

## LIONS AND WHITE CANE SAFETY DAY

Thursday, October 15, 2019

by Dave Schneider, 2E2 White Cane Safety Chair

On October 18, 2018, on a rainy day more than 150 students were school bussed to the Fort Worth Stockyards from 32 school districts! Damp weather only enhanced the jubilant spirit at our North Texas White Cane Safety Day! Even a student and his family from Houston who had participated in Austin's White Cane Safety Day showed up. **This year the event is to be hosted on Tuesday, October 15, by the Kimball Museum in Fort Worth (3333 Camp Bowie Blvd).** On-site registration opens at 8:30 AM. Register at our website, <http://www.whitecanesafetyday.info/>. Join us on Facebook: North TX White Cane Safety Day. **As an enthusiastic Lion why not come out to help? Contact: Kitra Gray , [khillgray@gmail.com](mailto:khillgray@gmail.com).** This is a wonderful event is supported and enjoyed nationwide by Lions!

The first white cane came to the USA around 1931. Blind artist James Biggs painted a stick to help him get across the street in Bristol, England ten years earlier. The president of the Eastside Lions Club in Detroit convinced his club to adopt the white cane project when he observed a blind traveler at a street crossing using a black cane for mobility. It was barely visible to motorists and passers-by. The Lions began by painted white canes with a red stripe to warn motorists. Four years later Michigan passed this into law.

1939: the Leader Dog School is launched in Rochester.

The following year Leader Dog becomes a state project of Michigan Lions when Karl Sorrick from Springport becomes the second Lions International President from Michigan. On October 6, 1964, a joint resolution of Congress adopted October 15 as the National White Cane Safety Day and it was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas. In 2011 President Barak Obama named our White Cane Safety Day as Blind Americans Equality Day. Our theme this **Oct. 15** is "**The Art of Navigation.**"

White Cane Safety Day recognizes and honors the accomplishments and contributions of blind people across the United States. Here in North Texas this is an opportunity for school children in the Metroplex to experience a variety of mobility and orientation opportunities. They will get a tour of the Kimball Museum, a special exhibit using navigation skills, as well as touring on a city bus. There will be an awards ceremony and a lunch on the Kimball lawn. In North Texas our White Cane Safety Day is usually on the Thursday closest to October 15.

I remember more than 30 years ago in Liberal, Kansas, standing outside the Ideal Grocery Store with members of my Noon Lions Club holding a White Cane Safety Day can for donations. To each donor we gave a tiny white/ red cane (exactly like the picture above) that could be pinned on your lapel. Lions Clubs in other cities I belonged to (Huntsville, TX; Reedsport, OR) did the same until recent years.

When I moved to Fort Worth and was elected to our Lions 2-E2 Organ and Eye Bank Board, and subsequently became the 2nd Vice President, I was tasked to represent us on the ad hoc White Cane Safety Committee in Fort Worth. Our LOEB designed, and gave out to the Lions Clubs, 3-foot White Canes to collect funds for the White Cane Project. My SE Fort Worth Lions Club still does that. I know of one other 2-E2 club which continues to do this. Several Lion volunteers serve on the 22-member permanent North Texas White Cane Safety Day Committee. We represent 3 clubs: Fort Worth Southeast, Northeast Tarrant County and Colleyville.