

# Faithful Friends



*News for you, a friend and supporter of Leader Dogs for the Blind*

AUGUST  
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Creating a  
**welcoming**  
environment







1039 S. Rochester Road  
Rochester Hills, MI 48307  
[LeaderDog.org](http://LeaderDog.org)

## FOLLOW THE LEADER



### Vision

Every person who is blind or visually impaired travels safely and independently.

### Mission

Empowering people who are blind or visually impaired with lifelong skills for safe and independent daily travel.

### Values

- Do what is right
- Show respect and compassion
- Demonstrate passion for the work
- Deliver a superior experience
- Work as a team
- Seek innovation
- Practice safety

## Greetings Friends,

First and foremost, thank you! As a supporter of Leader Dogs for the Blind, you've helped empower people who are blind with critically needed mobility skills that enhance their lives. These skills impact every aspect of daily life from seeking gainful employment to reconnecting with friends and communities.

Did you know that Leader Dog receives no government or insurance funding? We rely completely on the generosity of donors like you!

Your partnership with Leader Dog also supports innovations in the services we provide. Several ways we have expanded our services over the past year include:

- 1. DeafBlind Adaptive Services** – We have modified our services to people with multiple limitations to better meet their unique needs. Read “Leader Dogs for All” for more on these services.
- 2. Expanded Orientation & Mobility Services** – By adding more Certified O&M Specialists, we now provide in-home training of white cane skills and serve more teenaged clients in a unique program that includes teaching family members how to better support their child.
- 3. International Working Dog Registry** – Inclusion in this partnership provides us with statistical data to make breeding decisions to improve the success rate of our future Leader Dogs.



Your support has allowed us to serve over 17,000 clients who left the Leader Dog campus with increased confidence and hope for their future. This is the combined power of the generosity of people like you!

Thank you for believing in our mission and our clients!

With warm gratitude,

*Susan M. Daniels*

Susan M. Daniels  
President and CEO





## Leader Dogs for All

One of the ways we use your generous gifts to Leader Dogs for the Blind is to support individualized training. There are unique environments, like college campuses, that require extra time and focus, and there are certain skills that sometimes need more development, like crossing multi-lane streets. Whatever the situation, donor support is key.

And that's especially true for some clients who have other limitations to manage, such as hearing loss, loss of use of a hand or arm, uneven gait when walking or cognitive changes due to traumatic brain injury. Leader Dog has a team of guide dog mobility instructors (GDMLs) who provide training using specific instruction techniques and a lower client-to-instructor ratio for these clients.

This adaptive services team includes instructors who are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), have a background in counseling or have a solid background working with, and training dogs for, people with needs that do not include visual impairment.

They can:

- train a dog to work on the right side for someone who has experienced a stroke, has a prosthetic hand or limb abnormalities.
- identify and train a sturdy dog for someone with an uneven gait due to cerebral palsy that can offer a little counterbalance and be easier to control.
- dual train a dog to guide and alert to sounds like a doorbell for a person who is deaf and blind.
- provide one-on-one instruction at a gradual pace for someone who has experienced a traumatic brain injury.

That's the power of your support of Leader Dogs for the Blind – giving us the ability to empower people with multiple needs who cannot find services elsewhere to train with a Leader Dog and become unstoppable.



# Hosting a Breeding Stock Mom



The volunteers who host our Breeding Stock moms and dads literally give our future Leader Dogs their start in life.

Empty-nesters Janet and Rich Howse host a breeding stock mom because they like having puppies in the house and doing something for Leader Dog at the same time.



This is one of the most miraculous experiences you'll have in your life, watching these puppies being born and growing.

– RICH HOWSE

Their current breeding stock mom is Jazmin, a golden retriever. The process started with Jazmin staying at LDB to be bred when she was in heat. Then into quarantine, to protect her precious cargo. A month later, an ultrasound confirmed her pregnancy.

An X-ray taken a week before the due date shows the number of puppies in the litter – nine! The Howse's set up a whelp box to provide a safe place for the birth.



Around two weeks of age, the puppies' eyes open and their ears hear. Music, and other household sounds like vacuums and the TV, provide auditory stimulation for the young puppies.

At 3-4 weeks of age the puppies become more mobile, and a larger area is created with stimulating toys like overhead objects and plastic pipes to crawl through.





Rich weighs each puppy daily to make sure they are thriving. Janet trims their nails weekly to get them accustomed to the practice.



When it's time for the puppies to be weaned from Jazmin, they are fed Purina Pro Plan® Puppy Large Breed mixed with water to make it mushy.

The temperature gets warm enough to take the puppies outside. "The first time they walk on grass they pick up their feet like they are being tickled," said Janet.



The last 10-14 days are labor intensive, as the puppies eat solid food and grow larger. Their increased activity level prompted several puppy washes a day.

Rich and Janet find the experience of bringing the puppies to Leader Dog to be bitter-sweet. "It hit me when we loaded them in the car and headed to campus," said Janet, "I felt pride that we got them this far and hope that they'll all become Leader Dogs."

