



# UPDATE

LEADERDOG.ORG | ISSUE 2 | 2021

LEADER DOGS FOR THE BLIND



## Thriving in Mexico

Raising a Future Leader

A Decades-long Commitment





### Greetings.

As the end of the year approaches, I cannot help but think of our international clients. Every year during this time we send a letter to Leader Dog clients around the world with a year-end update on our operations. And while this year will be no different, the pandemic has largely kept us from serving our international clientele. As we know, the urgent need for Leader Dog services reaches beyond the United States.

More than 39 million people are legally blind worldwide. That number is staggering—especially knowing that only 10% of people who are blind or visually impaired travel independently with either

a guide dog or a white cane. This means that 90% of people who are blind or visually impaired are either dependent upon a friend or family member to get to the store, work or appointments or, even more distressing, not leaving home at all. We are hoping that we will soon be able to welcome our international clients back to the Leader Dog campus.

In this issue of Update, you will hear stories from two clients outside of the United States and how Leader Dog has affected their lives. You will learn how our services and your support provide so much more than safe and independent daily travel.

On behalf of the entire Leader Dog team, I wish you a safe, happy and healthy holiday season. As always, thank you for everything you do in support of Leader Dog as we work together to make people unstoppable!

Sincerely,

*Susan M. Daniels*  
Susan M. Daniels  
President & CEO





## Waiting for Freedom

### Lyn Morris

It was over a year of waiting to get a Leader Dog for Lyn Morris. She lives in Canada, has had guide dogs from other organizations and was excited to get her first Leader Dog. She never anticipated a pandemic would arise and the border would close.

Waiting for her Leader Dog was difficult for Lyn. She isn't a strong cane user and she relied heavily on the team of her husband John and his Leader Dog, Casey. Lyn was thankful to have their help but found it frustrating at times since she and John walk at different paces. This was especially difficult when crossing the street. "I love both of them dearly, but I love my freedom too," said Lyn.

Lyn was more than ready to get her independence back when she met Leader Dog Leo on March 23, 2021. LD Leo was delivered and the team was trained through a partnership with Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Guide Dogs of Canada because the US/Canada border was still closed due to COVID. Guide dog mobility instructors from Leader Dog and CNIB worked together to make sure Lyn and LD Leo were trained to Leader Dog standards. "The training was fantastic," said Lyn, "and I was matched perfectly with Leo. It's nice to have a dog by my side—it's nice to have a harness back in my hand."

Every single day since getting Leo, Lyn is amazed at what he does for her. "I'm very grateful to Leader Dog for finding me Leo and being able to have a guide dog back at my side," said Lyn.



## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT



▲ LYN AND LD LEO POSE FOR THEIR GRADUATION PHOTO AT A PARK NEAR THEIR HOME IN CANADA.

◀ LEADER DOGS CASEY AND LEO LAY TOGETHER DURING TRANSIT.

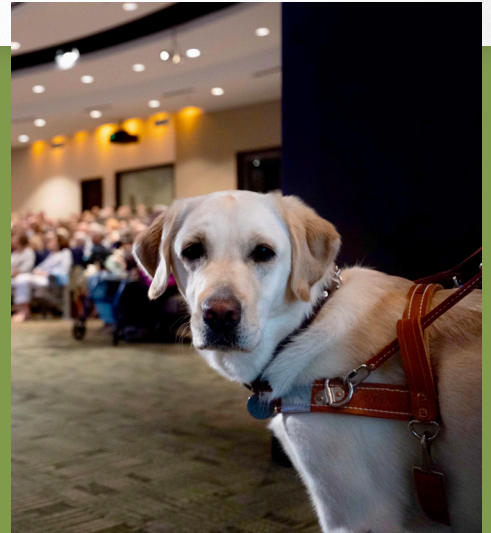


## LETTERS TO LEADER DOG



I took delivery of my sweet Shanti girl on May 25, 2021. For those of you who are waiting patiently, just know that it is well worth the wait! I am so in love with this girl and we have bonded so deeply. Your life will never be the same and neither will your pooches. Thank you ever so much Leader Dog for putting us together! Kevin [Karen's guide dog mobility instructor], you did GREAT! She is my guiding eyes and heart!

