



The Barker

Nor'wester Readers Canine Assisted Learning Program
... all the news that's fit to bark!

NEWSLETTER
EDITOR:
Deborah Glessner

Issue Highlights:

- EXPRESSIONS DAY CAMP
- FOR TEACHERS
- 2013 DOG WALK
- CANINE BOOK BUDDIES

Nor'wester Readers teams are currently visiting classrooms in:

♦ Bensalem Township School District

♦ The Center School Abington, PA

♦ Council Rock School District

♦ New Hope-Solebury School District

♦ Pennsbury School District

♦ Olney Charter High School Philadelphia, PA

"Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read."

~Groucho Marx

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NWR TEAMS VOLUNTEER AT EXPRESSIONS DAY CAMP Summer 2013



Six Nor'wester Readers therapy dog teams volunteered at the Expressions Day Camp during July and August 2013. Held on the beautiful George school campus in Newtown, Pennsylvania, the camp is a unique recreational program designed to meet the needs of children, ages 4 through 18, who have varied types of social skill deficits such as high functioning autism, Asperger's Syndrome, non-verbal learning disabilities, PDD-NOS, and similar social challenges.

The therapy dog teams worked with four different camp groups: pre-school, junior 6 to 9, junior 10 to 12, and teen. Various activities emphasizing social interaction, eye contact, and verbal expression were designed to be centered around the therapy dog. The presence of the dog lowered stress and improved focus. The campers were also calmer during the dogs' visits.

Four teams also attended the "talent show" and were awarded paw-print plaques designed by the campers. Carol Wagner with Kody and Lynne Weiser with Teddy performed an enthusiastically received dog dance routine for the campers and audience.



Deborah Hoelper, camp director, said, "The word is out! The dogs are on campus! Every Tuesday and one Thursday, our campers anticipated the opportunity to touch, sit next to, ask questions of, play games with, and learn about themselves along side their therapy dogs and handlers. The dogs reached out to each camper providing that optimum moment of discovery. Maybe the fear of dogs melted away as, each week, Jillian, Wes, Teddy, Moose, Kody or Hannah sat next to their

(continued on pg 4)

Karen McAllister and Moose with the Junior 6-9 campers

FOR TEACHERS: USING THERAPY DOGS SUCCESSFULLY IN THE CLASSROOM

As the Nor'wester Readers canine assisted learning program evolves, the role of the therapy dog in the educational environment also evolves.

When Nor'wester Readers started in 2007, the program was patterned after the original R.E.A.D. program which was initiated by Sandy Martin, RN, in 1999 as part of the Intermountain Therapy Animals in Salt Lake City, Utah. Our goal at that point was to provide "reader dogs" to teachers in the Council Rock School District, working with students who had reading challenges.

But, due to a creative pilot teacher that first year, we quickly learned that the therapy dogs could contribute substantially to the enrichment of the classroom learning environment in a myriad of ways. We then felt it was appropriate to change our name to "canine assisted learning program."

Because many administrators and educators are sometimes misled by our name, Nor'wester Readers, we have made a point of providing orientations for all new teachers who have requested therapy dogs for their classrooms. We are constantly urging teachers to be creative and think "outside of the box" while serving as a host teacher for an NWR therapy dog team. We have found that the host teachers who have the greatest success in promoting academic achievement and motivating their students, incorporate the therapy dog into their total classroom environment throughout the entire week and not just when the dog visits. These teachers are cognizant of the necessity of careful planning to use the dog as a "teaching tool" in their instructional strategies when presenting their curriculum.

The alert teacher will observe individual student responses to the therapy dog and will reinforce or build upon those interactions for increased impact. Many students have multiple educational needs or challenges, and thoughtful utilization of the therapy dog teams by teachers can often address those needs successfully. We once had a child with both reading and social challenges in a second grade class. The teacher observed this and gave the student 15 minutes of one on one time with the therapy dog weekly; this gave the child an opportunity to read and relax with the dog in a non-threatening environment. Eventually the teacher added activities which also addressed the child's social needs and continued to creatively build on the presence of the therapy dog as the child progressed in successful social interaction with his peers.

There is no "prescription" for how to use a therapy dog team. It merely requires a teacher who understands that the therapy dog is a genuine teaching tool and knows how to successfully implement this tool in presenting the curriculum. They quickly discover that the dogs are ***magic*** and offer unlimited potential for reaching unmotivated or struggling learners.

