**Pine Tree Guide Dog Users Committee Reports**

May 3, 2023

**Advocacy & Legislative**

Pauline Lamontagne, Chair

Email: [president@pinetreeguidedogusers.org](mailto:president@pinetreeguidedogusers.org)

•State Legislation

We submitted testimony to the Maine State Legislature in favor of LD 988 “Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Conduct an Accessibility Study of All Maine State Parks and Historic Sites and to develop a Plan to Remove Access Barriers.” The last Senate action was on March 30, 2023 - CARRIED OVER, in the same posture, to a subsequent special or regular session of the 131st Legislature, pursuant to Joint Order SP 594.

•         PTGDU Monthly News Updates

The following topics were shared in the Advocacy Matters section of our monthly news updates:

a) Pedestrian safety: safety tips, info on accessible pedestrian signals, and a sample letter for requesting accessible pedestrian signals in your community.

b) link to The Seeing Eye’s interference survey results

c) GDUI’s new audible PSA about keeping pet dogs under good control

We also included an article about improving visibility at street crossings in the Tips for Handling & Living with a Guide Dog section.

•             PTGDU Facebook page

During the months of February, March and April, we included two posts per month about trending advocacy issues. These posts are frequently shared and viewed more than other posts.

•             Requests for Assistance

We received a request from a guide dog handler in Washington State who was looking for the link to the pedestrian safety presentation by Lukas Franck of The Seeing Eye.

**Fundraising**

Christina Brino, Chair

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Email: princessregal@optonline.net

-ACB Maine Grant Request

On February 20, 2023, we submitted a grant request for $975 to ACB Maine to underwrite this year’s estimated cost for maintaining and updating our PTGDU website. Our request is still pending.

-Pampered Chef Fundraiser

On March 7 through 14, Pine Tree Guide Dog Users hosted a Pampered Chef fundraising party. The announcement was shared on our Facebook page and with members and friends. A reminder was sent on the last day.

On March 8, we hosted an informational party on Zoom to share new and favorite products. Despite sharing the party invitation with our members and on ACB community/Clubhouse, we had a low turnout. Total sales for the party were $554 with nine participants. Seven of the participants were PTGDU members. The majority of participants needed assistance placing their online orders.

Total funds raised for PTGDU (32%) equals $177.28. The 32% includes 10% of sales from Pampered Chef plus 22% from the hostess commission.

### **Public Relations, Publications, and Newsletter**

Ginger Kutsch, Chair

Email: news @PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org

Website: http://www.PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org

Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/PTGDU](http://www.facebook.com/PTGDU)

Members & Friends Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/3044240242465295

Email Group List: [PTGDU@GoogleGroups.com](mailto:PTGDU@GoogleGroups.com)

Outreach

-Created an informal email list for PTGDU members and their families on Googlegroups.

-The American Council of the Blind included information about our Guide Dogs in Action series in its February 6 Dots and Dashes newsletter.

-Perkins School for the Blind shared our Guide Dogs in Action Educational series in their newsletter “Paths to Literacy” on social media, and on their website at:

<https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/guide-dogs-in-action-educational-series/>

Contact: Lisha Yochimowitz <[lisha.yochimowitz@perkins.org](mailto:lisha.yochimowitz@perkins.org)>

-The Maine State Library shared news about our Guide Dogs in Action Educational Series in their spring/summer edition of the Talking Book Newsletter.

Contact: Sarah Duggan, Librarian – Generalist

207-287-1957

[sarah.d.duggan@maine.gov](mailto:sarah.d.duggan@maine.gov)

-The Iris Network continues to share a link to our monthly news updates in its own monthly newsletter.

Facebook

-Top Three Facebook posts since February

1. Resist the urge! We know it's tempting to pet, talk to, or look into the beautiful eyes of our guide dogs. But did you know that these seemingly harmless actions can make it harder for our dogs to focus on their work -- and may even jeopardize our safety? That's why it's never a good idea to interact with guide dogs when they're on the job! Read all about it in The Seeing Eye’s interference survey at https://www.seeingeye.org/press/press-releases/survey-reveals-gap-in-public.html

Photo Description: PTGDU Facebook fan Jon G. being guided down the sidewalk by his chocolate Lab. On the left is a storefront, and on the right, a woman is sitting on a bench, gently restraining her little Pug who is also sitting on the bench.

Alt text: A guide dog team walking by a woman and her tiny dog

2. It takes two to tango! Despite what some may think, our Guide dogs don’t just go it alone. They count on us to provide direction, support, and feedback. We communicate through verbal cues, hand gestures, foot and body positioning, praise, corrections, and physical affection. We’re in it together, and we wouldn’t have it any other way!

Photo Description: A PTGDU member and his yellow Lab guide dog coming down a flight of stairs. The man is using a combination of a verbal cue and a hand gesture to communicate with his dog.

Alt text: Man wearing a blue fleece pullover and jeans giving his guide dog the forward command as they go down the stairs

3. We know you share just about everything with your pet dogs – the couch, your bed, the last bite of banana. So of course you want to take them everywhere too -- but please don’t. Passing your dog off as a service animal may seem harmless, but it’s making access to public places more difficult for those of us who truly rely on specially trained dogs to go about our daily lives.

Photo Description: A teenager wearing a light orange sweatshirt and plaid pants shares a banana with his pet German shepherd. The young man is slightly smiling and sitting outdoors on a gray deck while his black and tan dog takes a bite of banana.

Alt text Pet dog with a turquoise collar eating part of a banana

Website

-Posted a link to a podcast on pedestrian safety by Lukas Franck to the Educational Corner page.

Monthly News Updates

- launched first issue of monthly news update in March 2022. All back issues from 2022 have been archived on our website and may be easily accessed from the news updates page.