Karen L and LD Shanti



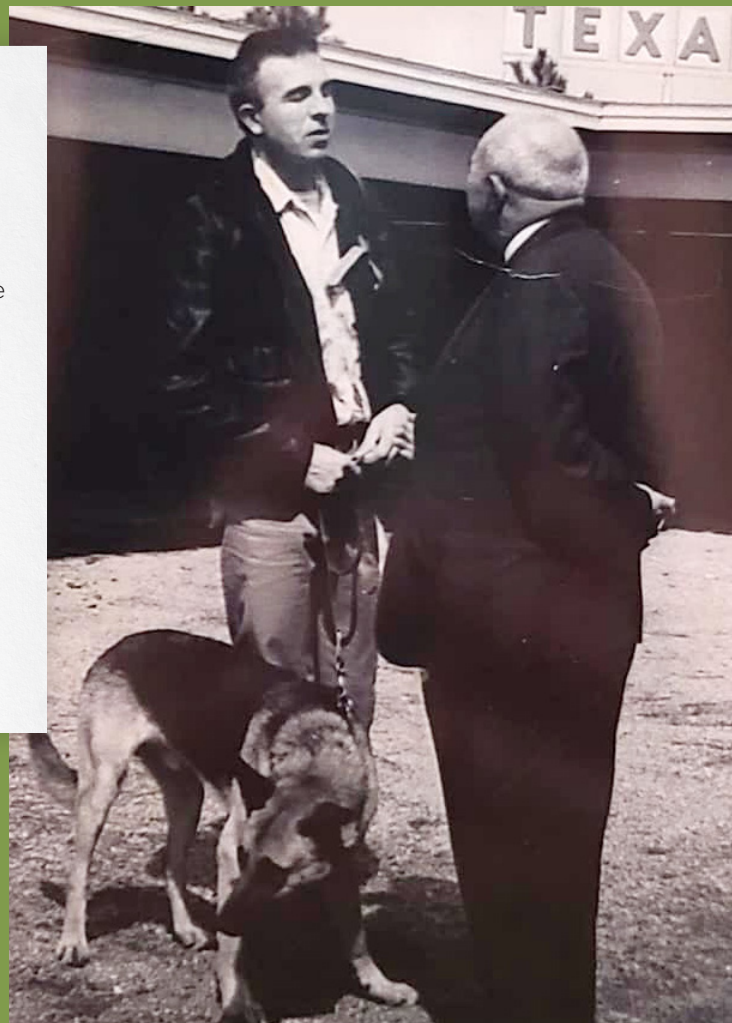
Dear Leader Dogs for the Blind,

Our father, Vernon Kolpek, passed away in July at the age of 87. He was a police officer in his hometown of Cedar Falls, IA. In 1966 he was shot in the face in the line of duty. At 31 years old, with a wife and four small children, our dad was completely blinded. He was not only a police officer, but also an artist and sign painter.

After his injuries healed, he came to your fabulous facility to receive his German shepherd Leader Dog, "Fritz." Having Fritz, and also learning how to navigate with a cane, allowed our dad freedom and independence to go to college. He later went on to own a music store, form and drum in a country western band for 30+ years, become a city councilman, and own his own company that raised money for many local service clubs.

His accomplishments are many. He was one in a million. We miss him very much. We are forever grateful for the independence our father had. He was an inspiration to many as a shining example of what he could do instead of what he couldn't do.

Sincerely the children of Vernon Kolpek,  
David, Dennis, Sheryl & Dawn







My Leader Dog Rockett and I, along with my husband and my in-laws, just came back from a trip to New York City and the museum of the dog. He did fantastic, ignoring all of the many distractions and dog statues. He showed no fear and guided very well.

It's been a long time since he's been in such a big city, so I wasn't sure what to expect from him, but he was amazing!

