

LEADING THE WAY



Leader Dogs for the Blind - Lions Newsletter



**HAPPY HOWL-IDAYS FROM ALL OF US AT
LEADER DOGS FOR THE BLIND!**

Navigating Life After A Hurricane

GUIDE DOG CLIENT STORY - LION WALKER J.
AND LEADER DOG LOKI

“Going to get vulnerable here for a moment. This morning, I had the most TERRIFYING experience of my life! My son, Riley, had to return to school after two weeks of no school courtesy of the hurricane. Because of that, I was notified yesterday that his bus can only pick him up at the end of our street because of all the debris and power lines down. Which means he has to walk there. However, it’s a very long road and I’m not going to let my son walk that far in the dark by himself at 6:00 a.m. So, I decided that I would go with him with Leader Dog Loki guiding me.

Loki and I have been practicing night walks for a while now, so I figured we could do this despite all the debris. As we began our walk to Riley’s bus stop, things were fine at first—felt like any other night walk. But as we got further down the road, that’s when things got scary. The amount of debris began to become worse and worse, and it got so bad that I could feel Loki pulling me to the middle of the road for long periods of time. This could only mean that there was a lot of stuff he was having to take me around. At this exact time, there were no more streetlights to give me any indication of where we were because they had fallen. So, while Loki could see, it was completely black for me. I was completely and totally blind. Finally, we reached the end of the street. I could hear Riley’s bus and then I heard Riley yell “Bye, Dad. Love you!” So, I knew he got on the bus.

Now it was time to walk back, but this time on the other side of the road. This is when I lost it. We’re walking and Loki is pulling me around even more stuff and I have no clue what it is. All I could think about is what if we get hurt? What if he makes a mistake and I get stabbed by a sharp branch or worse? I started hyperventilating and I couldn’t stop. Loki’s a fast walker, which didn’t help my nerves either. As we continued forward, my heart was pounding out of my chest. All of a sudden, I yelled out “Loki stop!” and I completely froze for about a minute. There we were, standing in the dark right there in the middle of the road, and I couldn’t move. I had never been so scared in my entire life. Eventually I decided we couldn’t stay there forever, so I knelt down and told Loki “I’m going to give you everything I have right now. We can do this. Take us home.” So, we marched on. He’s pulling me left and right. It felt like we were walking through an obstacle course. Not a single clue as what any of these obstacles were, but I trusted him with my whole heart and kept reminding myself that he can see things

Leader Dog Client and Lion, Walker navigating an intersection with his Leader Dog Loki.



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Lion Walker sitting on a bench with Leader Dog Loki sitting in front of him.

Navigating Life After A Hurricane Cont'd.

LION WALKER J. AND LEADER DOG LOKI

that I can't. After what felt like an eternity, we finally arrived at my doorstep. I broke down in tears. I fell down to the ground and held him and thanked him over and over again. I have never been so scared and so amazed in my life. I've seen Loki do the most amazing things, and I still couldn't believe he got me home. It's moments like this where I really see just how smart and well trained he is. It's moments like this where I really see his loyalty to me. It blows my mind. This dog doesn't owe me a damn thing. He didn't ask to be a guide dog. He didn't ask to be given to me. But this is what he is meant to do and he's damn good at it, despite some of our hiccups along the way. After seven months working alongside him, this was the most trust I've ever had to put into him and it paid off."



Season of Giving: Make a Lasting Impact This Holiday

Whether you're looking for a gift for loved ones or a meaningful way to support Leader Dogs for the Blind during the holidays, you can find the perfect gift here! A few options are:

- Symbolically Sponsor a Future Leader Dog
- Honor a your club, club member or district with a campus tribute brick
- Join Paws 365 Monthly Giving Program

Check out our variety of our giving options!

No matter what you choose, your gift will make a difference as 2024 comes to a close and far beyond. And, as a 501(c)3 organization, your donation is 100% tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

