



A publication for Lions
across Canada



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A Dog Guide's Journey

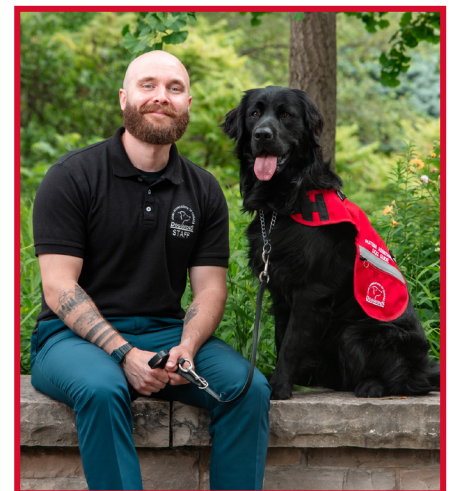
After a busy summer, I'm excited to reconnect with Lions across Canada and kick off another year of sharing the incredible impact you help make possible.

Over the summer, I had the opportunity to interview trainers from each of our seven Dog Guide programs, giving me an inside look at the expertise, care, and dedication behind every partnership. Beginning with our Client Matching article in March 2025 and continuing with a look inside our Nursery Program in June, we've been building the story of a Dog Guide's journey one piece at a time.

Go back through previous issues to catch up and follow along as we share a new article in each edition, taking you through the full Dog Guide journey from the very beginning to a life-changing partnership.

Every step of this journey is made possible by people who believe in what Dog Guides can do. Together, Lions are helping turn that belief into greater independence, confidence, and possibility for Canadians across the country. Here's to another year of changing lives together.

Richard Banyard
Campaign Officer



Meet Lucy: Leading the Foster Puppy Journey

Lucy Harbach joined Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides in 2010 after moving to Canada, beginning her career in the puppy program supporting foster families and young dogs. She later completed her apprenticeship in the Canine Vision program, gaining front line experience working with clients and dogs in advanced training.

Drawing on a background in the United Kingdom doing scent work with dogs, Lucy went on to work in the Diabetes Alert and Seizure Alert programs, combining her previous expertise with Dog Guides training methods. She then became supervisor of the early training unit and later took on leadership of the puppy program, a combined role she continues to hold.

Because she has worked with puppies, advanced programs, and clients, Lucy has a rare, complete view of the Dog Guide journey. Every day she uses that perspective to support foster families, guide staff, and help ensure that each puppy's first year builds the confidence, skills, and poise it will need to succeed as a Dog Guide in the community.



The Foster Puppy Journey

Before a Dog Guide ever meets a client, it spends about a year living with a foster family. During that time, the puppy is growing, learning, and being carefully prepared for a working role. Puppy program staff guide this process through orientations, classes, home visits, outings, and health checks.

This is the journey, from the breeding facility, to the day a young dog is ready for advanced training.

From Breslau to a Foster Home

The journey begins at the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides breeding facility in Breslau, Ontario. When a litter is old enough to leave the nursery, staff match each puppy with a foster family in Southern Ontario.

Prospective fosters share information about their home, daily routine, and experience with dogs. They can also indicate preferences such as:

- Labrador, Lab–Golden cross, Golden Retriever, or Poodle
- Male or female puppy



This helps staff place each puppy where it is most likely to thrive.

About a week and a half before the puppies leave Breslau, staff hold an online orientation for all the fosters in that litter. In that session they:

- Explain what equipment the program supplies and what families provide
- Review puppy proofing, from cords and plants to backyards
- Cover bathroom routines, sleeping arrangements, and first nights
- Introduce the families to one another

For many, this is the moment they realize they are part of a wider network of foster homes.

Pick Up Day and the First 48 Hours

On pick-up day, families travel to Breslau. Puppies are bathed and cleaned beforehand, so they start their new life comfortable and settled. At the facility, families receive:

- The crate that will go home with the puppy
- Food and clear feeding instructions

Staff answer final questions and encourage families to drive straight home, rather than stopping to show off the puppy. A direct, quiet trip helps reduce stress on a young dog that has just left its litter and familiar surroundings.

