

South Carolina Lions Visit Leader Dogs for the Blind



On August 7, 2014, a group of seven from South Carolina traveled to Rochester Hills, Michigan for a visit to the headquarters of Leader Dogs for the Blind. The group consisted of Rich Pinkerton, Past District Governor from District 32C, and his wife, Lola Lee (non-Lion); Edwina Otto, First Vice District Governor for 32A; Morris Herron, First Vice District Governor for 32B; Buddy Cantrell, Zone Chairperson of 32D; David Dority, First Vice District Governor for 32D and his wife, Lion Claudia. Past District Governor Rich Pinkerton is the Region Coordinator for Leader Dogs for the Blind in North and South Carolina. Zone Chairperson Buddy Cantrell is the District 32D Chairperson for Leader Dogs for the Blind.

The purpose of the trip to Michigan was to attend the Leader Dogs for the Blind Summer Conference on Friday, August 8, 2014. The conference began at 8:30 a.m. with a welcome from Sue Daniels, President and CEO of Leader Dogs for the Blind. This was followed by an overview of breeding, puppy raising, and training by Jeff Stein, the manager of canine care. A panel of puppy raisers talked about their experiences and what is required and involved in raising puppies for Leader Dogs for the Blind. Later, Rod Haneline, Chief of Programs and Services

Officer, discussed the Leader Dogs programs and services that are provided by Leader Dogs for the Blind. Before lunch, Sue Daniels and Mike Dengate, the Lions Campaign Manager, covered the Canine Development Center Campaign. This is a five year upgrade of the kennels and facilities that are in need of improvements after 75 years of use.

Those in attendance, from at least nine different states, were treated to the traditional lunch of homemade chili and homemade donuts, prepared and served by the couple that has been doing this for many years.

After lunch, attendees were guests to open house. Each person had the opportunity to tour residence rooms, watch client demonstrations, take a blindfold walk with a Leader Dog, visit the gift shop, talk with personnel in client services /support services, and have photos with a Leader Dog. Also, many visitors rode a tour couch uptown to watch training demonstrations taking place on the streets of Rochester Hills.

Later in the afternoon, Melissa Weisse, Chief Philanthropy Officer, gave a presentation on The Leader Dog and Lions Partnership. That was followed by a discussion on selecting a Leader Dog Chair by Lion Frank Cunningham and Len Quinn, State Leader Dog Chairperson.

The afternoon session closed with a client panel discussion by recipients of Leader Dogs, all accompanied by their Leader Dog. This was very interesting as they talked about their lives before and after receiving their Leader Dogs, problems encountered, and what is required to maintain their companions.

The evening session included a delicious buffet dinner, presentation of club awards, and a guest speaker that gave a very moving testimony of how his life dramatically changed because of Leader Dogs for the Blind. Visitors returned home on Saturday.

Photo: From Left to Right: PDG Rich Pinkerton (Region Coordinator for Leader Dogs for the Blind) (Member of Camden Club); Rich's wife, Lola; Morris Herron (1st VDG for District 32B); Lion Claudia Dority; Edwina Otto (1st VDG for District 32 A); Lion Buddy Cantrell (Zone Chairperson and District 32D Coordinator for Leader Dogs for the Blind); and David Dority (1st VDG for District 32D).