Katlyn C and LD Rockett



I had to go shopping recently without my guide dog, Rory. It was a very hot, humid day and I thought it was best to let her have the afternoon off. My son was leading me around the store, and I needed to stop and so I said "Halt!" Then I realized it's my son, not Rory. We both started laughing. It's such a great feeling that Rory is my "normal" when it comes to my everyday life. It doesn't feel natural to me to be without her. She's a huge blessing.

Thank you Leader Dog!

Heidi E



# Thriving in Mexico City



Mexico City is the 5th largest city in the world boasting 21 million residents; by comparison, New York City only has 8.2 million. It is a difficult city to travel if you are sighted with the difficulty multiplying if you are vision impaired.

"The traffic is considerable, and the infrastructure is not adapted for people with visual disabilities," explained LDB Client Abigail Lopez, who lives in Mexico City. "Accessibility to various parts of the city is difficult, many times putting my safety at risk."

***More than once Gudrun has saved the team from danger by turning very fast to avoid a vehicle. "She acts immediately," said Abigail.***

Abigail was diagnosed with a degenerative eye disease, retinitis pigmentosa, when she was only 15. After she turned 20, her vision began to deteriorate faster. Though she did manage to navigate Mexico City with a white cane, Abigail found it very challenging. She was attending university and had to continually learn to travel to different parts of the city, but she could not shake her fear of traveling alone.

So, Abigail turned to Leader Dog for assistance, traveled to the United States and was matched with Leader Dog Gudrun (class graduation photo top left), and she is no longer afraid. "Gudrun has been fundamental in giving me security and confidence in addition to unconditional love and company," said Abigail. "She is an intelligent companion, saving me from overhead and ground obstacles which helps me to move with greater speed." LD Gudrun makes it easier for Abigail to access Mexico City's extensive public transportation, like the Metro transit system (second largest in North America) and the city's extensive bus system. This access has resulted in Abigail's 2-hour commute to her job as a physiotherapist to be considerably decreased.

◀ **ABIGAIL AND LD GUDRUN WALK THROUGH BUSTLING MEXICO CITY.**

*(continued on page 8)*







Visit [LeaderDog.org/puppy-raise](https://LeaderDog.org/puppy-raise) to learn more about puppy raising or apply online.

### PUPPY RAISERS PHIL AND PHYLLIS KREBS WITH ABIGAIL AT ▲ 'MEET THE CLIENT NIGHT' AT LEADER DOG.

#### MEET GODRUN'S PUPPY RAISERS



Phil and Phyllis Krebs' journey into puppy raising was triggered by Phil's years as a member of a Lions club. "During a visit to Detroit, we toured Leader Dog because Phil wanted to see the campus," recalled Phyllis. "At the end I told Phil 'I'll be back in a minute' and I went to fill out a puppy raiser application. I came back and said, 'We'll have a puppy in about six months.'"



So, it makes sense that Lion Phyllis (yes, she joined) and Lion Phil named LD Gudrun after the first female International President of Lions Clubs International, Gudrun Yngvadottir.

The Krebs drove 12 hours from Missouri to meet Abigail Lopez during her training with Gudrun. They still stay in touch through Instagram.

"Since I met some LDB clients, even if they didn't get a puppy we raised, I have a different perspective on what we're doing," said Phyllis. "It's hard to return the puppies, but you meet a client and realize the impact that dog has on them. It's humbling to know that the little I do to raise a puppy has so much impact."

Lions Phil and Phyllis are currently raising their 13th Future Leader Dog!





Of course, a busy city means the team crosses paths with a lot of children throughout the course of a day. According to Abigail, children are Gudrun's joy and love. "Once when I was shopping and choosing a blouse," said Abigail, "I heard a childish voice and turned to see that Gudrun had become very good friends with a little girl in a matter of moments."

*"We have such similar personalities that we are simply the best team. I am very active and Gudrun is also, she has adapted very well to my lifestyle."*

Having Gudrun by her side as she travels throughout Mexico City has really boosted Abigail's confidence; enough so that it prompted her to start a new stage in life as an athlete. She has begun running—loving every minute of it.



