

2022-2023

# ANNUAL REPORT

LEADER DOGS FOR THE BLIND







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## MISSION MOMENT



Client Joey Johnson decided to do daily social media posts when he came to Leader Dog for his first Leader Dog so he could keep his wife in the loop. "I've also developed relationships with LDB alumni who weren't in training with me," said Joey. "It's opened a lot of doors for friendships because we share the common situation of being blind. It might sound odd, but it's encouraging to hear that other people are struggling. It makes you realize, 'It isn't just me.' It's good to know that I'm not alone," Joey explained.

In a recent post, Joey stated " "Liberation! After showing great "settling" at PF Changs for lunch, LD Tucker and I walked independently all around the mall. Upstairs, downstairs, through the food court, to the restroom and then located the family. All without bumping into anyone, tripping, hitting any poles, kicking any of wet floor signs, and didn't get lost. I know this is nothing new to my more experienced guide dog friends and may seem silly to anyone who isn't vision impaired, but it's been YEARS since I've walked alone in a place like this. This was completely liberating!"



Read more of Joey's posts at [LeaderDog.org/blog/meeting-my-match-a-leader-dog-diary](https://LeaderDog.org/blog/meeting-my-match-a-leader-dog-diary).



Dear Friends,

As we close fiscal year 2022-2023, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable achievements we have made together at Leader Dogs for the Blind. This past year has been marked by growth, innovation, and impact—all fueled by the unwavering support of our generous donors and Lions, dedicated volunteers and passionate team.

Our Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program experienced significant growth this year, expanding our reach and allowing us to serve more individuals than ever before. This expansion is a direct result of your generosity, allowing us to train more individuals in their home environment and more teenagers (and their adult supporter!) through our Teen O&M program.

We entered a significant and exciting partnership with the Gary Sinise Foundation to raise awareness of our services amongst veterans and first responders. Together we will continue to support America's heroes who are blind or visually impaired with our free programs.

The unwavering support of Lions clubs nationwide resulted in a record number of Top Dog Clubs this year. As they have since the inception of Leader Dog in 1939, Lions continue to be true ambassadors for our mission in every way.

As we move forward, we remain committed to our mission of empowering people who are blind or visually impaired with lifelong skills for safe and independent daily travel. With your continued support, we will continue to expand our programs, innovate our services and make a lasting impact on the lives of individuals who rely on us.

Thank you for being a part of the Leader Dogs for the Blind community. Your generosity and dedication are making a world of difference.

Sincerely,

*Susan M. Daniels*

Susan M. Daniels  
President & CEO





# VISION, MISSION & VALUES



## VISION

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

## MISSION

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

## VALUES

Do what is right

*We act with integrity in every situation.*

Show respect and compassion

*We show empathy and kindness to every person and every dog.*

Demonstrate passion for the work

*We do more than just our job, we believe in our mission.*

Deliver a superior experience

*We exceed expectations for every person in the Leader Dog community.*

Work as a team

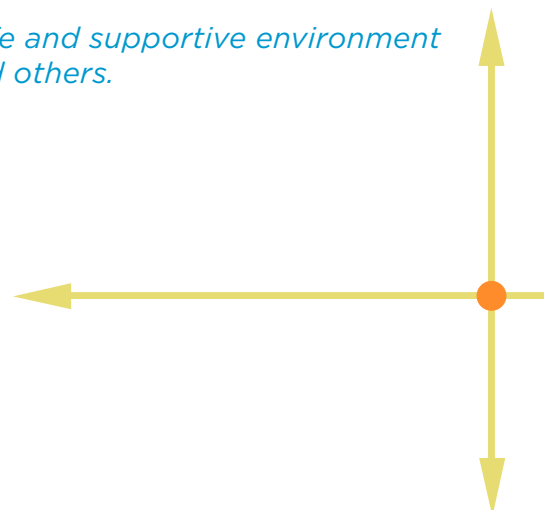
*We partner to achieve goals and advance the mission.*

Seek innovation

*We keep an open mind; we learn; we share our ideas; we drive change.*

Practice safety

*We provide a safe and supportive environment for ourselves and others.*





# HIGHLIGHTS 2022-2023

## Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Growth

Our O&M program success prompted us to hire more certified O&M specialists, allowing us to serve a record number of clients: 149 (65% more than FY 21-22).