Those first nights set the tone. Families are encouraged to:

- Make the crate a safe, positive place
- Introduce a bathroom area and simple routines right away
- Be patient with unsettled sleep while the puppy adjusts

Within about forty-eight hours, puppy program staff conduct a mandatory follow up call. They check:

- How the puppy is eating and drinking
- Whether there have been any stomach upsets
- How crate training and first nights are going
- How the family is managing overall

This early contact helps prevent small problems from growing and reassures new fosters that support is close at hand.

Early Classes and Building Foundations

Soon after the puppy arrives, the family begins four mandatory online classes. Developed during the pandemic, they have remained because they work so well for young puppies.

The first class focuses on crate games. Fosters learn to make the crate inviting, reward calm behaviour, and build a routine where the puppy chooses to go in and settle.

The next two classes cover the fundamentals. In the first, families practice:

- Simple skills such as sit and down using food lures
- Early loose leash walking
- Gentle, positive introduction of the head halter

In the second, the emphasis shifts from guiding the puppy with food to responding to verbal cues and clear handler signals. That step from “showing” to “asking” is a key part of early training.

The fourth class teaches fosters how to read canine body language. Staff explain what over excitement, stress, and fear can look like, and how to help a puppy return to a calmer state. These skills become vital as puppies start to go into busier public spaces.





Alongside the classes, each puppy has two veterinary appointments for vaccinations, health checks, and weight monitoring, ensuring physical development stays on track.

Home Visits and Life in the Community

As the puppy grows, more of the work happens in the home and neighbourhood.

Around three months of age, puppy program staff visit the foster home. They look at where the puppy sleeps and rests, how the space is set up, and how house training is going. Chewed shoes, table legs, or other “puppy damage” are treated as useful information that helps shape the next stage of training.

At about five months, there is another home visit that includes a walk through the local area. Staff watch:

- How the puppy walks on a loose leash
- How it wears and accepts its jacket and equipment
- How it reacts to people, other dogs, noise, and movement

These visits provide a realistic picture of daily life and allow staff to give specific, practical advice.

By around seven months, the puppy is ready for a more challenging public outing. Staff meet the foster at a shopping mall or similar location, where the dog encounters:

- Different floor surfaces and environments
- Elevators, escalators, and stairs
- Busy food courts and crowds

Staff observe how confidently the puppy moves through these spaces, how well it can settle, and how it manages distractions such as food on the floor or people trying to interact. This offers important clues about the kinds of work the dog may cope with best.

Behaviour Checklist and Health Screening

Around ten to eleven months, staff complete a structured Behaviour Checklist, often called the BCL. This assessment records how the dog responds in a range of situations, from sudden noises to new environments. It helps staff understand:

- How confident and resilient the dog is
- How quickly it recovers from surprises
- How it interacts with people and surroundings

From this, they begin to form an initial idea of which Dog Guide program the dog might suit best. For example:

- A dog calm around traffic and busy streets may be suited to vision work
- A dog that enjoys scent-based problem-solving may lean toward detection-style roles, such as diabetes alert
- A dog that prefers close contact and quiet companionship may be suited to roles where that closeness is especially important

The BCL does not make the final decision, but it gives a strong starting point for planning the dog's future.

At around twelve months, each dog has hip and elbow X-rays and a specialist eye examination. These checks confirm that the dog is physically ready for demanding work and help determine whether it might also be considered for the breeding program.

A Year of Quiet, Consistent Work

Throughout the year, there is also a calendar of optional activities. Fosters can attend play and train sessions in different communities, join group walks and outings, bring their puppies for kennel introduction visits, and take part in grooming and "appropriate greeting" classes. Each activity adds another layer of experience and confidence.

By the time a young dog is recalled for advanced training, it has travelled a long way from the breeding facility in Breslau to everyday life in the community. It has learned how to live politely in a home, how to behave in public, and how to trust the people guiding it.

Behind every Dog Guide team is this year of quiet, consistent work by foster families, puppy program staff, veterinarians, and many others who help a puppy grow into a dog ready to change someone's life.



Dog Guide Scholarships- A Guide for Lions Clubs & Districts

September means it's time to go back to school! Students look forward to new lessons, new challenges, and a whole lot to learn.

