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

**February 5, 2025**

## **Advocacy & Legislative**

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

1. November: coverage of the NFB rideshare rally; Guiding Eyes for the Blind’s new rideshare resource; update on Uber’s self-ID pilot program; service animal relief areas in airports; and emergency preparedness.
2. December: N/A.
3. January: update on the improvements to The Seeing Eye Advocacy app; access resources from Maine Human Rights Commission and the Department of Justice; and an article about rideshare discrimination.

We continue to receive the most interest from our Facebook posts regarding educational and advocacy-related matters. The top post this quarter explained a guide dog’s high standard of behavior and why it’s important not to pass off your pet as a service animal in order to gain access or avoid pet fees.

## **Membership**

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

-Membership count equals 27 members.

- 20 of the members are current or former guide dog handlers.

- Three new members, all are current guide dog users.

- We now have members in Maine as well as Alabama, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, and New Jersey.

- An invitation to join PTGDU or renew membership was included in the January Monthly News Update. Renewal reminders were sent out by email and some phone calls were made.

## **Publications, Newsletter, & Website**

Email: news @PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org

•Facebook

1. Members & Friends Facebook: 79 members

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

1. Official Facebook: 240 likes, 3 followers

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

Ratio is approximately 80% women, 20% men. Over the last quarter, we’ve average 1 - 2 posts per week. Our educational and advocacy posts typically perform the best. We are currently seeking a volunteer who will help us build our social media presence.

The top two performing Facebook posts in the last 90 days were as follows:

1. January 14, 2025. Views: 12,545

If you’re thinking about passing off your dog as a service animal to gain access to “No Pets” venues or avoid pet fees, please don’t! The high standards

of behavior required for guide dogs and other service animals goes far beyond that of ordinary pets. It takes almost two years to prepare a guide dog for

its work. Hundreds of hours are spent gradually exposing guide dog pups to a variety of public places and modes of transportation. This enables working

guide dogs to calmly and reliably perform their essential duties in all types of settings, and ensures that venues like busy restaurants and crowded trains

will not trigger fearful or anxious behaviors such as uncontrolled barking, vicious growling, jumping on other people, or getting away from the handler.

Photo Description: Guiding Eyes black Lab pup Oscar sitting calmly on a train station platform in Saco, Maine. He’s wearing an orange collar, a blue training

vest, and a multi-colored leash. In the background, the sky is overcast and a sleek silver train with blue and red stripes is visible. Tue, Jan 14 Views

2. January 3, 2025. Views 4,297.

New coloring page for kids! This printable coloring page is the latest addition to our free Guide Dogs in Action Educational Series. Download our materials including a poster, two handouts, supplemental info, and a lesson plan at https://pinetreeguidedogusers.org/guide-dogs-in-action-educational-series/ Photo Description: A simple line drawing of PTGDU’s new coloring page that shows a man wearing a cowboy hat being guided by his German shepherd down a country road. A two-story home, trees, and cloudy sky are visible in the background.

* Website

-The annual fall membership meeting minutes and committee reports have been added to the website along with the recent changes to the emergency vet fund and our constitution. Additional updates were made to the Rideshare, Personal Stories, Healthcare Providers, and Monthly News Updates pages.

- We worked with Thrive Media to resolved the problems with online membership payments.

- The annual fee of $21.17 was paid to HostGator for our domain name.

* Monthly News Updates

- The 2024 issues of our monthly news updates were archived. Back issues from 2022 – 2024 can be easily accessed on the Monthly News Update page. We continue to receive positive feedback about our newsletter, including the below comment about December’s special holiday giving guide:

“I just wanted to say that I absolutely love this gift guide and now have too many ideas than I know what to do with! Thank you for putting it together. I’ve seen a few suggested lists making the rounds but none as thorough and creative as this one.”

•Outreach

We received an inquiry sent to [info@PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org](mailto:info@PineTreeGuideDogUsers.org) from a legally blind woman who requested information about self-training her German shepherd/cairn mix puppy to be a guide dog. We sent info about owner-training and referred her to Mission Working Dogs in Lewiston.

-A woman seeking information about what it’s like to live and work with a guide dog was referred to us by an O&M instructor. One of our members spoke to the woman at length and offered future assistance if desired.

- The president of Georgia Guide Dog Users reached out to us to discuss the recent changes to our emergency vet fund. The group is trying to determine how to set up their own fund.