Piloted in FY 21-22, our Teen O&M program became a permanent offering. Accompanied by a parent, the teens improve their O&M skills while the parents learn more about blindness, the skills their child uses, and how to help them achieve their O&M goals.

In-home delivery of O&M services also became a permanent offering after providing in-home training during the COVID-19 pandemic proved successful for our clients.



## Fundraising Success

Giving was exceptionally strong in the areas of foundations and grants, underscored by the Gary Sinise Foundation partnership, and in Lions club giving. A record number of individual Lions clubs gave more than \$5,000, putting them on our list of Top Dog Clubs. Our Lions department supported this growth by travelling extensively across the U.S. to present to clubs, often accompanied by a Leader Dog client who told their personal story. We also welcomed hundreds of Lions to campus for tours and as a part of our Lions summer visit program.



## Gary Sinise Foundation Partnership

Leader Dog and the Gary Sinise Foundation (GSF) entered a \$350,000 partnership to support America's heroes who are dealing with the challenges of visual impairment while raising awareness about the free programs Leader Dog offers.

The partnership gave GSF the opportunity to name seven Future Leader Dogs to help draw attention to the challenges faced by first responders and U.S. veterans experiencing sight loss. Six of the puppies were raised by current Leader Dog volunteer puppy raisers who are veterans or have family members who are veterans or currently serving in the military.





## International Collaboration

As a member of the International Guide Dog Federation, we recognize the importance of collaboration. We hosted staff members from Guide Dogs UK to train four of their clients with Leader Dogs.

While Guide Dogs UK was able to serve clients in a timely manner (due to the pandemic, their wait time for a guide dog was five years), we benefitted by working with their instructors to learn and compare training techniques. Guide Dogs UK covered the cost of the dogs and training, and they are providing follow-up support for the clients.

## IWDR Implementation

In a continual effort to breed and produce the best possible guide dogs for our clients, we began utilizing the International Working Dog Registry (IWDR). This database includes a variety of helpful tools to help us identify which dogs are genetically likely to produce puppies that will meet our breeding program objectives of producing dogs with the most desirable physical and mental traits.



## New Puppy Raising Options

To attract more people to be volunteer puppy raisers, we developed options to suit a variety of lifestyles. Now people who periodically travel for work or juggle a busy home life can be involved in raising a Leader Dog puppy.

Options allow for a single person/family to raise a puppy, people from two separate households to share duties throughout the year or in six-month increments, co-workers to raise as a team, or students at select colleges and universities to raise.



**Solidified our Focus on Accessibility** - As a key component of our FY 2022-2025 strategic plan, we initiated efforts to make Leader Dog a more accessible and inclusive organization starting with an accessibility audit reviewing materials, technology, and our physical campus to identify best practices and how to incorporate them. Next, we held the first of three employee training sessions focused on accessibility and inclusion.



# WHY I LOVE LEADER DOG REASON #215



“Volunteering at Leader Dog has given me a lot of worthwhile work to do in my retirement. The enthusiasm of clients and the dedication of team members inspire me to help wherever I can.”

— DAVE T., VOLUNTEER



# PROGRAM INFORMATION

## GUIDE DOG



A three-week residential program matching hand-selected, highly trained dogs with people who are legally blind, or both deaf and blind.

123

- 3 DeafBlind
- 82 GPS\* devices issued

## ORIENTATION & MOBILITY



The only seven-day residential orientation and mobility program in the U.S., providing clients with cane skills to become safer, more independent travelers.

149

- 1 DeafBlind
- 3 Youth O&M
- 7 GPS\* devices issued

## TEEN SUMMER CAMP



A unique summer camp for 16- and 17-year-olds who are legally blind, combining fun outdoor activities and leadership training with an introduction to guide dogs.

18

- 13 GPS\* devices issued

**Note:** In fiscal year 2023, we discontinued our virtual program T.O.M. Talks (Technology, Orientation and Mobility) as well as Virtual Summer Experience Camp due to lack of interest in the previous year.

\*GPS technology empowers clients to identify their current location and plan their own travel routes.

