<u>Newest Lions Club Branch formed to support Service Dog Organization</u>

Lions Clubs International recently chartered their newest Lions Specialty Club Branch in Winchester, Connecticut. This Lions Club Branch, sponsored by the Barkhamsted Lions Club, is **Connecticut ECAD Lions Club Branch**.

 ECAD, Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that provides service dogs for those with physical or invisible disabilities, such as MS, Parkinson's, PTSD, TBI and Autism, so that they may have greater mobility and independence.

"This is another successful example of ECAD's efforts to be part of its Litchfield County community and the community responding in kind," said Dale Picard, ECAD's executive director. "The Lions Club is an outstanding service organization, always has been, and we are so very proud that ECAD was deemed worthy of being a Lions Club Branch. We look forward in every way to the collaboration with other Branches."

 The new Lions Club Branch currently has 8 charter members. ECAD Marketing Director Carrie Picard is serving as the Lions Club Branch Charter President. Barkhamsted Lion Jackie Martin is club liaison and Terryville Lion Sue Boilard is club advisor.

In August 2017, Lions Clubs International launched the Specialty Club program to create clubs and club branches in which members share a common interest or passion, allowing them to connect with one another on a deeper level. Forming a specialty club (20 or more members) or branch (5 or more members) allows people to turn their passions into rewarding service projects that directly benefit their communities.

"I have always been passionate about helping those most in need," said Barkhamsted Lions Club President Dave Roberts who worked with District Governor Ev Lyons to charter this newest Lions Club Branch. "My family has lived here for decades. Once we learned of ECAD from a friend and saw the great work they were doing for those in need by providing them with trained service dogs, we knew we wanted to start a collaboration with Lions Clubs International, the world's largest service organization with over 1.4 million members."

ECAD was co- founded in 1995 by Lu and Dale Picard, who are initial charter Lions Club Branch members. When Lu's father suffered a stroke, she saw how much he hated being dependent on her. She taught their family pet to help him rise from a chair and retrieve some items, and noticed that her dad actually became more active and less depressed than when all his help came from a human. Thus, Lu saw first-hand how

service dogs could change a person's life for the better. For the past 25 years, ECAD has placed Assistance Dogs with more than 300 clients in over a dozen states.

ECAD has numerous volunteer opportunities which this Lions Club Branch will help support including "Home for the Weekend" where trained volunteers can bring a service animal to their home for a weekend to help acclimate that animal to non-shelter life. Lions Club Branch members were already contributing their time on the Friday leading into the Labor Day weekend – offering six extra pair of hands in the necessary clerical work of helping ECAD staff to prepare the year end fundraising appeal by stuffing letters into envelopes!

Look for future updates and if you or someone you know wants to get involved with this service opportunity and support our newest Lions club branch, please contact either Lion Jackie Martin at jmartin2101946@gmail.com or Advisor Sue Boilard at dsboilard@gmail.com. For more information on ECAD, visit www.ECAD1.org