## From Client to Lion

This past January, LDB client JP Trevino arrived on campus for a week of orientation & mobility (O&M) training. After getting minimal support through his state, about one hour of O&M training per week, he was ready to work hard to learn how to travel safely using his cane. "After my week at Leader Dog," said JP, "I was feeling confident to walk just about anywhere."

A few months later, JP learned that Leader Dog was started by three Lions club members and told his wife that he had to join their local Lions club. So, now the Greeley Noon Lions Club has two new members – JP and Kathy Trevino!

To honor Leader Dog, JP, a jeweler, designed a ring\* and is donating a portion of the sales to support our programs and services.



\*[www.RJDspiritrings.com](http://www.RJDspiritrings.com)



# Making Our Clients Feel at Home

An insider's look at some of the ways our residence, kitchen and custodial staff, along with our volunteers, create a welcoming environment for our clients.

Whether a client is on campus for a week of Orientation & Mobility training or three weeks of Guide Dog training, the hospitality they experience allows them to relax after a long day of learning new skills.



## Hi, I'm with Leader Dog

Clients flying into Detroit Metropolitan Airport are met by a Leader Dog volunteer in the baggage claim area. For some clients, this is the first time traveling alone since losing their vision, so a friendly voice is a great welcome. Often, there is a box lunch prepared by our kitchen staff waiting for them on the bus.

## Alexa, Play Me Some Motown

After getting time to settle into their private room, a residence advisor or volunteer shows each client how to use the technology in their room. Every room has an Echo Dot and cable television. The phone has designated extensions to hear the day's menus and activities, and recently added LED lighting can be adjusted to fit a client's individual lighting preference.



## Let Me Show You Where to Go

After dinner on their first day, clients have a meet-and-greet with the residence advisors and receive a one-on-one tour of the residence building. Clients are shown the layout of the common areas including the dining room, piano lounge, library, feed rooms and most importantly, the room where drinks, snacks and help are available 24/7.

## The Food is Wonderful

Our clients rave about the food prepared by our talented staff (some say it's a good thing they walk so far in training every day to burn the calories). The kitchen staff host several special meal nights including Fiesta Dinner, Pizza & Beer night, and BBQ night with Vernors ice cream floats (it's a Michigan thing).





If you are enjoying this issue and would like to support Leader Dog, you can make an online donation and make even more people unstoppable TODAY by clicking below.

**DONATE NOW**







## This is Like a Hotel

Leader Dog's custodial team does a wonderful job keeping the client rooms and the common areas clean and fresh. After a long day of training, clients get to return to a comfortable environment where they can relax and unwind. Our team works their tails off (sorry for the pun) keeping the hallways free of dog fur and paw prints.

## It's Time to Celebrate

At the end of class, a special luncheon is prepared, and the banquet room gets linen tablecloths for a gathering to acknowledge the accomplishments of each client. Family and friends are invited to join the ceremony via Zoom as everyone celebrates the hard work, dedication and determination of every O&M and Guide Dog client. Clients share stories from their training and thank the people who have supported them on their journey to become unstoppable.



## It's a Special Night

For guide dog clients, the chance to meet the wonderful person or people who raised their Leader Dog is a special night. Volunteer puppy raisers visit campus to meet the person who received the dog they raised and learn where the dog will live. Puppy raisers often bring puppy photo albums for the client or a special toy or blanket that the dog loved when growing up. For puppy raisers who don't live close to campus, the RAs set up a Zoom call with the client so they can meet.

## Why Support Leader Dogs?

We believe every person who needs access to our services should have it, and that cost should never be a barrier. All of our services, including expenses for training, room and board, and travel to our campus from anywhere in North America, are offered free of charge. The generosity of our friends and supporters is what keeps all of this going. Give today!



# Mission Moment



Before her senior year of college, Danielle came to Leader Dog and was matched with Eva, a black Labrador retriever.

Danielle always thought service dogs looked calm and collected, which Eva is when working, but said, "It's fun to find out how playful she is and that she is a little bit of a diva. I like seeing her personality come through."

"Having Eva is going to make me feel a lot more confident when traveling on campus," said Danielle. "It's also nice to have a second opinion when it comes to reading traffic and crossing streets."

Danielle loved her Leader Dog campus experience. "I've never been anywhere like this where the layout of the building and everything is catered to people who are blind."

But the biggest surprise... "They even had me excited to get up at 6:30am to take my dog out to the bathroom."

## Celebrating 40 Years of Service

### Leader Dog Team Member **Keith McGregor**

In 1981, Keith McGregor came to Leader Dog as a dog care attendant, he ended up staying for the next 40+ years.

After becoming a guide dog mobility instructor (GDMI), Keith identified a need for training designed for people who are deaf and blind. With Leader Dog's support, he attended college to learn American Sign Language (ASL) and began our groundbreaking Guide Dog program for people who are DeafBlind, the first dedicated training of its type in the U.S.

Keith mentored many GDMI's over the years, sharing his experience with training dogs and working with clients from all backgrounds. His legacy includes never using the excuse "that's how we've always done it," instead questioning and looking for better ways to support our clients and canines.

Currently, Keith is a part-time contract employee, so we continue to benefit from his experience and knowledge.