## VOLUNTEERS



**90**  
Breeding  
Hosts

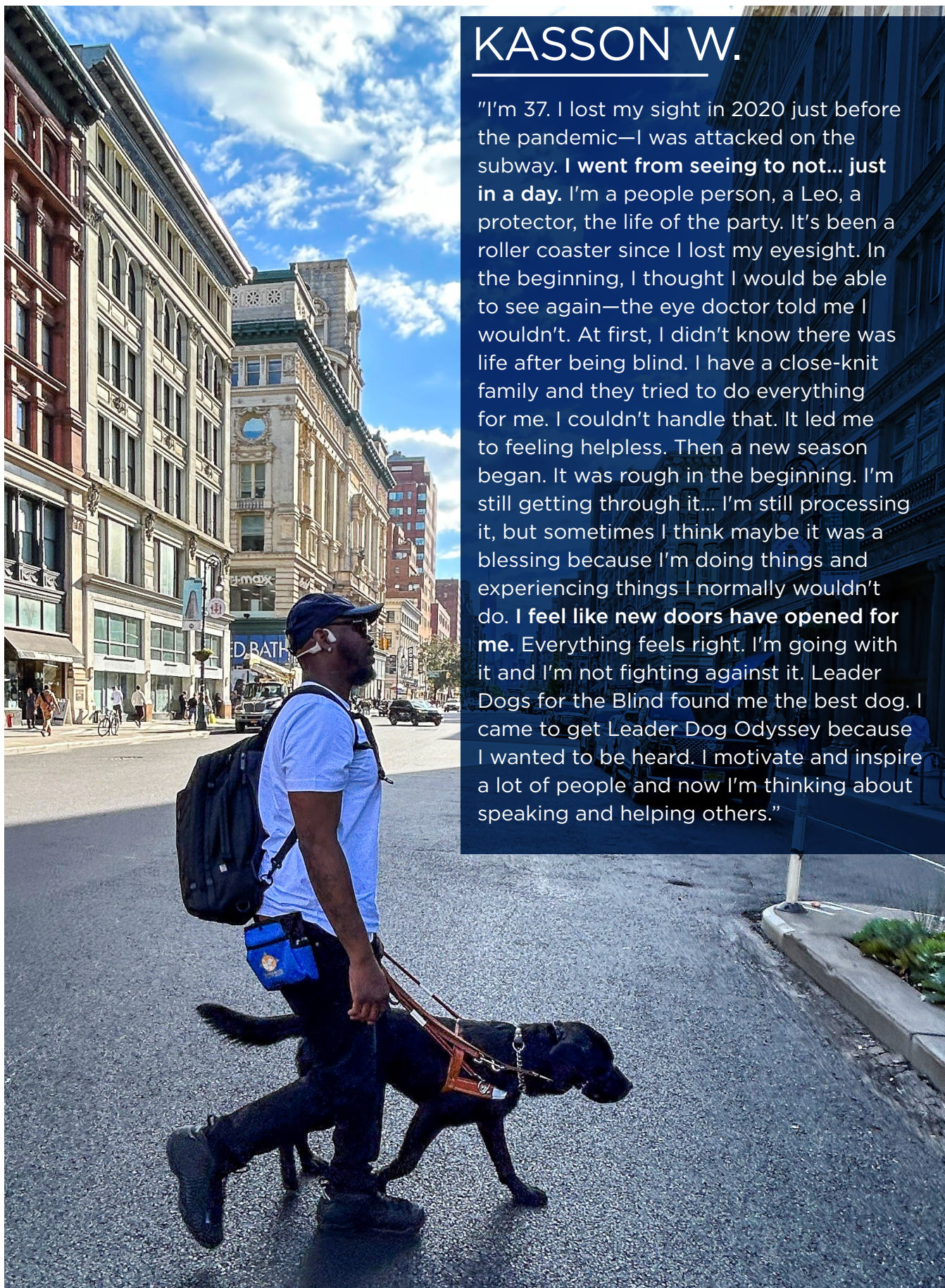


**326**  
Puppy  
Raisers



**401**  
On-Campus\*  
\* Includes 25 Board Trustees





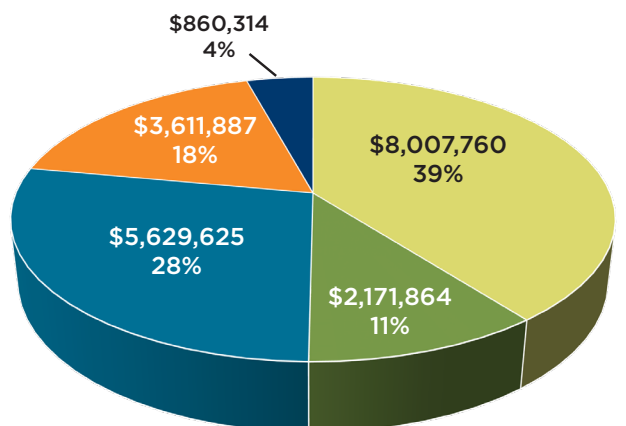
## KASSON W.