### ABIGAIL'S RUNNING GROUP ▲



**SHOP FOR THE HOLIDAYS AT [LEADERDOG.ORG/SHOP](https://leaderdog.org/shop)**

Be sure to shop early for the best selection and to beat the shipping rush!

Use code **HOLIDAYS** to receive **20% off your entire order** now through **December 5, 2021**.

*No other discount codes may be used with this offer. While supplies last.*



# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Strides Forward



## COMMITTEE UPDATE

In 2020, Leader Dog began working to incorporate a more diverse and inclusive environment for our entire community—our clients, volunteers, supporters and staff. To move this initiative forward, we developed a DE&I strategic plan and two new DE&I committees, one at the board level and one at the staff level.

To get everyone on board, our staff and board members participated in unconscious bias sessions run by The Leadership Group. The sessions were well received and have become a requirement for new staff and board trustees to ensure everyone starts with common knowledge.

Several experts in the DE&I field stepped forward to join our board committee. This group is tasked with measuring the success of our DE&I strategic plan and focusing on methodologies and impact. Committee members lead staff sessions, sharing their experiences and proactive steps they've taken professionally and personally to make DE&I a part of their lives.

The staff committee recently launched a 21-day equity challenge for all team members. They provided a wide variety of resources related to various DE&I subjects. The challenge culminated in a group discussion to begin making this tough subject an easier one to talk about with co-workers.

We are at the beginning of an initiative that will grow and evolve for many years to come!

### DE&I STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Leader Dogs for the Blind is committed to diversity and inclusion within all organizational constituencies and strives to create an equitable community for all clients, team members, volunteers and supporters whatever their race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or identity. We stand as an active community partner in advancing the core values of diversity, equity and inclusion which embody the foundation of the organization's overall mission and service provision.



Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

Interested in learning more? Join us by following the Voices of the Leader Dog Community entries on our website at [LeaderDog.org/blog/introducing-voices-of-the-leader-dog-community](https://LeaderDog.org/blog/introducing-voices-of-the-leader-dog-community) or using the QR code to the right with your mobile device.

If you are interested in doing the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge rolled out to Leader Dog team members, visit [debbyirving.com/21-day-challenge-archive2021](https://debbyirving.com/21-day-challenge-archive2021) for a full list of resources.







## Foundation Relationship Supports Our Mission

**L**eaders Dog has been fortunate to have an enduring relationship with the Michigan-based DeRoy Testamentary Foundation, formerly the Helen L. DeRoy Foundation, since 1981. The disruption of the past year hasn't stopped the foundation from staying true to their mission to improve the quality of life and promote the well-being of individuals in our community. This included making a grant to Leader Dog that helps ensure our capacity to serve clients.

The foundation's understanding of the complexity of Leader Dog's strategic and service-based outcomes led them to provide us with a new Ram ProMaster 2500 Cargo Van, which was delivered this past summer. The vehicle was needed to transport dogs to and from our Prison Puppies correctional facilities and other community partners who help us meet the ongoing demand for Leader Dogs. The vehicle is also used for field evaluations and supply acquisition when transporting dogs.

With a revised client to instructor ratio of 3:1, required social distancing protocols and an increase in home delivery training, our fleet is being used in more varied and flexible ways than ever before.



The foundation is currently managed by family of Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy and has been a stabilizing force in Southeast Michigan for over four decades. We thank them for their partnership with us.



THE DONATED RAM VAN IN FULL LDB BRANDING. ▲

## SIMPLE WAYS TO MAKE A BIG IMPACT



**L**eaving a donation to Leader Dogs for the Blind in your will or trust is a very simple but impactful way to support the work we do and ensure our future. Another way to make a lasting difference is to designate Leader Dog as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, IRA, life insurance or donor-advised fund.