For a future Dog Guide, the school looks a little different. Their classroom might be a busy sidewalk, a grocery store, a city street, or a crowded public space. Their lessons prepare them for the real world and, eventually, a life-changing partnership with a Canadian living with a disability. And just like any education, tuition is steep!

It costs approximately \$35,000 to raise, train, and match a Dog Guide with someone who needs one. By sponsoring a Dog Guide scholarship, you can help cover the cost of a Dog Guide's education and give them the opportunity to reach graduation and beyond.

Learn more about the Dog Guides Scholarship Program: [Dog Guides Scholarship - Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides](#)

Lions Clubs and Districts can help fund the \$35,000 journey to raise, train and place a Dog Guide through the Dog Guide Scholarship Program.

Scholarship Opportunities

Novice | \$5,000–\$7,499 – Early training

Intermediate | \$7,500–\$9,999 – Introductory program-specific training

Advanced | \$10,000–\$14,999 – Advanced skills training

Expert | \$15,000–\$34,999 – Final team training

Full Scholarship | \$35,000 – Full Dog Guide journey and working partnership, including the opportunity to name a Dog Guide, subject to LFCDG approval.

Wondering why our Scholarship Program looks a little different? We moved away from the previous structure, such as \$4,000 for a Hearing Dog Guide or \$8,000 for a Diabetes Alert Dog Guide, because these amounts could unintentionally give the impression that some programs cost less to train than others. In reality, it costs approximately \$35,000 to train a Dog Guide in any of our seven programs.

The new giving tiers instead reflect different levels of support, rather than different program costs. Despite this change, we wanted to preserve the essence of the program. Donors and Lions Clubs may still choose the Dog Guide program and location their scholarship supports.

Interested in a Scholarship or Planning a Project?

Please contact the LFCDG Scholarship team before getting started.

This is especially important for Club or District projects involving contributions from other Lions Clubs. Our team will help ensure your project is set up correctly, and contributions are properly directed.

Fill out our contact form here: [Scholarship Contact Form](#) or you can email: scholarships@dogguides.com

Sending Contributions

Once you have connected with LFCDG, include your Club/District name, Dog Guide Scholarship Program and project name, if applicable, with all contributions.

E-Transfer: Available upon request. Contact LFCDG for details.

Cheque: Payable to Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides

- Mail/courier: Contact Staff for updated mailing information

Credit Card: Make an Online Donation - Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides

EFT/Wire: Available upon request. Contact LFCDG for details.



A Lasting Tribute: The Memorial Forest & Pet Memorial Wall

In June 2026, 110 trees were dedicated through the Memorial Forest, and 19 beloved pets were remembered through the Pet Memorial Wall.

Located in Breslau, Ontario, the Memorial Forest offers Lions, families, and friends a meaningful way to honour someone who has passed. Each tribute includes a tree in the Memorial Forest, a personalized plaque placed at its base, and an "In Memoriam" certificate for the family.

Learn more about Memorial Forest: <https://www.dogguides.com/memorial-forest/>

The Pet Memorial Wall, located within the Memorial Forest, offers another special way to remember a beloved companion with a personalized plaque displayed in their memory. Learn more: <https://www.dogguides.com/pet-memorial-wall-order-form/>

Each year, those remembered through both programs are honoured during our annual ceremony.

Create a lasting tribute in 2027. Place your order by April 25, 2027, to have your tribute recognized at the June 2027 Memorial Forest Service. Orders received after this date will be recognized at the 2028 service.

Questions?

Contact Richard Banyard, Campaign Officer – rbanyard@dogguides.com | 1-800-768-3030 Ext. 202

Paws & Practice: Lions Learning Hub

Interested in a Tour?

Tours of Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides Training school in Oakville are available on select dates and are subject to staff capacity. Clubs and districts interested in visiting are asked to provide at least four weeks' notice and complete our tour request form. Please note that submitting a request does not guarantee availability.

As we prepare for our move to the new training school, tour availability will become increasingly limited over the coming months.



