**Pine Tree Guide Dog Users Committee Reports**

August 2, 2023

**Advocacy & Legislative**

Pauline Lamontagne, Chair

Email: president@pinetreeguidedogusers.org

•State Legislation

1. LD 1339, a bill to establish a task force to study forming a Maine Commission on Disabilities was introduced and later failed to make it out of committee at the work session.
2. 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” is currently under consideration for funding with the Appropriations committee.

•PTGDU Monthly News Updates

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

May -- Legislative update on LD 1339 and the release of the new Seeing Eye Advocacy app

June – update on LD 1339, an educational resource about the path of legislation in Maine, and tips for reporting rideshare problems

July – Maine Human Rights Commission service animal pamphlet, U.S. National Parks info on service animals plus its free access pass for visitors with disabilities, and tips for navigating airports.

• PTGDU Facebook page

In June, we featured a video and photo from the GuideDogAtWork.org campaign stressing the importance of keeping pet dogs away from guide dog teams.

**Fundraising**

Christina Brino, Chair

Email: princessregal@optonline.net

-Update on 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. ACB Maine is still waiting to learn how much money will be available for grants so our request is still pending.

**Membership**

Cheryl Peabody, Chair

Email: epeabody@roadrunner.com

Currently PTGDU has thirty-two members. Outreach has been completed by the Membership Team regarding delayed renewals for 2023. To date Members of PTGDU have been active in contacting individuals who may be interested in joining PTGDU and contributing to the mission and activities of the group.

Going forward for 2024, a plan may be developed to explore partnering with ACB Maine to meet with specialists employed with the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), the Iris Network and Catholic Charities of Maine (CCM). All three agencies have statewide annual meetings and statewide meetings of specialty teachers. Historically, there has been a statewide all agency meeting. If that is scheduled in 2024, it may be an opportunity to have a panel on the agenda reviewing all related to PTGDU and the opportunity for current and former clients to explore the possibility of a guide dog. With the white cane training with the Orientation and Mobility services, this shares the guide dog option for individuals to consider.

**Public Relations, Publications, and Newsletter**

Ginger Kutsch, Chair

Email: news @PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org

• Facebook

A. Official Facebook: www.facebook.com/PTGDU

Summary: We currently have 168 likes, and 224 fans following our page. Generally, we average 2 posts per week. In June, we shared a post and video about keeping pet dogs away from guide dog teams which included a 30 second video. It was one of the top two performing Facebook post in the last 90 days. The text read:

* Yoohoo, pet owners… we need your help! Can we count on you to keep your dogs a safe distance away from guide dogs at work? Learn more at www.GuideDogAtWork.org

alt text: Woman and her guide dog exit a local shop while a man with two dogs keeps a safe distance away

The second top performing post read:

 April showers bring more than May flowers! Meet JJ, a sweet yellow Lab golden cross currently in training to become a Seeing Eye dog. Right now she’s taking a break from traffic training. Her instructor has been teaching her not to be fearful of moving vehicles while at the same time, fostering a healthy respect for cars and trucks so she can safely cross busy streets and driveways.

Photo Description: Seeing Eye dog-in-training JJ sitting on a sidewalk in front of a bed of red and yellow tulips with bright green leaves. Her nose is pink, and she’s looking directly at the camera.

Alt text: Seeing Eye dog sitting in front of a flower bed and brick building

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

We currently have 60 members on our group page.

• Outreach

1. Patrick Sullivan, Corporate Accounts Manager for the Maine Mariners, reached out to PTGDU to discuss hosting a booth at the team's "Pucks & Paws" theme night on Saturday, February 3, 2024 at 6:00 PM. (Cell: (207) 712-7268, Office: (207) 761-6725 ext. 102). Pauline and Ginger virtually met with Patrick to discuss the event and PTGDU's participation. We suggested that he also reach out to the Guiding Eyes Maine region puppy club coordinator and gave him the contact info.

The designer from AKC completed the production copy for the White Cane Walk banner and we are now ready to order a six-foot banner to carry during the walk. We are still working on a flyer for the event.

• Monthly News Updates

In July, our monthly news update publication was nationally recognized at the Guide Dog Users, Inc. awards ceremony at the national American Council of the Blind convention.