To find out more about donating these types of assets or joining our Legacy Society, please contact Lora Cabarios, director of personal and planned giving at 248.650.7109 or [lora.cabarios@LeaderDog.org](mailto:lora.cabarios@LeaderDog.org).

### NEW LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS

Carole L. Buechler

Paul E. Buechler







**W**ho doesn't love the soft cuddles, funny antics and love a puppy provides? But to raise a puppy for 12-15 months and have to give it up to someone who needs it more is one of the most selfless and rewarding things a person can do! From single raisers to families and retired couples—raisers come together to share their stories.

1. What brought you to puppy raising?
2. What have you enjoyed the most?
3. What would you say to someone considering raising?



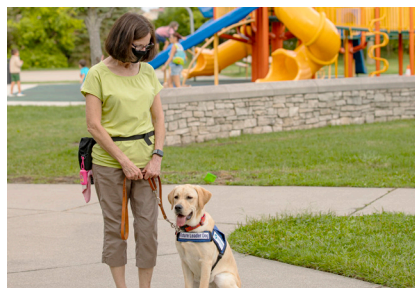
### **RAISERS/HOSTS - Michael & Dan**

1. We had "puppy sat" for a LDB puppy raiser friend and were drawn in! It took a few years to be in the right place in our lives to do it, but then we dove in head first and have now raised five puppies.
2. Being a part of both the breeding and puppy raising programs has been our favorite part! When the fifth puppy we raised was chosen for the breeding program, we decided to become her host home. Having the opportunity to see full circle, from pregnancy and birth through being a part of puppy raising for just over a year is truly amazing to watch!
3. Come to some outings and experience what puppy raising is all about! Ask questions, talk to raisers about their experiences and be a part of changing lives.



### **RAISER - Lindsey Methner & Family**

1. My oldest child and I watched a TV show a few months beforehand that talked a lot about the lives of puppy raisers. We knew immediately that was something we wanted to do.
2. Being a puppy raiser is such a rewarding job. It has taught our children responsibility, and even patience to myself. My favorite part is watching how smart these FLDs are in every situation.
3. If you are debating becoming a puppy raiser, I encourage you to do it! It's a once in a lifetime experience. Leader Dog really treats all their volunteers just like family.



### **RAISER - Kathy Larsen**

1. I had just retired and was looking for a volunteer activity. My husband saw an advertisement for puppy raisers needed at Leader Dog. Knowing that I love dogs and had trained a neighbor's dog when I was 14, he encouraged me to sign up and become a puppy raiser.
2. Learning so much about puppies, how they learn, how to train them and watching the puppies become confident dogs

ready for their training at Leader Dog. Also, the new friendships I have made with fellow puppy raisers has been awesome!

3. You will be doing something that is going to greatly change lives. You will be giving someone a precious gift of "their eyes" through their Leader Dog. Being able to raise a cute, fluffy puppy for a year isn't bad either!



### **RAISER - Sammi Cash**

1. I watched Pick of the Litter and it really interested me in puppy raising. I found Leader Dog by my house and applied! I had so much fun raising Mia and can't wait to see how she does in training, and raise another puppy.
2. I enjoyed meeting everyone in the Leader Dog community, and watching Mia grow as a puppy. It was so cool seeing her as an 8-week-old puppy, to a mature and smart 17 month old!
3. It is a super rewarding and awesome experience. I learned so much about myself and I always say Mia taught me more than I taught her. It was so fun going to classes and watching all the puppies grow!



Visit [leaderdog.org/puppy-raise](https://leaderdog.org/puppy-raise) or use code above to learn more!



After four highly successful decades as an executive in the energy sector, Tom O'Masta retired. Or did he? Tom continues to share his knowledge and passion with Leader Dog as an active board member since 2013.



During this time, Tom has been a member of our Finance Committee (5 years), Governance Committee (9 years) and the Mission Assurance & Quality Committee (6 years). His expertise in executive leadership, project management and customer care services have been a big benefit to our board and to Leader Dog overall.

