great discussion already. Your fellow alumni have been sharing their experiences while in training, some of the new things they are doing since learning how to use a cane and/or a Leader Dog and asking questions to become better travelers.

The next article will provide you information on how to get on to Facebook and into the group. If you're new to Facebook, you may want to get assistance from a friend, family member or your local library to join.

As always, we include the contact information for our client services department several times in this newsletter. We do this so you know that client services is always your first point of contact. You can reach our client services department at 888-777-5332 or clientservices@leaderdog.org.

How to Join the LDB Alumni Facebook Group

We are excited to invite you to join a new Facebook group just for Leader Dogs for the Blind alumni! This group will connect you with other LDB alumni to share stories, photos, everyday issues and personal wins. Anyone who attended a Leader Dog program is welcome to join – Guide Dog Training, O&M Training and/or Summer Experience Camp.

The group is administered by our client services team. They will confirm that only LDB alumni are in the group. They will also check in periodically to see if there are any questions or concerns that a LDB team member can help with.

When new clients are approved for one of our programs, they'll be invited to join the group. This group is a place they can seek support and ideas to help them prepare for training (what to pack, how much money to bring, etc.). Who better to give them advice than LDB alums?

Please note that you must join with your own Facebook account, not your spouse's, child's or dog's account. If you don't have a Facebook account, the information below can help you set one up. We are not able to set up a Facebook account for you. Please ask a friend, family member or your local library if you need assistance.

A good place to start is Facebook's Help Center at [facebook.com/help](https://www.facebook.com/help).

To create a Facebook account:

1. Go to www.facebook.com.
2. Enter your name, email or mobile phone number, password, date of birth and gender.
3. Click 'Sign Up.'
4. To finish creating your account, you need to confirm your email or mobile phone number.

To find the LDB Alumni Group:

1. Go to the search bar at the top of Facebook and type "Leader Dogs for the Blind Alumni."
2. A list of pages and groups associated with Leader Dog will appear.
3. Click 'Leader Dogs for the Blind Alumni,' which should be the first group/page on the list.

To join the LDB Alumni Group:

1. Once on the group page, click the '+Join Group' button.
2. You will be prompted to answer three questions which must be answered to join the group. These questions help us confirm that you're a client.
 - a. Have you been approved for or completed at least one program at Leader Dog? If you've completed more than one, select the most recent.

- b. Under what name did you submit your application for training at Leader Dog (in case it's different from your Facebook name)?
- c. What is your date of birth?

If you have any questions, please contact clientservices@leaderdog.org. Reminder, we are not able to set up a Facebook account for you. Please ask a friend, family member or your local library if you need assistance.

LDB Alumni Facebook Group – Join Us!

By LDB Client Juanita Lillie

Did you know that Leader Dog Alumni can now connect with one another on Facebook? All you need is a Facebook profile. Creating a profile is free. Joining the group is free as well.

The benefits of groups like this one is that folks can respond to one another utilizing the comments feature. If you post any photos or other visual attachments, please describe them. Not all screen readers identify the content of those images. Please write your post followed by the words "image description" or "photo description." Then write a brief summary of the visual content to ensure that all group members can enjoy or react to your post.

When someone swipes or reads a post with a screen reader, they may hear the number of reactions to that post. Possible reactions include love, haha, sad and like. Tap or click on the spot where the number of reactions is given in order to view them.

Otherwise, read the comments and write your own if you wish. Use the search feature within the group to search for key words of older posts that you would like to revisit.

Remember that if you create a post in the group, fellow members may be able to access your personal Facebook profile depending on your privacy settings. Make sure your information is set to your liking. For example, are the posts on your personal page open to the public or just your Facebook friends?

I hope you enjoy discussing topics related to Leader Dog. Personally, I love reading the successes of fellow Leader Dog alumni and learning from those individuals.

