

'Leading the Way' Benefits Service Dogs

Pet product retailer's campaign will donate money to service dog groups in the U.S., Canada.

Posted: November 25, 2008, 5 a.m. EST

The Wag Inc., a Canadian retailer and wholesaler of leather accessories for dogs, recently launched "Leading the Way," a year-long campaign to help support service dogs in North America.

For every item The Wag Inc. sells on its online retail site, the London, Ontario-based company will donate two dollars each to Canada's National Service Dogs and the United States' Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. The Wag Inc. President Tibor Hattayer also said he plans to partner with other businesses to raise money for the organizations.

"The bigger part of this whole campaign is to inspire other companies, other businesses to donate to the cause," said Hattayer. "I can only do so much. If I, say, have 2,000 or 3,000 orders, then that's only about \$6,000 for each organization. They need an awful lot more than that."

National Service Dogs, located in Cambridge, Ontario, trains dogs specifically to assist families of children with autism. By 2009, the charity will provide more than 30 new families annually with certified autism service dogs.

Hattayer, who has worked with autistic individuals for more than 20 years as a community support worker, said National Service Dogs recently lost a major contract with the Banyan Tree Foundation after the Toronto-based foundation had its charitable status revoked. Under the contract, National Service Dogs was to receive \$190,000 each year for 25 years. That represented one quarter of the organization's funding, according to National Service Dogs.

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, based in Bloomfield, Conn., has trained German Shepherd Dogs as guide dogs for the blind since 1960. The organization is an accredited member of the International Guide Dog Federation and pioneered the "In-community Placement" process, which sends instructor-trainers to clients' homes and place of employment to work with families and develop the dog-client relationship.

Hattayer said he will likely make "Leading the Way" an ongoing campaign, but did not know specifically how that would work at this point in time.