**Harness & Leash**

**Edition 41**

**Message from David Locklin, Chief Program Officer**

I hope everyone is as excited about 2023 as I am. I love the feeling of having an entire new year in front of me.

Here at Leader Dog, we are always willing to try something new to increase our services to you. For instance, we are working with another service dog organization, Paws with a Cause, to train a guide dog for an individual who is blind and has additional service needs. We trained the dog to Leader Dog standards for guide work and now PAWS is working with the dog for their part of the training. We are not sure yet if this is going to work, but we are always willing to try! You will find several other new things we are trying highlighted in this newsletter.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, contact client services at 888-777-5332 extension 1 or via email at clientservices@leaderdog.org.

**O&M Corner - NaviLens**

At the intersection of the Rochester and Avon Hallways in our residence center a client holds her cell phone forward. A drum beat and chime are growing louder as she nears the RA office. She is not playing music or taking a selfie; she is using the NaviLens app. The drumbeat quickens and a voice announces “Office, three feet ahead.”

This is an example of a new app we are testing on campus. Several locations are labeled with graphics that look like colorful QR codes, but which are actually codes offered by the NaviLens company. The free app reads the codes which are used for labeling and navigation. A user can also acquire blank codes for personal use like at their workplace or when traveling.

The NaviLens app is one example of the technology testing conducted at Leader Dog, in this case by the extended services department. We are assessing the usefulness of the app for efficient interior orientation. Stay tuned for more information after our testing is complete.

**Moving From CD to Email**

We offer this newsletter and Update magazine to you, our clients, in several different formats: large print, CD, Braille and email. The quickest and most green way to get these newsletters is via email. If you are currently receiving these materials by print, CD or Braille and would like to change to email, please call 888-777-5332 and dial ‘0’ to speak with the operator to change your format. You can also send your change request to leaderdog@leaderdog.org.

**Working with Guide Dogs UK**

We welcomed four clients and four staff members from Guide Dogs UK to campus in October to collaborate on training the clients with Leader Dogs. As a member of the International Guide Dog Federation, we feel it is important to work with organizations from abroad in support of our organizational vision that every person who is blind or visually impaired travels safely and independently.

This mutually beneficial arrangement helped Guide Dogs UK serve four clients in a timely manner. Due to the pandemic, they have a 5-year waiting list for their clients to receive dogs. Our partnership included a financial agreement for Guide Dogs UK to pay for the dogs and training. They are also providing all follow-up support for the four clients.

We benefited by working alongside their instructors to learn and compare their training techniques to our own.

There were two very apparent differences in working with a guide dog in the US vs the UK. First, their traffic flow is on the opposite side of the street; and second, their dogs must learn to relieve themselves on concrete since they do not have as much green space as in the US.

We are currently reviewing the outcome of this partnership to decide if it will continue into the future and, if so, what the scope of the collaboration will be.

**Taking the Lead Podcast**

If you haven’t listened to our Taking the Lead Podcast yet, now is the time to start! The co-hosting team of LDB Client Timothy Cuneio, LDB Outreach Manager Leslie Hoskins and LDB Digital Marketing Manager Christina Hepner release a new episode every Thursday. The trio welcome guests for most episodes, so you’ll hear stories from clients, LDB staff and LDB volunteers. You can find the podcast on Leader Dog’s website at leaderdog.org/taking-the-lead or wherever you stream podcasts including Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Spotify.

**Winter Grooming Tip**

Winter can be tough on your dog’s feet, especially if you live in a snowy or icy area that uses salt on sidewalks. Help your dog by making it a habit to bathe its feet in lukewarm water and dry thoroughly when you come in from the cold. You may also want to apply Musher’s Wax to your dog’s pads or try dog boots before heading out. If you’re having trouble getting your dog adjusted to boots, call client services at 888-777-5332 then choose ‘1’ for tips.

**Cane Quest**

LDB participated in a new program this year in celebration of White Cane Day on October 15. We hosted 74 people on our campus for the second annual Michigan Cane Quest, a competition for students who are blind or visually impaired to test their cane skills in a variety of environments. The event encourages building cane skills in a fun way and provides an opportunity for families to learn more about blindness and gain some empathy for what their child experiences daily.

**Alumni Facebook Group**

If you have not already joined the LDB Alumni Facebook group, do it today! It is a great place to make connections and share resources. Go to Facebook and search “Leader Dogs for the Blind Alumni.”

**Get 15% Off Everyday**

All clients receive 15% off at 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, then choose ‘1’ 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.