Update Available for the Victor Reader Trek

HumanWare recently announced a major upgrade to the routing engine of the Victor Reader Trek version 2.0. The routing engine bridges map data with GPS information, it calculates routes, converts GPS data into map information and locates you on a map. It also drives features such as current heading, where am I, and what's around.

The update doesn't change how you use the Trek, but it does significantly improve its operation. The upgrade brings the following improvements and new features:

- A richer Points of Interest database
- Improved points of interest browsing
- Better performance

- More efficient map parsing
- More efficient routing calculation
- Ability to pause and resume map updates

Bug fixes:

- Eliminated the reading of slashes in map data
- Personal landmarks were not always announced in certain situations
- Highway entries were often reported as exits
- Locations with no street number were treated with a “0” street number
- Missing points of interest
- Issues with cardinal directions in street names
- Issues arising from a variety of local mapping and addressing conventions

Your Trek should notify you that an update is available when you have it turned on and connected to wi-fi. If you are having problems with the update, contact HumanWare at 800-722-3393 or contact our extended services department at 888-777-5332.

Accepting my Labrador

By LDB Client Pauline Ulrey

I met and fell in love with my first German shepherd dog in my early grade school years. I lost my vision at the age of 26 months and grew up “just being one of the neighborhood kids” never realizing that I was different from the rest of my playmates.

The neighbor kids up the street had a German shepherd named Skipper who was always right with us kids wherever we were playing that day. After most of a summer, we realized that Skipper always stayed very close to me and seemed to take care of me.

As the years passed and we grew up and more aware, I realized that something was different about me and Skipper knew it too. I fell totally in love with him and German shepherds in general.

On August 5, 1963, my high school teacher and her mother drove me to Leader Dogs for the Blind and on August 7, I was handed the leash of my first Leader Dog, Danny—a large German shepherd. Danny and I learned many lessons in and about life together over our next 10.5 years, all while I earned my bachelor and master's degrees and spent 14 months searching for a job.

Much to my horror, I lost Danny to bone cancer just two weeks into employment. My next nine Leader Dogs were all German shepherds. Each being a fantastic dog, assisting me for many years. Unfortunately, dog's number seven and nine decided they preferred another career for their lives and were soon career changed.

As the years passed with my German shepherds, my love and respect for their breed continued to grow and I "NEVER" wanted to accept any other breed as my best friend and working companion. After shepherd number nine was career changed, I

was informed that there were no German shepherds available in the near future. I was without a dog for four months dreading going anywhere with my cane. I have the highest regard for individuals who travel with a cane but definitely did not want to be one of them any longer than absolutely necessary.

In my many years of travel over the USA and Canada for Lions conventions and ACB conventions I had friends from other schools that I knew trained German shepherds. I gave serious consideration to applying to one from which I knew another shepherd would be available.

Several guide dog mobility instructors at Leader Dog with whom I had worked reassured me that they had a Labrador retriever that I would love. Only because of their reassurance, and my dedication and allegiance to Leader Dog, I finally agreed to give it a try. I met Leader Dog Satch, a 16-month-old yellow lab, in late October 2015. We returned home together in November.

The instructors were correct. I soon fell in love with floppy-eared Satch and wouldn't trade him for any other dog. Satch and I have traveled together for four years now and he works well. He is the current love of my life.

Grain-Free Diets by Kelly Wilson, DVM

There has been discussion in the LDB Facebook group about canine diets, so we are rerunning this article from Dr. Wilson.

There have been many stories about grain free diets in the news lately. Why are people talking about it? Are grain free diets good or bad?

