**Harness & Leash**

**Edition 37**

**Message from David Locklin, Director of Programs**

I am thrilled to inform you that Leader Dog is open to American clients for O&M Training and Guide Dog Training! We have been receiving applications for all programs throughout the past year and will be reaching out to people to schedule training when we have a dog that matches their needs or a space available in our O&M program.

 We will continue training guide dog clients with a smaller client-to-instructor ratio. Each guide dog mobility instructor will work with only three clients each class; however, we will have the capacity to serve the same number of clients by adding several classes to the yearly schedule. This means less down time during training and more one-on-one instruction time to focus on your specific goals and needs.

 Currently, we do not know when international clients will be coming back to campus. The timing depends on when travel opens between the countries we serve and the U.S.

**Virtual Learning**

Did you know that we have added new virtual learning content on our website? There is information for prospective clients, graduates, family and friends, and blind rehab professionals. The graduate section includes information on accessible pedestrian signals and guide dog readiness.

Please share this resource with your friends and family! Go to LeaderDog.org, click on the “Resources” tab then choose “Virtual Learning” from the dropdown menu.

**O&M Corner – Long Cane vs. Guide Dog**

We are often asked, “What are the differences between a long cane and a guide dog?” Some of the obvious differences are that you do not feed a long cane, it is easier to clean up after and at the end of the day you can just hang a long cane up and forget about it; versus a dog which requires care and maintenance. On the other hand, a dog offers companionship that a long cane cannot. You can always pet and play with your long cane, but a dog will play back with you. Lastly, the retirement and passing of a guide dog can be a hard experience because of the bond shared with the dog, whereas forming a bond like this with a long cane is unlikely.

A long cane is an object detector. Its primary purpose is to let the user know that an object is in their path of travel. A guide dog is an obstacle avoider, maneuvering you around an obstacle if there is an easy and direct path. A guide dog user may never know what the obstacle was or might not even realize there was one there. When obstacles are too complex for a guide dog to maneuver around, it is up to the user to figure out how to navigate around the obstacle or to find an alternative route.

Long canes provide tactile feedback, but guide dogs do not. Not having tactile feedback can be a big change for individuals who are used to exploring their environment tactually. With a guide dog the only feedback is the dog’s motion, environmental sounds and smells, and some tactile feedback from the user’s feet.

Traveling with a long cane is slower than traveling with a guide dog because the guide dog is not detecting obstacles but instead going around them. Also, traveling faster means the user needs advanced orientation skills. Guide dog user’s need to update their mental map more regularly because they are moving quicker.

In the end, there are pros and cons with both long canes and guide dogs that should be considered when deciding which is right for you. Both mobility tools require good orientation, problem solving and route planning skills.

If you want to improve your O&M skills or know someone else who does, please email our client services department at clientservices@leaderdog.org or call 888-777-5332 extension 1. Our client services team will be happy to answer your questions or get your application started.

**Do Not Pet**

We know that sometimes it seems your dog’s DO NOT PET sign must be written in invisible ink and your Leader Dog attracts people like bees to honey. We apologize for matching you with such gorgeous creatures with soulful eyes and wagging tails – their irresistibility factor is high! <smile>

We have a few suggestions on good ways to deal with unwelcome attention:

1. Say “It is important” to get the person’s attention, then “that my dog stays focused on me to keep me safe.”
2. Wear a t-shirt explaining your dog is working and unavailable for receiving pets, attention or treats.
3. Explain that touching a guide dog is like touching a steering wheel of a car when someone is driving; this creates a powerful image.
4. If you have time, take the opportunity to educate the person about guide dogs and their responsibility while in harness. Also, let people know that your dog’s off-duty time is filled with plenty of play, relaxation and snuggles.

Thank you for your patience as you teach the world this important lesson one dog fan at a time.

If you need a DO NOT PET sign and sleeve, please contact our client services department at clientservices@leaderdog.org or call 888-777-5332 extension 1.

**Continuing A Great Partnership with CNIB**

In the last issue of Harness & Leash we mentioned our partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Guide Dogs. We supplied them with five dogs during a pandemic-induced shortage and they conducted follow-up visits with some of our Canadian clients.

 Since then, we have continued the partnership by providing five additional dogs to CNIB and, in turn, they delivered a Leader Dog to a client in Canada and trained the team using our guidelines.

 At Leader Dog we believe that all clients benefit when we collaborate with other guide dog organizations.

**In Memory of Bryan Young**

It is with deep sadness that we inform you of the passing of Bryan Young. In his most recent role with Leader Dog, Bryan was a field representative who considered this job his true calling. Bryan’s passion for our clients and their dogs was something many of you were lucky enough to experience, and we know that he would have visited and helped every single client if only it were possible.

Bryan started at Leader Dog as a young man taking care of our dogs on campus. He went on to devote his career to improving the lives of people with vision loss at Leader Dog and other guide dog organizations. He was a compassionate man who loved to instruct clients and dogs and did so with incredible patience. The guide dog industry feels the loss of this very talented individual.

**Alumni Hour**

Alumni Hour is a great way to meet other alumni, hear from LDB team members and share your personal experiences.

Alumni Hour is held the first Wednesday of every month at 3 p.m. EST. This is exclusively for LDB alumni, so do not share the link or call-in number outside of our community.

You can join via Zoom or by phone. To join online, copy the following link and paste it into your browser: https://leaderdog-org.zoom.us/j/95644864327?pwd=bkdON0s5TzZ2TVlhbnZEUFN0elFvdz09

To join by cell phone, dial: 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID: 95644865327, passcode: 061366

If you are calling using a long-distance plan on your home phone, use a phone number below for the location closest to you:

New York 646-558-8656

Washington DC 301-715-8592

Chicago 312-626-6799

San Jose 669-900-9128

Tacoma 253-215-8782

Houston 346-248-7799

Meeting ID: 95644864327 Passcode: 061366

**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 them at clientservices@leaderdog.org.

**Questions, Comments or Suggestions**

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