THE "CANINE MAGIC" FORMULAS:

Nor'wester Readers has become unique for its canine assisted learning program. While "reading dog" organizations emphasize using therapy dogs to foster motivation and a love for reading with students who have reading challenges, Nor'wester Readers has become a true learning program. Not only does the Nor'wester Readers organization promote a specific program, it also offers occasional Act 48 (Pennsylvania) workshops to guide teachers in ways to effectively use therapy dog teams in their classrooms. It has become apparent over the years of our work with teachers and children that there are "*canine magic*" formulas which provide the keys to the success in utilizing a canine assisted learning program.

It is our goal to supply the "keys" to educators, to access that magic so they are able to create powerful spells for learning within their classrooms.

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For Teachers (continued from pg 2)

Dog + Child = comfort, happiness, relaxation

Research has proven that the presence of an animal lowers blood pressure and stress, setting the scene for a relaxed learning environment, which is highly conducive to academic achievement.

Dog + Child + facilitator = confidence and self-esteem

In addition to dog and child, a skilled facilitator (teacher and/or handler) shifts performance pressure off the child and provides positive support throughout the learning process, whether it is reading or in other curricular areas. This formula has been shown to boost student confidence and self-esteem.

Dog + Curriculum + Strategies = motivation, focus, and success

Put a dog into the hands of an enthusiastic, creative host teacher and educate them how to effectively use the canine assisted learning team to maximize the power of motivating their students and directing their focus so they experience the success of academic achievement. We strongly encourage the host teachers to plan in advance for the team's weekly visit time and to consider the team as a teaching tool (strategies) to add a powerful punch to successfully presenting their curriculum.

Dog + Child + Books = joy of reading

Putting a dog into the equation of child plus books encourages the child to tackle his/her reading challenges, whether remedial or of an *aliterate nature, in the presence of an accepting, non-judgmental companion. The presence of a dog shifts performance pressure off the student and aids them in perceiving themselves as a teacher or mentor to the dog. This is validating, empowering, and satisfying for the student and ultimately results in discovering the joy of reading.

Dog + Child + Love of Reading = read to learn

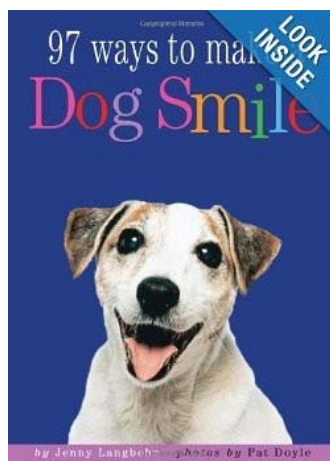
When a child embraces a love of books and reading at the side of a therapy dog, the groundwork has been set for the child to read to learn and become a lifelong reader and learner. This formula conquers the dilemma of *aliteracy so prevalent today

The Nor'wester Readers organization keeps books and articles on file which can be borrowed for more information on how to use therapy dogs in the classroom. We are working on a "Teacher Page" for our website which will offer supportive information about our canine assisted learning program. Teachers interested in requesting a therapy dog can complete and return the request form which is currently on the FORMS page of our website.

We also hope to gain approval to offer an Act 48 Council Rock in-service workshop for teachers this winter titled "There's A Dog In My Classroom!"

In the meantime, be creative, think outside the box, and put the dogs to work!

***ALITERACY:** A new phenomenon which is simply the lack of the reading habit in capable readers. People who are alliterate are not essentially illiterate, but choose not to read for some reason. Aliteracy is becoming known as the invisible epidemic." (Anderson, T. "The Dangerous Step Above Literacy." Lifestyle Channel, February 2011)



Recommended by NWR handler Judy Eckenrode:

It really works! Lower Ear Noogies, The Thumper, Lazy Man's Tetherball, Bobbing for Treats, The Hansel and Gretel. For an afternoon of fun, scamper about the house leaving a trail of plain popped popcorn in your wake.

97 Ways to Make a Dog Smile is a gift of pure pleasure for dogs and the owners who love them.

#39: "Luke, I am your father."

Speak to your dog through the cardboard cylinder of a paper towel or wrapping paper roll. Your dog will love your Darth Vader voice!