According to board certified veterinary nutritionists, “grain free” is purely a marketing term, it does not mean anything nutrition wise. Although some people have adverse reactions to gluten, there is no evidence that this occurs in dogs. However, some dogs develop adverse food reactions (hypersensitivities) to animal proteins in their food over time, usually from a protein that they have eaten consistently for a long time. When dogs develop food hypersensitivities or “allergies,” people often look for new protein sources to feed them to alleviate the issue. Dog food companies have done this and started marketing accordingly. Not only have they replaced traditional animal protein sources like chicken and beef with salmon and duck, but they have replaced cereal grains like corn, wheat and rice with legumes like chickpeas, lentils and green pea. These food switches are made to appeal to people and are not necessarily beneficial to the health and nutritional needs of dogs. These products are often marketed as “allergy free” which is nonsense. Dogs can become allergic to any ingredient that they eat regularly, including salmon, duck or lentils. Since most food companies make a variety of food with different ingredients using the same machinery in their factories, there is a lot of cross contamination between products, so what’s on the label is not always what is in the bag. A bag of fish and

potato food may be contaminated with chicken and rice that was processed on the same machine!

Not only is the term "grain free" a marketing tactic, there is recent evidence that these diets may be creating unexpected and unusual health concerns for dogs. Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) is a heart disease that causes enlarged heart chambers leading to irreversible congestive heart failure. In dogs, DCM can be inherited in certain breeds, such as Dobermans, boxers and standard schnauzers. In some dogs, DCM is due to a deficiency of taurine, an amino acid required for the development and function of the myocardium. Consequently, dogs may develop DCM on taurine-deficient diets. Although grain free diets are not deficient in taurine, many dogs eating grain free are being diagnosed with DCM. This includes breeds such as Labrador retrievers and golden retrievers. Researchers believe that the connection could be due to low bioavailability of taurine or increased loss during digestion. The Adverse Event Review Team in the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine Division of Veterinary Product Safety recently reported that 93% of the dog foods identified in the DCM reports listed peas, lentils or both among their first 10 ingredients, and 91% were grain free. It is suspected that the reasons for dogs developing DCM is complex, involving many factors in addition to their diet.

Until further research is done to determine the exact causes, we recommended that you choose a standard, not grain free, diet for your dog.

Holman Prize for Blind Ambition

The San Francisco Lighthouse for the Blind is taking applications for the fourth Annual Holman Prize for Blind Ambition. This is a global competition which awards up to \$25,000 to three people who are blind to undertake a dream project to push their limits.

Past recipients of the prize have solo kayaked, hosted a conference in Mexico for children who are blind and their families and created an app enabling citizen scientists who are blind to participate in the search for exoplanets by listening to space.

Applications are being accepted through March 15, 2020. Learn more at holmanprize.org. If you have questions, contact the San Francisco Light House at holman@lighthouse-sf.org.

Privacy Updates

Here at Leader Dog we are serious about maintaining the privacy of our clients, volunteers and donors. Recently, we have made some changes to support this outcome including information that we used to provide in this publication.

In past issues of Harness & Leash, we included information about retirements and deaths of breeding stock dogs and working Leader Dogs, births of new puppies and guide dog class

information. We will no longer be sharing this information to maintain the privacy of puppy raisers, breeding hosts and clients.

We realize that some people will be disappointed that this information will no longer be available, but there are other ways for you to receive information. First, you can join the Leader Dog Alumni Facebook group where you can find friends you made while at Leader Dog. Second, if there is someone you want to contact who isn't part of the Facebook group, you are welcome to contact client services and ask them to reach out to the person on your behalf. They will call the person you are looking for and give them your contact information, then the person can call you directly.

If you have any questions about the changes made to this publication, feel free to contact Rachelle Kniffen, director of communications and marketing, at rkniffen@leaderdog.org or 248-659-5013.

Thanks for understanding and helping us be considerate of people's privacy.

LDB Gift Shop Offers Discount

All clients receive 15% off from our online gift shop. Enter code "15OFF" at checkout to claim your discount. If you have questions or issues with the gift shop website, contact Kim Thomas, gift shop coordinator, at 888-777-5332.

Contact Us by Phone, Email or Text

Your first point of contact for assistance is always the client services department. You can reach them by calling 888-777-5332, or email or text them at clientservices@leaderdog.org.

Questions, Comments or Suggestions

Please send comments to UpdateEditor@leaderdog.org or call 888-777-5332 ext. 1158.