## Tom O'Masta

(pictured with wife, Shirley, at one of their favorite LDB events, Dinner in the Dark)



During Tom's many years with Consumers Energy he held several executive level positions including in project management, customer operations and engineering. But that wasn't all: he also volunteered extensively, including with the THAW Fund, Crittenton Hospital, Michigan Manufacturers Association and as a soccer coach for the YMCA.

We would like to thank Tom for his continued service to our organization and our mission as a valued member of our board.

*"All organizations hope to provide a lifelong, life-changing experience for their clients. At Leader Dog, this is not a hope, it is a reality. Leader Dog's clients have been empowered to overcome their blindness, have gone to college, embarked on new careers and engaged in activities that they never thought would be possible. Leader Dog truly provides them a new life."*



## MISSION MOMENT

◀ *"It was surprising to me how fast they pick up on targeting things, he learned so fast that I love Starbucks. I'd say 'Do you want to get Starbucks?' It took 2-3 times for him to know. It was so interesting to me how smart they are."*

*~Emma D and LD Pepper*



## Rich and Janet Howse

### A Decades-long Commitment



## DONOR HIGHLIGHT

**R**ich and Janet Howse began their commitment to Leader Dog 20 years ago when their daughter, Jenny, asked to raise a puppy. Janet thought back to her childhood when she helped her grandfather, who was blind, with daily tasks. She remembered his struggle to live independently and knew her daughter's desire to raise a Future Leader Dog would change someone's life.

Jenny ended up raising not one, but four puppies over the years. She later participated in LDB's veterinary externship program while studying at MSU and now volunteers her time at LDB as a veterinarian.

In 2018, Rich and Janet broadened their relationship with Leader Dog by hosting a breeding mom, Martha. "Hosting Martha has been a constant

source of joy in our home," said Janet. "The breeding team and veterinarians were terrific and provided support, education and advice."

The Howses view Leader Dog as a positive light in their lives, providing them a way to give back to their community. When offered a naming opportunity in the veterinary clinic, they made their gift to further strengthen their support and remember Janet's grandfather.

Now retired, Rich volunteers on campus with the puppies and breeding dogs. Rich and Janet plan to continue their support of Leader Dog through financial contributions and volunteering.

If you would like information on how to make a future gift, we are here to help you. Visit our website at [leaderdog.planmygift.org](http://leaderdog.planmygift.org) or contact Lora Cabarios at 248.650.7109 or [Lora.Cabarios@leaderdog.org](mailto:Lora.Cabarios@leaderdog.org).

### RICH AND JANET HOWSE



### DAUGHTER JENNY WITH HER PERSONAL DOG, GEORGE





## TEVRA BRANDS - CANINE DENTAL CARE

**W**ere you aware that 80% of all dogs experience some form of dental health issue by the time they are three years old?

At Tevra Brands, we are continuing our mission to change how people care for their dog's health, including canine oral care. An obstacle many people face is how difficult it can be to brush your dog's teeth. To make it much easier, Tevra Pet developed Brush Free Oral Gel for dogs.



Brush Free Oral Gel is a revolutionary dental care product that eliminates the need for daily dental care. Just squeeze two drops of gel on your dog's lower and upper gums with the applicator tip or finger. Using our patented ProLong Technology, the gel forms an invisible layer on your dog's gums that slowly releases dental actives (chlorhexidine and baking soda) over time. These actives whiten teeth, freshen breath, and fight plaque and tartar build up for an entire week.



For an even easier-to-apply product, we are introducing our new Brush Free Twist & Lick Oral Gel which will soon be available in stores or on-line. Simply twist the applicator two clicks for small dogs and four clicks for large dogs, then let them lick the gel right off the applicator! It's simple and dogs love the delicious chicken flavor. Use Brush Free Twist & Lick twice a week for a dramatic improvement in your dog's breath and overall oral health!

Vet Tested... Dog Approved!

*Article submitted by Tevra Brands*

## PLANNING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

**W**e have all had unexpected things happen during our lives. Having a plan can help you be prepared for the changes life can bring. One way you can be prepared is with an estate plan.

