

Bancroft Lions Club Dog Walk set for May 25



By Michael Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Bancroft Lions Club presents the Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides, coming back to Bancroft on May 25. Starting at Riverside Park, registration is at noon while the walk begins at 1 p.m. Now in its 40th year, the walk raises money to train dog guides for Canadians with various disabilities. Last year's walk raised nearly \$3,000 while this year they're hoping to raise that or more. Laverne Stapley with the Bancroft Lions Club and Diane Slopek-Weber, interim director of marketing and communications with the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides, comment on this upcoming event.

The Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides is an accredited not for profit that relies on its largest fundraising event the Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides, by providing Canadians with disabilities dog guides at no cost, to empower them and provide support. All proceeds from walks in Bancroft and across the country go towards the \$35,000 cost to breed, train and place a dog guide.

The LFCDG supports local communities like Bancroft with their Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides in the planning and execution of the walks and are given one on one support from the fundraising team, including promotional materials, liability insurance and any other assistance they need.

There has been a high demand for dog guides for many years, with one in five Canadians living with a disability, providing safety and independence they would not have otherwise. Thanks so sponsor Pet Valu, all the proceeds go directly back to dog guide

programs. These programs are; canine vision, hearing, service, seizure response, autism assistance, diabetic alert, and facility support. Each walk is organized by local volunteers, in the spring and fall, with support from the LFCDG. To date the walks have raised over \$21 million. For more information, go to www.dogguides.com.

Stapley, who has fostered dogs for the program for over 20 years, says that the theme this year is "bright futures, countless possibilities."

"We actually don't have a fundraising goal. We just try to raise as much as we can. Myself, I've raised over \$500. I know there's some people that have raised some money also. Last year we raised about \$2,700. You can always hope for that goal but it would be nice if we got more. It is what it is and it depends on the weather and people," he says.

This year, Stapley says that a territory representative from Pet Valu named Nicole will be there on site.

"And she's bringing a board that people can get a photo taken with their dog in front of. The Lions will also be doing hot dogs for participants that day," he says.

As to how many people are expected on May 25, Stapley says it's hard to say.

"There were four or five people last year but it depends on the weather and how many people are out and about. There's been quite a few pledge forms picked up so it's hard to say. You never really know until the day," he says.

Slopek-Weber told The Bancroft Times that thousands of people participate in the Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides each year, raising essential funds to help match Canadians with medical and physical disabilities with a life-changing dog guide.

"Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides is the only organization that provides life-changing Dog Guides across seven different programs: Autism Assistance; Canine Vision; Diabetes Alert; Facility Support; Hearing; Seizure Response and Service," she says.

Slopek-Weber says that this year they're celebrating the 40th anniversary of their walk fundraiser which is being held in 200 plus communities across the country.

"Building on the \$1.3 million raised in 2024, this year's Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides aims to reach an ambitious fundraising goal of \$1.6 million. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of the local organizers - such as the Bancroft Lions Club, volunteers and participants who have supported the Walk for Dog Guides over the past 40 years. Their dedication and efforts have made a significant impact, helping to provide brighter futures for countless Canadians," she says.

Thanks to their national sponsor, Pet Valu, all proceeds from this event directly fund Dog Guide programs, according to Slopek-Weber.

"Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides relies on the success of the Pet Valu Walks for Dog Guides to continue to provide these indispensable companions to Canadians living with a disability. For more information about the Walk, visit: walkfordogguides.com. For details of the Bancroft Walk: <https://www.walkfordogguides.com/fundraiser/bancroftwalkfordogguides>. For general information about Dog Guides and our programs: www.dogguides.com," she says.

Stapley told Bancroft This Week that he's looking forward to a good day on May 25 for the walk.

"And hopefully we have a good day and quite a few people show up, and the Lions will be happy and so will the Lions Foundation of Canada," he says. "There's still some pledge forms at Dairy Queen [in downtown Bancroft next to Stedman's] if people want some and they'll be available on the day of the walk if people want to make donations, then."