

# Leader dog group miffed over mandates

By Louise Okrutsky  
staff writer

Although the United Way of Michigan remains mum on the issue, a spokesman for the Leader Dogs for the

Blind School asserts that the Avo Township-based organization will sever its 30-year affiliation with the charitable foundation by the end of the month. Although the furor isn't the first disagreement between the two organiza-

tions, Leader Dog administrators are saying their decision was prompted by a letter sent to them in June, in which United Way of Michigan demanded the school change certain policies before receiving next year's allocation.

CITING UNITED Way of Michigan's continuing insistence that the school break its longstanding policy and begin charging students fees based on a sliding scale, Harold Pocklington, director of the Leader Dogs school said, "We said we weren't going to change anything."

Many members of the school's board of directors privately indicated to him they favored divorcing the organization from United Way of Michigan, Pocklington said.

In addition, the school was asked to prominently display United Way's insignia on school vehicles, stationery and pamphlets. The school also was asked to institute an affirmative action program.

Internationally known, the Leader Dogs School for the Blind graduates an average of 320 students a year, Pock-

lington said. No matter the economic status of a student, no one has been charged tuition, he said.

INSTEAD, 80 percent of the school's funds are raised by members of the Lion's International. About 5 percent of the school's \$2.2-million budget for 1984 was to come from United Way of Michigan. Private donations make up the rest of the funds, according to Pocklington.

"The Lions are tickled to death. They wanted us to get out long ago. We wanted out 20 years ago. It's kind of a habit (to stay with an organization so long)," he said.

The 73-year-old Pocklington complained that throughout the organization's affiliation with United Way of Michigan, it was promised more money than it actually received. For much of the time the two groups were affiliated, United Way of Michigan made the same demands it did this June.

"WE ASKED (United Way of Michigan) for \$140,000 this year. We got \$112,000. They expect us to cut our

budget," said Pocklington, who's been with Leader Dogs for 34 years.

"We argued with them back and forth. We'd ask for a certain amount of money. They'd allocate it, then they'd cut back. We never got a big share of our budget from them," he said.

President of the Board of Directors of United Way of Michigan, Luder A. Beauvais refused to comment on the situation until the Leader Dogs organization takes formal action. "We're waiting to hear from them. We haven't heard a final decision from their board of directors. Our board of directors have asked me not to comment."

HOWEVER, in the letter sent to Leader Dogs in June the foundation said it applied the same standards to each of its charities, regardless of the amount of money involved.

Pocklington isn't worried about losing the money which came from the United Way. "Lots of people donate. The money will come," he said.

Demands that the organization institute an affirmative action program were denied by the Leader Dogs. In the

past the school had an affirmative action plan but now declines to commit itself to one because it doesn't want to replace any of its employees or board members, a spokesman said.

INSTEAD, THE school attempts to hire minorities as openings occur. Although Pocklington said the school has hired black trainers in the past, none are employed there now. The school hasn't received any applications from blacks for that position, he said. There is one woman on the kennel staff.

School administrators refuse to display any insignia belonging to other groups on its equipment.

"Eighty percent of our money comes from the Lions and they don't put their stuff all over the place," Pocklington said.

He fears that by placing the United Way insignia on Leader Dog equipment and brochures, private donations will decrease because the public will assume the foundation funds all of the school's activities.

"We depend on public contributions. We serve over 23 states, not just Michigan," Pocklington said.

## Tuition stays same at college

Unlike some southeastern Michigan schools, Madonna College in Livonia is not upping its tuition for the upcoming academic year.

Tuition for undergraduate students in most programs will stay at \$65 per semester hour. Students in the baccalaureate nursing program will pay \$80 per semester hour; those in emergency medical technology will pay \$88 per semester hour; and tuition in the graduate program will stay at \$100 per semester hour.

"Madonna has committed itself to being affordable for the vast majority of students," board chairman Andrew Brodun said recently in announcing the tuition freeze.

Chris Ziegler, director of financial aid, said students who need financial aid may still qualify for certain federal grants and loans. Of the more than 5,500 students enrolled in the school's liberal arts and career programs last year, about 65 percent received some form of financial aid.



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