# **Pine Tree Guide Dog Users Committee Reports**

**August 2, 2024**

## Advocacy & Legislative

Brad Strause, Chair

* Education

The new rideshare educational handout and poster for drivers has been completed.  It is available in English, Spanish, and French. We created a detailed description of the handout and an educational sheet about each key point of the handout that can be used as background info. We also created a general overview document about rideshare discrimination against blind riders with guide dogs. The document briefly summarizes the various aspects of rideshare discrimination and provides links to supporting materials for further investigation. Topics include reasons rideshare drivers use to deny service to guide dog teams, how these refusals impact the lives of people with visual disabilities, discrimination statistics, and more. The advocacy team met for a brainstorming session to generate as many ideas as possible about ways to improve the ridesharing experience for blind riders; explore if and **how these ideas can be categorized together; and determine priorities, goals, and next steps**. The etiquette tip sheet for healthcare providers has also been completed. All educational handouts are available for download on our website in the Educational Corner.

•State & Federal Legislation

The FAA Reauthorization Act, recently signed into law, requires the Secretary of Transportation to establish an optional Known Service Animal Travel Pilot Program, providing service animal handlers the opportunity to participate in a streamlined pre-registration process. (Enrolling in this program will eliminate the need for handlers to complete the service animal forms for each flight.) Prior to its passage, we sent letters of support for this pilot program to our Maine legislators in Congress.

* Monthly News Updates

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

1. May – Info about accessing educational institutions with a guide dog; tips for dealing with uncontrolled dogs in stores; and survey results about ridesharing from Guide Dogs for the Blind and Guide Dogs Australia.
2. June – provided an update on the FAA’s service animal pilot program; and the CDC’s travel requirements for entering the U.S. with your dog.
3. July – new rideshare resource on the PTGDU website; info about creating service animal policies from Accessible Avenue; and Guide Dog for the Blind’s podcast about their efforts to stop rideshare discrimination.

## Fundraising

Chair: Christina Brino

Our yearly report for the Mary T. & Curtis D. Lovill Trust Emergency Veterinary Care Fund was submitted to the trust via email. Todd Mattson confirmed receipt of the report on May 20, 2024.

## Membership

Email: [membership@PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org](mailto:membership@PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org)

-Membership count equals 30 members. 22 out of the 30 members are current or former guide dog handlers.

**Publications, Newsletter, & Website**

Ginger Kutsch, Chair

Email: news @PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org

•            Facebook

-Members & Friends Facebook: 71 members

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3044240242465295>

-Official Facebook: 222 likes, 316 followers

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

Ratio is approximately 80% women, 20% men. Generally, we average 2 posts per week. The top two performing Facebook posts in the last 90 days were as follows:

1. July 16. Post reach 3,808.

Dog Day? Some say it’s the most exciting part of the guide dog journey! For puppy raisers/walkers, it is the culmination of months of hard work and love laying the foundation for their puppy’s future mission as a guide for the blind. For trainers, it is the bittersweet end to a four to six-month process of time-tested training. For kennel staff and others who are the often-unseen backbone of any guide dog program, it is the tearful goodbye to the tail-wagger waiting for kibble. And for students, Dog Day is when they’ll meet their special partner for the very first time! Read more about Dog Day at <https://www.bonnie.mosen.org/2019/02/12/getting-to-dog-day/> Photo Description: An adorable, fluffy golden retriever guide dog puppy being held in the arms of his puppy raiser. The puppy has smudges of greenish tattoo dye on its fur. The background appears to be the side of a house with light-colored siding. Tue,

2. June 5. Post reach 3,482.

Hey #Uber and #Lyft drivers! What do rideshare drivers and guide dogs have in common? They both have important jobs to do! Find out what to expect when transporting these hard-working service animals in your vehicles at [www.PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org/rideshare-poster](http://www.PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org/rideshare-poster)

* Website

Steve Lambert revised our website to include several new rideshare resources, including a French translation of our rideshare flyer. He also posted our new tip sheet for healthcare providers. Bonnie Mosen is working on board bios to be added to our About Us page.

•            Educational Materials

We’ve continued to work with the advocacy team to create educational materials. We’ve completed the new rideshare poster along with a general overview of the challenges faced by blind riders with guide dogs. The poster is now available in English, Spanish and French. Leader Dogs for the Blind reached out to us to request permission to include the flyer in their materials. The new etiquette sheet for healthcare providers is also finished. Christina Brino volunteered to work with The Seeing Eye to get a photo for the handout. The picture shows a nurse taking a blind woman’s blood pressure while her black Lab guide dog rests quietly under the chair.