An estate plan can feel like a lot to tackle, but it can:

- Protect your family and friends
- Create a guardianship plan for pets or animals in your care
- Identify beneficiaries for your assets (including IRA, 401K or assets outside of a will)
- Support the communities and charities you value through a lasting legacy

To get started, use FreeWill's free estate planning services. FreeWill is a simple way to write a legal will at no personal cost. You can also create other important estate planning documents to prepare for your future.

Make your plan today to protect the people, pets and communities you care about most.

Get started at [www.FreeWill.com/LeaderDog](http://www.FreeWill.com/LeaderDog)



**At Leader Dog we know that blindness changes everything. For most people, the loss of sight is never part of their "plan," leaving them unprepared when daily activities must be altered. But despite the uncertainty that comes with visual impairment, having the ability to travel independently provides our clients the opportunity to adapt and thrive.**



# Lions Leadership at the Helm



LIONS CLUB CONNECTION

*IN EVERY LEADER DOG LIES THE HEART OF A LION—A Leader Dog partner since 1939.*

**F**ounded by three Lions club members over 80 years ago, Leader Dog has partnered with Lions for support in many ways: puppy raisers, agency contacts and public awareness, fundraising, volunteerism and, of course, leadership.



In addition to 75% of Leader Dog's board of trustees being Lions, we have a board sub-committee, the Lions Engagement Committee. The committee is comprised of Lions international and district-wide leaders. Led by Past International President Joe Preston (pictured), the committee's purpose is to provide strategic guidance and perspective regarding the Lions constituency.

Current members include Immediate Past Chair PID Bruce Schwartz (ND), PDG John Paul Burnett (TX), PDG Bob Jones (DE), ID Ardie Klemish (IA), PID Esther La Mothe (MI), PID Robert Littlefield (FL), ID Mark Lyon (CT), Lion Linda Madden (IN), VDG Debbie Mansell (WA), PID John Rabideau (FL), PID Kembra Smith (GA) and PID Debra Wasserman (MN).

We thank these leaders for ensuring the Lions and Leader Dog partnership remains a powerful force supporting people who are blind or visually impaired across the country.

*"[The committee] provides insight on challenges and opportunities to increase Leader Dog's impact and reach, and ways to improve their communication with Lions. It is about getting more Leader Dogs matched with blind or visually impaired people, to give those people greater independence and advanced mobility. Lions have always played a large role in the growth and success of Leader Dogs for the Blind. We are doing our best to take Lions partnership with Leader Dog to the next level!" ~ Joe Preston*

## LIGHT UP LEADER DOG 2021

**F**or the second year, we will be lighting up the Leader Dogs for the Blind campus to welcome the holiday season and honor our clients, donors, canines and others in the LDB community.

Over 1,200 luminaries, each representing a \$10 donation, will turn our campus into a beautiful display of support, community and hope. Everyone can enjoy the event by driving through the display or attending a Facebook Live event broadcast in the evening. This year, additional light displays will be added to the event, which takes place on Saturday, December 11.

You can make your mark during Light Up Leader Dog by sponsoring one or more luminaries for \$10 each to be displayed on campus. Luminary sponsorships are available online at [LeaderDog.org](https://LeaderDog.org) or use the QR code on this page to access via mobile.

Please join us on December 11 as we Light Up Leader Dog!







**LEADER DOGS**  
FOR THE BLIND®

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# DINNER IN THE DARK

Please **JOIN US** on **Friday, March 11, 2022 at MGM Grand or online!**

This year Dinner in the Dark will be in-person AND online, so everyone can join us for an unforgettable evening in support of Leader Dogs for the Blind.

**Ticket Prices:**

- \$125 SUPPORTER TICKET or VIRTUAL at home kit *(w/link to live broadcast)*
- \$225 VIP

**Tickets go on sale December 1, 2021!**

For tickets or additional information, please visit [LeaderDog.org/dinner-in-the-dark](http://LeaderDog.org/dinner-in-the-dark).

