**Harness & Leash**

**Edition 43**

**Message from Melissa Priester, Manager of Client Services**

Wow, we have sent out 43 issues of H&L over the years—that’s a lot of information. But to keep in step with the rest of LDB by reviewing our processes and updating as needed, we will be making changes to Harness & Leash. The first likely being a new name since Harness & Leash doesn’t represent our many O&M and Teen Summer Camp clients.

 We will work with our Voice of Client Advisory Team (VOCAT) among others to develop a newsletter that is meaningful to you, our clients. This may mean sending the communication at different times than Update is distributed. So, this may be the last Harness & Leash you receive combined with Update.

However, what isn’t changing are client services office hours, which are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST. We try to answer every call, but if you are sent to voicemail, please leave a detailed message and we will call you back as soon as possible. As always, you can also contact the client services department through our email, clientservices@leaderdog.org, which goes to our entire team.

**Decision to No Longer Train German Shepherds**

Our goal is to breed and raise dogs with the highest potential for future success. Success being a dog that becomes a working Leader Dog or is selected for breeding. Our success rates for Labrador retrievers and golden retrievers are similar to the success rates for these breeds at other guide dog organizations. Also, like other organizations, we have not experienced the same level of success for German shepherds. This has prompted our decision to focus solely on Labrador retrievers and golden retrievers; again, like other guide dog organizations.

This decision was not made lightly. We have worked diligently to improve the success of our shepherds by introducing new bloodlines into our breeding process, enhancing our puppy raising protocols, adapting new training guidelines, changing housing while on campus for training and developing processes to support GSDs during veterinary procedures. Despite our best efforts, their success rate remains very low.

Taking all these factors into consideration, we have made the difficult, yet appropriate, decision to stop breeding, raising and training shepherds. The exception are dogs currently in training which will be given every opportunity to become a working Leader Dog. This change allows us to focus our time and resources into maximizing the success of our Labrador retriever and golden retriever colonies.

If you have a question regarding this communication, please send an email to Dana Hunter, breeding program manager, at dana.hunter@leaderdog.org.

**This Cane**

The following poem was shared on the Alumni Facebook Page by LDB Client Steve Morelli after his week of O&M at Leader Dog.

This cane

Shaft of shame

Feeler of streets

Gatherer of pity

Attractor of stares

Loose light in my hand this cane

Sensor of bumps

Broadcaster of warning

Parter of crowds

Detector of disaster

Sweep sweep over mines this cane

Reflector of light

Reflector of grace

Reflector of humility

Reminder of fragility

White as an arcing dove this cane

Conjurer of mercy

Granter of forgiveness

Liberator of love

Cutter of shame

This cane

**Preparing for Nighttime Travel**

As we approach winter and earlier sunsets, it is a good time to review best practices for nighttime travel. Though canes and guide dog harnesses have reflective markings, some simple adjustments to standard travel techniques should be included to further reduce risks, such as:

* Wear reflective or high contrast clothing to help alert drivers to your presence.
* Use upper- and lower-body self-protective techniques to avoid unwanted contact with tree branches and other obstacles.
* Wear protective clothing, like a billed hat, to avoid injuries from tree branches or bushes.
* Carry a flashlight to light a path AND increase awareness of your presence.
* Plan the route ahead of time. Keep in mind that traffic patterns can vary for day and night travel including light phases at intersections.
* Remember that landmarks may vary for day and night travel.
* Communicate travel plans and estimated arrival times to friends and family.
* Carry a cell phone in case of emergencies.
* Always use common sense while traveling at night to reduce risks and make safety a priority.

This is not an exhaustive list, but it is a great start when planning. For more information, call client services at 888-777-5332, then hit ‘1’ or email to clientservices@leaderdog.org to have a certified O&M specialist call you back.

**Leader Dog Wants to Stay Connected!**

Do we have your most current contact information? Please provide or update your email address with us to receive communications about program opportunities, organizational updates and additional resources on a timely basis! Call client services at 888-777-5332, then hit ‘1’ or email to clientservices@leaderdog.org.

**Menus4ALL**

There is a new app, Menus4ALL, that pulls from a database of hundreds of thousands of menus across the U.S. and Canada. The app reformats the data into a screen reader-friendly interface. With the app, you can quickly scan a menu—bouncing across categories, zeroing in on items you’re interested in, skimming along the list of prices, and so on. Available on the App Store for iPhone and iPad. They offer a 14-day free trial, then it’s $2.99 per month or $29.99 per year.

**Taking the Lead Podcast**

Are you a Taking the Lead listener? If not, now is the time to start! The co-hosting team of Client Timothy Cuneio, Outreach Manager Leslie Hoskins and Digital Marketing Manager Christina Hepner welcome guests for most episodes, so you will enjoy stories from clients, staff and 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.

**Alumni Facebook Group**

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

**Leader Dog Gift Shop**

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, you can contact the gift shop at 248-218-6347 or giftshop@leaderdog.org.

 We have a new gift shop coordinator starting in November, so start checking out the website for new offerings in Spring 2024!

**Contact Us by Phone, Email or Text**

Your first point of contact for assistance is always the client services department. Call them at 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 248-659-5013.