#50: "The Treat Fairy"

While your dog is asleep, attempt to sneak a treat under his pillow without disturbing him. Dogs love to wake up to a surprise!

Expressions Day Camp (continued from page 1)

handlers with compelling eyes and steadfast composure that cued the OK to make the first touch. Maybe the questions which the handlers so patiently and lovingly answered about their dog caused the campers to realize that we have things in common, and other conversations became a little easier when the dogs were not there. Or, finally, maybe the campers learned the feeling of serenity, tranquility, and peace as they walked hand in hand down the road with a dog, taking turns holding the leash, in a moment when all is right with the world. This was our magic on the campus of the George School during the 2013 Expressions Camp — a memory to warm the long days of winter and the spark to ignite the excitement once again of the dogs on campus.”

Susan Jasiewicz, the pre-school group counselor, said, “Our delighted campers truly came alive during visits with Teddy, Moose and Hannah. Whether sustaining immediate eye contact, enjoying the texture of fur, or feeling empowered while holding the leash on an exploratory walk -- our preschoolers effortlessly sat longer, tried harder, and trusted themselves more because of the calming, nonjudgmental demeanor and presence of the dogs. The dog handlers were so sensitive, accommodating whatever was happening in the classroom at the time. The warm interaction between dogs, handlers, and staff provided excellent modeling of pro-social skills for the campers, and we all benefited from the “magic” that evolved. Thank you for this beautiful, beneficial partnership.”

The NWR organization extends their gratitude to the following therapy dog teams who volunteered at the camp.

Wendi Huttner and Wes
 Bob Muska and Jillian
 Lynne Weiser and Teddy
 Carol Wagner and Kody
 Karen McAllister and Moose
 Debbie Glessner and Hannah

http://www.phillyburbs.com/news/local/courier_times_news/camp-gives-kids-with-special-needs-special-experience/article_ab42bb14-097c-57d6-8103-929119303db7.html

Click on the above link to see the Courier Times article and accompanying video.



Bob Muska and Jillian with the junior 9-12 campers. (above)



Debbie Glessner and Hannah with the Pre-school campers. (left)

2013 DOG WALK AND FAMILY FAIR

Approximately 150 walkers participated in the second **Nor'wester Readers Dog Walk and Family Fair** at Tyler State Park on Sunday, May 5th, raising over \$8,000 for NWR.

Students, parents, friends, and teachers came to walk and support the organization. We were especially pleased with the "family fair" which ran after the walk while participants enjoyed hot dogs cooked on the grill and music supplied by ASharp Productions.

Exhibitions included a free-style doggy dancing routine, Police K-9, agility, and fly-ball demonstrations. Horse-drawn wagon rides were given by Hutch Hamilton and A Better Way Farm Belgians.

Melinda Berger of Dream Dogs LLC provided Canine Good Citizenship and Bright & Beautiful therapy dog testing.

Professional photographers, Hillary Shemin and Ira Idelson, donated their time to photograph the event and posted a gallery of wonderful photos on their websites.

A variety of vendors were on hand to showcase their wares and to speak with walk participants.

Nor'wester Readers, a 501 c3 non-profit, now provides therapy dogs to the School districts of Council Rock, Bensalem Township, Pennsbury, and New Hope Solebury. We also provide therapy dog teams to The Center School, a private school in Abington, PA, and to the life skills classes at Olney Charter High School in Philadelphia. The next dog walk and family fair is tentatively scheduled for May of 2015.



Photos by Hillary Shemin



~A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR FAMILY DOG WALK SPONSORS AND DONORS~

SUPREME GRAND CHAMPION (donation of \$500 and up)

First National Bank of Newtown
A Better Way Farm Belgians
Shubert Goodman & Huttner LLP
ASharp Productions
McAllister Construction Company, Inc.
Old York Road Dog Training Club

GRAND CHAMPION (donation of \$250 and up)

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Sheila Fabrizio
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Kallelis Chiropractic Center
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George Allen Wastewater Management
Vicki & Lew Hendler

CHAMPION (donation of \$100 and up)

