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A Safe Port, Or A Chance To Sail

by 1st VDG Don Nelson

On a recent trip, I happened to spend one day in the tail end of the last tropical storm. There was a quote in the paper that a smart sailor weathers a storm in port and wonders what it would be like to be on the water. A foolish sailor weathers the storm on the water and wishes he was in port.

Do we, as Lions clubs weather the storms by just raising monies and contributing to various activities? Do we sometimes forget that our local communities are our most important priority? Not that it isn't important to contribute, but local exposure could be one answer for increased membership and extension.

Sometimes we should be the foolish sailor that takes the chance on a stormy sea and try a new tack. Are we searching out those small projects in town that we could do? I really respect those clubs that build wheelchair ramps, park shelters and perform the smallest favors to those that can't afford them and generally do what the community needs.

Throughout the next year, our biggest challenge will be to keep our current membership at an even keel. Let everyone know that you are a Lion. Display a Lion decal on your car. Have signs printed and display them in your yard so that your neighbors know that you are a Lions member and that "We Serve" those that cannot help themselves. And above all, remember that you are a member of a club whose members are your friends and will serve with you and celebrate with you. Be proud to be a Lion.

Have a good summer and I hope to see you at the State Convention in Stevens Point.

Leader Dog Changes Recipient's Lives

by Michael Martin

Lions Clubs are known for our dedication to improving sight, but even long-time members don't always know how much their efforts make a difference in the lives of the visually impaired. 27-D2 Leader Dog Chair Ken Williams of Holmen is an enthusiastic supporter of the program and does all he can to make people aware of how important it can be.

The Lions' Leader Dog program began in the Detroit area in 1939. Currently, the school's campus in Rochester Hills, Mich., pairs about 276 visually impaired people per year with their own Leader Dog.

The cost per dog is about $38,000 dollars, but if you ask Steve Johnson it is worth every penny. Johnson, a La Crosse resident, has used Leader Dogs for the past 18 years.

Most Leader Dogs are Labradors, but there are also German shepherds, golden retrievers and for those with allergies standard poodles.

Leader Dog recipients spend 26 days at the school, bonding with their dogs and learning how to work together. They are together round the clock.

"It's really amazing what goes on at that training center," Williams said. Besides learning how to navigate streets with their dogs, students are each provided with a simple handheld GPS device that provides verbal cues to help them orient themselves.

RECIPIENT'S THANKS - *Steve Johnson and Misha, has Lions to thank for his first Leader Dog, as do almost 300 people a year nationwide who receive Leader Dogs. Photo by Michael Martin*

Williams mentioned the case of 27-B1 DG Len Quinn, who appeared in a Leader Dog video. When Quinn became blind, like so many other people in the same situation, he became very depressed because he'd lost the feeling of being in charge of his life. As it turned out, his Leader Dog was a pathway back to personal independence.

As one graduate of the Michigan program put it in the video: "If you believe in angels, they do exist — in the form of Leader Dogs."

Despite losing his sight to diabetes 19 years ago, thanks to Leader Dog, Johnson leads an independent lifestyle. "That first Leader Dog helped me get back on my feet," said Johnson, whose current dog is named Misha.

He's worked for La Crosse County Human Services since 1987 and is a past president of the North American Squirrel Association, an organization that promotes outdoor recreation for the elderly and people with handicaps. Despite being unable to see, Johnson has successfully hunted deer, pheasant and ducks.

"I use a laser sight and, of course, a good guide is really important," Johnson said. "But the most important thing is the confidence to think 'I can do this.'"

Johnson has only been with Misha since last summer after his previous dog, Ripley, "retired" after the heavy snowfall during the winter of 2007-08. "He helped me through it, but basically, when it was over, he told me, 'I don't want to work anymore,'" Johnson said.

Although now retired, Ripley still lives with Johnson and he and Misha have become great friends. "They play like two puppies," Johnson said. "and when we get home from work she always looks for him."

Johnson said each of his Leader Dogs has had a different personality. He said Misha is a shy dog, unlike Ripley.

According to Johnson, one of the most frustrating things about being blind is the attitudes of others and their lack of knowledge of the law. "I've probably been denied entry to businesses 30 times because of my dog," he said.

For him, the "straw that broke the camel's back" was being told that the only way a fast-food establishment would serve him was if he came through the drive-through.

"In 2006 I filed a lawsuit. Because I corresponded with the owner and kept the e-mails, the actual lawsuit was a slam dunk," he said. Johnson said his goal was not monetary but simply to stop discriminatory practices.

Although he and Misha have been together less than a year, Johnson is expecting their relationship will deepen. "She's turned out to be a wonderful guide dog, and I expect her to peak this summer and then plateau for many years afterward," he said.

Johnson, who works as a social services specialist for the county, said he enjoys talking with children and doing presentation to the public. "While there are not a lot of us with Leader Dogs in this district, I think each of us gives back to the community as much as we can," he said. "A Lion helped me get my first Leader Dog and I'll be forever grateful for that."

27-D2 District Governor
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May is here and the flowers are blooming. Let's see if we can get our clubs blooming with new members. As of this writing, 27-D2 has lost 112 members (nine of those are deceased), and has added 96 new members. So, if we want to be a plus in membership for this year, we not only need to bring in new members, we need to close the back door and retain the members we have.

