

News Release

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Leader Dogs for the Blind begins training at Detroit Metropolitan Airport

Detroit, Mich. (February 23, 2015)--Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) has teamed up with Michigan-based **Leader Dogs for the Blind** to provide a new setting to help train dogs that will eventually become guide dogs. The kick-off event is **February 25, 2015** at the McNamara Terminal. This unique partnership includes **Delta Air Lines** and the **Transportation Security Administration (TSA)** in Detroit.

Founded by three Detroit-area Lions Club members in 1939, Leader Dogs for the Blind empowers people who are blind, visually impaired or Deaf-Blind with skills for a lifetime of independent daily travel, opening doors that seem to have closed with the loss of sight.

Leader Dog representatives will be available near the water feature in the Terminal's Concourse A between **10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.** so that passengers and employees can learn more about the program.

Several training sessions are planned throughout the year, with guide dog mobility instructors taking approximately twenty (20) dogs into the terminal for each custom training event. Nearly all of their 200 graduating dogs will have received this unique training before they are partnered with a person who is blind. A majority of the dogs are golden retrievers and Labrador retrievers, ranging from 16 months to 22 months of age. Typically dogs are issued to their partner between 18 – 24 months old.

The training will include being screened at a TSA check-point, using elevators and moving walkways, riding the express tram, experiencing the varying lights and music in

the connecting tunnel to B/C concourse, visiting concessions, and finally, accessing a jet bridge and onto an aircraft.

DTW has a long history with Leader Dog. Clients from around the world travel through Detroit Metro Airport to visit and train at their state of the art facility. For more than 10 years, the airport and airlines have worked together to coordinate efforts that allow for their volunteers to meet clients at their gate, as well as escort them and their new dog to the gate when they return home. Over the years, the organization has provided independent mobility to more than 14,500 individuals.

“Leader Dogs for the Blind prides itself on offering services that empower our clients to travel farther, travel safer and prepare for their next life challenge,” said Susan Daniels, president and CEO.

The Airport hopes that by providing accessibility to the terminals for training purposes, more people with special needs will be encouraged to travel and fly through DTW. To support this effort, a **Service Animal Relief Area** (SARA) was recently installed inside the terminal to provide an easily accessible location for those who travel with their pets.

“We are happy to have the opportunity to provide a realistic venue for this important training,” said airport CEO Thomas Naughton. “Future customers with visual challenges will have the confidence of knowing that their service animal will recognize the airport as a familiar setting.”

Headquartered in Rochester Hills, Leader Dogs for the Blind is a nonprofit organization that provides independent travel to people who are blind through the use of Leader Dogs. The services of the organization are provided free of charge. The organization also provides classes for orientation and mobility, pedestrian GPS and a summer camp for teens. For more information on Leader Dogs for the Blind, call (888) 777-5332 or visit www.leaderdog.org.

***Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW)** welcomed more than 32 million passengers in 2014 and is one of the world’s leading air transportation hubs. With service from 13 scheduled passenger airlines, Michigan’s largest airport offers more than 1,100 flights per day to and from nearly 150 non-stop destinations on four continents. In 2010, DTW ranked highest in overall customer satisfaction among large airports in the J.D. Power and Associates North America Airport Satisfaction Study. With two award-winning passenger terminals, six jet runways, and an onsite AAA Four-Diamond Westin Hotel, DTW is among the world’s most efficient, customer friendly and operationally capable airports in North America. DTW is operated by **Wayne County Airport Authority**, which also operates nearby **Willow Run Airport** – an important corporate, cargo and general aviation facility. **The Airport Authority is entirely self-sustaining and does not receive tax dollars to support airport operations.** Visit www.metroairport.com for more information.*

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