Tour Request Form: <https://www.dogguides.com/tour-request-form/>

Thank You for Your Generosity

(Donations: June– August 2026)

Ongoing Support

100 Mile House & District Lions Club	Calgary Westwind Lions Club	Edmonton Millwoods Breakfast Lions Club	Grimsby Lions Club
108 Mile Ranch Lions Club	Canmore Lions Club	Elmira Lions Club	Guelph Lions Club
Aldershot Lions Club	Cardston Lions Club	Elphinstone Lions Club	Hickson & District Lions Club
Alexandria Lions Club	Carstairs & District Lions Club	Esquimalt Lions Club	Holland Landing & District Lions Club
Alix Lions Club	Cedar Lions Club	Esterhazy Lions Club	Hunter River Lions Club
Argyle Lions Club	Churchbridge Lions Club	Eston Lions Club	Innerkip & District Lions Club
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Calgary Korean Lions Club	Dunsford & District Lions Club	Greely Lions Club	Lake Country Winfield Lions Club
Calgary North Hill Lions Club	Dwight Lions Club	Greenfield Park Lions Club	
	East Royalty Lions Club Ltd.		
	East St. Paul Lions Club		

Lake Lenore Lions Club	Musquodoboit Valley Lions Club	Quispamsis Island View Lions Club Inc	Stirling & District Lions Club
Lambeth Lions Club			
Land O' Lakes Lions Club	Nackawic Lions Club Inc.	Random Lions Club	Strathroy Lions Club
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Legal Lions Club	Nipawin Lions Club	Rhein District Lions Club	Sunderland Lions Club
Lethbridge Host Lions Club	Nobleton Lions Club	River Valley Lions Club	Sunshine Coast Lions Club
Lions Club Of Kitchener	North & South Esk Lions Club	Rossburn Lions Club Inc.	Sweaburg & District Lions Club
Lomond Lions Club	North Bay Lions Club	Rossland Golden City Lions Club	Sydenham & District Lions Club
London Central Lions Club	North Oshawa Lions Club	Saskatoon Lions Club	Sydney Lions Club
Loreburn District Lions Club	North Vancouver Deep Cove Lions Club	Saskatoon Millennium Lions Club	The Floradale Friends of Dog Guides Lions Club Branch
Lumby Lions Club	O'Leary Lions Club	Schumacher Lions Club	
MacNutt & District Lions Club	Oliver Lions Club	Shelburne & District Lions Club Inc.	Thornbury Beaver Valley Lions Club
Markham Lions Club	Onaping Falls Lions Club	Sherbrooke Lions Club Inc.	Tiny Township Lions Club
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Wawanesa Lions Club	Wheatley Lions Club	Widdifield Lions Club	Woodstock (ON) Lions Club

In Memory/ In Honour

Argyle Lions Club	Greenfield Park Lions Club	Medicine Hat Lions Club	St. Agapit Lions Club Inc.
Brussels Lions Club	Hickson & District Lions Club	North & South Esk Lions Club	The Floradale Friends of Dog Guides Lions Club Branch
Edmonton Millwoods Breakfast Lions Club	Lions Club Of Kitchener	O'Leary Lions Club	Trenton Lions Club
		Peterborough Lions Club	

Capital Campaign

Ariss & Maryhill Lions Club	Hamiota Lions Club	Russell & District Lions Club	Unity Lions Club
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District 19L	Oakburn & Area Lions Club	Stoney Creek Lions Club Inc.	Winnipeg Beach Lakeside Lions Club
District 5-SKS	Prince Albert Lions Club	Sylvan Lake & District Lions Club	
Dryden Lions Club	Raymond Lions Club-DISBANDED		

Scholarships

Ariss & Maryhill Lions Club
Baxter Ward Lions Club

Cambridge Highlands Lions Club
Chinguacousy Lions Club

LCI District A-16, Activity
North Newmarket Lions Foundation
North Shuswap Lions Club

Port Stanley Lioness Club
St. Margaret's Bay Lions Club

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Beaver Bank Kinsac Lions Club
Blackie Lions Club
Blyth Lions Club Inc.
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District 5M-13
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Markham Lions Club
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Unity Lions Club
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Memorial Forest

Dundalk & District Lions Club
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For further questions and additional support, please contact your Lions Liaison:

Richard Banyard

Campaign Officer

rbanyard@dogguides.com

Phone: 905-842-2891 Ext. 202

**This newsletter is meant for all Lions, so please share freely
within your network.**

**If you know of a club that is not receiving updates from
LFCDG, please let us know.**