Pratt, Brett & Luce, P. C.
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Dr. David Baugh
Family Pet Clinic, PC
Dominick's Pizzeria & Dom's Lounge
Francis Furguele:
Wells Fargo Advisors
Indian Valley Animal Hospital
Zikoski Vision Associates
Philadelphia Revolution
Marty & Gail Wade
Yardley Center for Psychology
Bruce & Marci Morgenstern
Denise & Tony DeLuca
The Center School
Dave Puerto
A Long Term Companion:
Michele Kilstein & Brett Ringold

CHAMPION (continued)

Judy Colt
Julie Sturman &
Martin H. Sturman MD
Anthony & Lauren Dunn
Ed Murphy:
McBride & Murphy
Mike Nelson
Susan Dachowski
FirsTrust Bank (Jenkintown)



For a complete list of all individuals and businesses who made donations or volunteered, please visit our dog walk page on our website.

www.norwesterreaders.org

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can, to all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."
— Debbie Macomber, One Simple Act: Discovering the Power of Generosity



Photos by Hillary Shemin



**CANINE BOOK BUDDIES
SUMMER 2013 READING PROGRAM
AT
THE FREE LIBRARY OF NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP**



On five Wednesday afternoons in July, NWR provided therapy dog teams for the third annual summer Canine Book Buddies program at the Free Library of Northampton Township in Richboro, PA. An offshoot of the Nor'wester Readers program which runs so successfully in local school districts, the Canine Book Buddies, coordinated by Millicent Neff, gives children a chance to experience the joy of reading aloud to a non-judgmental canine "active listener." The children have been able to practice their skills while learning first-hand about rescue dogs and purebreds that come in every size from little West Highland Whites to a gentle giant Rhodesian Ridgeback! While awaiting their turns to read, children could listen and enjoy a book being read by one of their peers or they could participate in a small craft activity.

Special thanks to the following therapy dog teams who helped make the program an enjoyable summer event for the children.

Lynne Weiser with Teddy
Cathy Guenzel with Kerrigan
Carol Wagner with Kicho
Lisa Conicella with Annie
Debbie Glessner with Heidi
Melinda Berger with Hannah
Grace Lennon with Blue
Nancy Jorczak with Drusy
Tina Walters with Bailey
Christina Minsky with Harry
Bob Muska with Jillian
Judy Eckenrode with Casey



Photos courtesy of Elisa Baxt



ATTENTION: High School students!

If you are looking for a way to fulfill your community service hours, consider volunteering as a therapy dog handler with our organization. You will need to be certified as a handler, and your dog must have its CGC title and also be certified to work as a therapy dog. On occasion, we also have other tasks for which we need volunteers.

HELP WANTED: Facebook Custodian

Please contact one of the directors for more information.



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Deborah Glessner

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

The goal of the Nor'wester Readers Canine Assisted Learning Program is to utilize registered therapy dog teams who will work cooperatively with public school teachers to support and build student motivation, enhance focus, and increase task persistence. The presence of our therapy dog teams will offer a stress free learning environment which will increase student self esteem and confidence.

OUR VISION STATEMENT

Nor'wester Readers therapy dog teams will enhance the educational environment in ways which will prompt students to fully realize their learning potential.

www.norwesterreaders.org



THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Greetings:

We've had an amazing sixth year in Nor'wester Readers! Who knows what exciting things are on the horizon for our organization!

Along with our highly successful Dog Walk and Family Fair in May, we have been busy doing presentations for various groups and meeting with teachers and administrators interested in bringing our program into their schools and districts.

Our teams have also been volunteering at special events such as the Expressions Day Camp at George School (article in this issue) and in several summer school programs. Wendi and I have worked hard this summer on creating a procedures & policy manual along with preparing grant proposals. We extend our deepest gratitude to Jan Hempel of Princeton for her invaluable assistance with our grant applications.

We also now have a Twitter page. Special thanks to Elisa Baxt who has been assisting us as we step into the world of social media.

We plan to set up our booth at the Crafts in the Meadow event at Tyler State Park on October 19-20. If you can volunteer with or without your dog, we would greatly appreciate your help for an hour or two.

Emails will be going out soon with information regarding therapy dog team placements for the 2013-2014 school year. Please read the information carefully and follow the recommended procedures and deadlines to expedite the placement process.

In closing, I want to wish all the handlers and teachers a wonderful school year working together. We deeply appreciate all your enthusiasm and support.

Debbie Glessner