"I'm 37. I lost my sight in 2020 just before the pandemic—I was attacked on the subway. **I went from seeing to not... just in a day.** I'm a people person, a Leo, a protector, the life of the party. It's been a roller coaster since I lost my eyesight. In the beginning, I thought I would be able to see again—the eye doctor told me I wouldn't. At first, I didn't know there was life after being blind. I have a close-knit family and they tried to do everything for me. I couldn't handle that. It led me to feeling helpless. Then a new season began. It was rough in the beginning. I'm still getting through it... I'm still processing it, but sometimes I think maybe it was a blessing because I'm doing things and experiencing things I normally wouldn't do. **I feel like new doors have opened for me.** Everything feels right. I'm going with it and I'm not fighting against it. Leader Dogs for the Blind found me the best dog. I came to get Leader Dog Odyssey because I wanted to be heard. I motivate and inspire a lot of people and now I'm thinking about speaking and helping others."



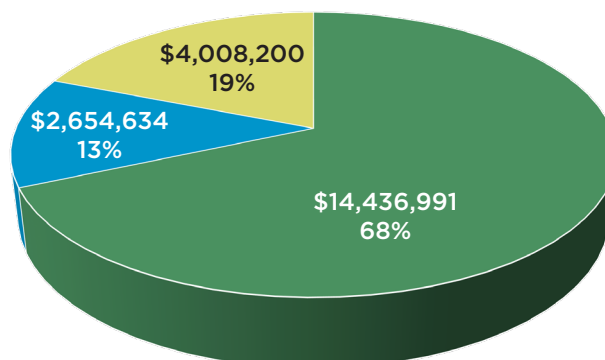
# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## Revenue



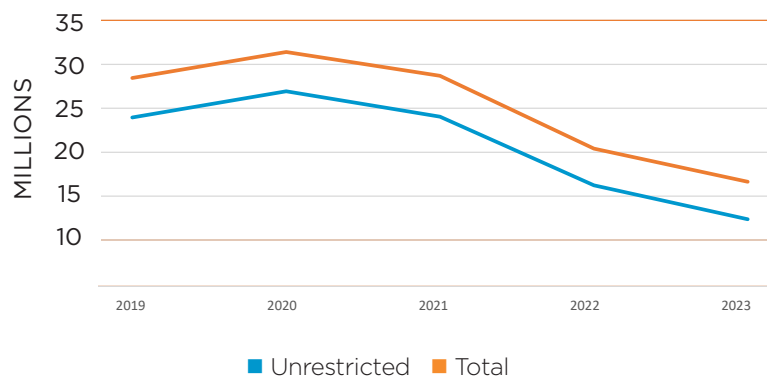
■ Estates and bequests    ■ Lions clubs donations  
■ Grants    ■ Other contributions  
■ Investments & misc.

## Expenses



■ Programs and services    ■ General and administrative  
■ Philanthropy (fundraising)

## Other



■ Unrestricted    ■ Total

### LEADER DOGS FOR THE BLIND

#### Summarized Statement of Activities

For the year ended June 30, 2023

#### Revenue

Contributions	\$19,421,136
Investment & Other	860,314

**Total revenue** **20,281,450**

#### Expenses

Programs & Services*	14,436,991
General & Administrative	2,654,634
Fundraising	4,008,200

**Total expenses** **21,099,825**

Change in net assets from operating activities (818,375)

Non-recurring adjustments to net assets\*\* (2,943,036)

**Total change in net assets** **(3,761,411)**

Net assets, beginning of year 20,398,824

**Net assets, end of year** **16,637,413**

#### NOTES:

\* Programs and Services Expenses include gifts made by Leader Dogs for the Blind to the Leader Dogs for the Blind Foundation, a separately organized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose exclusive mission is to support Leader Dogs for the Blind. These gifts primarily consist of large bequests.

