

To: All District Clubs and District Officers

From: Lion Bev Powell
District A1, Chairman
Leader dogs for the Blind

Governor Steve Mahovlich has appointed me, the 2011/12 Chairman, Leader Dogs for the Blind. Although I don't currently have a Leader Dog; I am a former graduate of the Leader Dog program. Zeus and I were a Team for almost 12 years. I would like to come to your Club to explain more about the program at Leader Dogs for the Blind.

My dog, Zeus, a purebred Lab, was of tremendous assistance to me, over the time we were a team. Zeus and I walked, regardless of the weather, about 5 Kilometers almost everyday. We became very well known in and around Strathroy. Not only did Zeus keep me fit; but, that daily exercise helped maintain my health.

Over the years, my eye condition has caused the deterioration of my vision, to the point where I'm now virtually totally blind. At the time in 1997, knowing that my vision would fail, I made the decision to obtain a guide dog. My thought process was, that if I got a dog while I could see somewhat; I could gain confidence and trust, in its ability to keep me safe. Thus I spent 26 days at the Leader Dog facility, and was given Zeus, at no cost to me. In the beginning, Zeus surprised me with his guiding skills and I soon became dependant on him, and placed my faith in his ability to protect me from harms way.

One of Governor Steve's objectives is to raise sufficient funds to support the cost of one Leader Dog during this Lions year. Many factors are included in the cost to produce a working Team. There is the breeding program, veterinary and medical costs, kennel and training facilities, as well as the trainers; the cost to house and feed Blind Trainees. There is also the cost of specialized staff to look after each aspect of the Leader Dog program. . The majority of their canine graduates originate from within the in-house breeding program. Thus they have a greater assurance of a quality product. Quality is paramount, since the blind person's life depends on the dog's training and skills.

Just as in your personal life; Leader Dog's costs of their rigorous training are constantly increasing. All that investment in individual dogs does not insure against failure. Some dogs are scrubbed out of the training program, even after expending hundreds of dollars in development.

The puppy program is just one aspect of the total Leader Dog process. All the staff and facilities to maintain and support the breeding stock, nurture the puppies, support the puppie foster homes program, to prepare a dog for the training they must endure, requires huge sums of money. You can be assured that Leader Dog does not waste the resources donated to it by various Lions Clubs.

Over the recent past our District has been less than enthusiastic, regarding support for the Leader Dog Program. A Leader Dog is an invaluable tool, and companion, for many blind individuals within our District and beyond. Unfortunately, the incidents of blindness are ever growing, and more blind persons are choosing a guide dog to retain some level of independence in their life. Your Club's donation to Leader Dogs for the Blind will be used in a most effective and efficient manner to improve the life of some blind individual.

I look forward to hearing from your Club; either through an invitation to speak to your Membership, or receiving a contribution to a Leader Dog of the future.

The single most important concept to keep in your mind is that you are ultimately making a difference in the independence and quality of life for a blind person

Thanks for your interest.
Yours in Lionism

Lion PZC Bev Powell
46 Pearson Avenue
Strathroy, ON N7G 3Y3
519245-2923
Bwpowell@sympatico.ca