A great way to add members is by recruiting family members. On the retention side we have to change the way we do business and make sure we are meeting our member's needs. The more hands we have to help serve, the less chances of the dues increasing.

We need to do a club orientation every few years to remind all Lions what Lionism is all about. I have revised the orientation information and you can download it at www.md27d2.org under MERLO then under Orientation. Fill in your club information. Make a copy and give to all your members, old and new alike.

I encourage all Lions to attend the State Convention May 13-15 in Stevens Point. There will bus trips to the Lions Camp, golf and a wild game feed. It is always a good time and we will be voting for a chance for Wisconsin to have another International Director.

Thank you to all Lions members and clubs for all of the great service projects that you have done this year and anticipate doing in the next several months.

Also thank you for all of the attention that each club has given to changing how their clubs are doing business. You just keep proving to me and your District Cabinet that *Reaching, Touching and Improving Lives* is what Lionism is all about.

My year is coming to a close. It has been an enjoyable, trying, and wonderful experience.

A little on Diabetes my passion in Lionism... May is Mental health Month - Getting your brain in order might be good for you if you have adult onset diabetes.

Diabetes is the perfect breeding ground for anger. One reason diabetes and anger so often go hand in hand is that diabetes can make you feel threatened. Life with diabetes can seem full of dangers. When you fear these threats, anger often surges to your defense.

Let anger be your ally. The goal is not to get anger out of your life. You may go on feeling angry. When you feel threatened, afraid, or frustrated, anger is a normal response. But you can put your anger to work for you. A few sessions with a skilled counselor might help.

The better you understand your anger, the better you will be able to use it for good self-care.

Seneca Lions Egg Hunt & Breakfast

by Lion Mark Kramer

Neither cool weather or dreary skies kept the Seneca Lions from holding their annual Easter Egg Hunt and Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast at the Seneca Town Hall & Park.

Approximately 80 children participated in the Easter Egg hunt and everyone took home at least three plastic eggs filled with treats.

Then 180+ enjoyed ham, scrambled eggs, pancakes and applesauce. It was a nice family event for all.

Bring A Pin To The State Convention

by Lion Brian Overturf

Spring has finally sprung. It has been a long winter and it is time to get outdoors and enjoy this great weather. It is also time for our State Lions Convention. I encourage each of you to attend, especially if you have never been. The Convention Committee is been working hard to make it enjoyable and educational. Some functions are being held at the Lions Camp with shuttle buses supplied for your convenience. So it's a great opportunity to see your Lions Camp.

Being a Lions member for over 30 years, I have attended many State and District Conventions. The seminars have helped me to become a better Lion, employee, and person. I also was introduced to Pin Trading. Just a couple of years after joining the Sparta Lions Club, I "accepted" the position of Club Secretary. With that position, I inherited a bunch of Sparta Club pins. Not knowing what to do with them, I checked the Lions International Constitution. Those many years ago you were to only "trade" pins with other Lions. Patty and I took a Fruit Cake tin of pins to every function we attended. It helped us to meet many new friends in Lionism. And the State Convention was the best.

AVAILABLE SOON... *the third in the 27-D2 Beef series, the Hereford Bull.*

Everyone had a pocket full of pins and we walked around trading back and forth.

Pin trading has changed over the years. Most pins are sold for fundraisers. Not many of our Club members even think about taking pins with them to trade. The Wisconsin Pin Traders Club would like to see that change. We encourage you to bring some Club pins, old or new, with you to any event you go to, especially your District and State Conventions. There will be a room with tables for you to display them on to either trade or sell. The Wisconsin Pin Traders Club will also have a Hospitality room by the pool. So please stop by and meet us. Bring a friend and some pins.

Any questions about pins or pin trading? Have a new pin you want to promote? Feel free to contact me at 24768 Mallard Rd, Sparta, WI 54656 or pvzoo@yahoo.com.

Happy Trading!

send your club news to District Editor Pat

LaCrosse Area TTT Training

On February 27, three zones in the greater La Crosse area held a TTT (Transfusion, Transition, Transformation) training session attended by 23 Lions from eight clubs in the zones. The event was well received and attendees were challenged by the training to take the information back to their clubs for implementation.

Thanks to the direction of DG Kathy Friske and PDG Marty Osinski, Lions were led to examine why our clubs are not as attractive to prospective new members as we once were. There have been changes in our society we need to understand. We can transfuse our membership by understanding a new, younger member's needs and desires regarding their serving through a Lions club.

PDG Marty explained that a club that does not transition will continue to gain the same ineffective results. We must change our ways without sacrificing our history of service and our ideals. The issues of how we recruit (meet new member expectations), install (a wow event) and orientate (educate, initially and ongoing) our prospective and current members, makes the difference in getting and retaining members.

TTT TRAINING ATTENDEES RECEIVED DVD & CD - *UW-LaCrosse Lion President Liz Elvekrog (center) receives her materials from DG Kathy Friske and PDG Marty Osinski.*

A combination of transfusing and transitioning leads us to transforming, (making something new) a club with an approach that will succeed in growing the membership of our clubs, by being involved in the work projects we do in our communities and our ongoing support of Lions state and international projects.

We are not to underestimate our own personal growth in leadership through our Lions activities. Combined, ultimately, we fulfill our motto – We Serve - both for the benefit of our clubs and ourselves.