\*\*Elite Detection K9 (EDK9) was formed as a long-term investment strategy to provide an alternative revenue source as financial support for the mission of LDB in addition to philanthropic revenue. Since its inception in 2018, the Leader Dog Board of Trustees reviewed and assessed all EDK9 operations and financial projections on a quarterly basis. Based on these ongoing assessments, the senior management team and board made the decision to dissolve EDK9 and operations were ceased as of June 30, 2023. This course of action triggered certain accounting adjustments we have identified as non-recurring (i.e., outside the normal course of LDB operations).



# WHY I LOVE LEADER DOG REASON #365



“ One of the reasons I love volunteering is the fact that these dogs are Difference Makers! From the day they are born, they leave a positive, long-lasting impact on their breeding host, puppy raiser and their client. The time and effort you put into these puppies doesn’t compare to what you get back from them in return—and being a small part of their journey is truly such an honor! ”

— JENNA R., VOLUNTEER PUPPY RAISER

# CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

(as of 11.15.23)

## Executive Officers

Susan Daniels, President & Chief Executive Officer  
Lorene Suidan, Vice President & Chief Operating Officer  
Melissa Weisse, Vice President & Chief Philanthropy Officer

## Officers

Kathryn Davis, Board Chair  
Steve Guarini, Immediate Past Chair  
Kim Gorman, Vice Chair  
Michele Honomichl, Treasurer  
Mark Guthrie, Secretary

## Trustees

Arun Anand	Michele Honomichl
Anne Arvia	Justice Marilyn Kelly
Jackie Buchanan	Maria Kristic
Franklin Carmona, DVM	Megan McCandlish
Anthony Costanzo	Thomas O'Masta
Margaret Dimond, PhD	John Reed
Paul Edwards, MD, FACS	Avril Rinn
Jill Garvey	Mary Smith
Jill Gaus	Daniel Spriet
Diane Henderson	Kurt Terrien
Brian Hock	Marc Wisniewski

## Honorary Trustees

Celia Domalewski	Daniel Markey
Lon Grossman	James Platzer
Paul Hemeryck	





# BOARD COMMITTEES

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## **Assistive Technology, Accessibility and Advocacy Committee**

Oversees the organization's use and implementation of assistive technology, ensures adherence to Leader Dog's accessibility philosophy and makes recommendations to Leader Dog on matters relating to client advocacy.

## **Audit Committee**

Oversees the organization's annual external audit and its system of internal controls over financial reporting.

## **Business Development Committee**

Researches and develops strategies to ensure the growth of Leader Dog in accordance with its goals and vision.

## **Ethics Committee**

Ensures that the Leader Dog mission is executed with the highest ethical standards and in alignment with organizational values and to review, interpret and monitor the organizational Code of Ethical Standards.

## **Executive Committee (Board Officers only)**

Conducts such business as is necessary or desirable during those periods when the Board of Trustees is not in session.

## **Finance Committee**

Oversees fiscal accountability and budgetary affairs.

## **Governance Committee**

Establishes and maintains a dynamic, diverse, engaged and knowledgeable Board of Trustees.

## **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility Committee (IDEA)**

Ensures organizational commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility at the highest level and throughout the organization.

## **Information Systems Committee**

Serves as a strategic partner for the Leader Dog team, focusing on the alignment of core business and technology so that the organization remains in the mainstream of continually evolving technology and IT solutions.

## **Leader Dog Foundation**

This group manages the foundation fund.

## **Medical Advisory Committee**

Provides an avenue of collaboration and outreach to expand awareness of Leader Dog programs and services within the vision-related medical community and ultimately grow the number of client applicants.

## **Mission Assurance & Quality Committee**

Oversees performance metrics, outcomes, quality, continuous improvement and strategic plan progress and ensures alignment with the mission statement of Leader Dogs for the Blind.

## **Philanthropy Committee**

Oversees development and fundraising activities, ensuring that the case for support is strong, current and based on the organization's mission and goals.

## Accreditations

Assistance Dogs International (ADI)  
Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)  
International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF)



## Member

Council of North American Guide Dog Schools  
American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)  
International Working Dog Registry (IWDR)  
VisionServe Alliance

## Leader Dogs for the Blind

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Email: [leaderdog@leaderdog.org](mailto:leaderdog@leaderdog.org)

## LeaderDog.org

FOLLOW THE LEADER    



**LEADER DOGS**  
FOR THE BLIND