



The Barker

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

NEWSLETTER
EDITOR:
Deborah Glessner

Issue Highlights:

- FIRST ANNUAL FAMILY DOG WALK
- CAROL WAGNER AND KICHO
- TEACHER PROFILE: KATIE LANG

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
- ♦ Quaker School Horsham, 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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Summer 2012



FAMILY DOG WALK AND CANINE CELEBRATION IS A BIG SUCCESS!

Approximately one hundred twenty-five walkers participated in the first *Nor'wester Readers Family Dog Walk and Canine Celebration* at Tyler State Park on Sunday, May 6, raising over \$8,000 for the organization.

The event marked the first official fundraiser for *Nor'wester Readers*. Students, parents, friends, and teachers came to walk and support the organization. We were especially pleased with the “family fun event” which ran after the walk while participants enjoyed hot dogs cooked on the grill and music supplied by ASharp Productions, a professional DJ.

The Lower Bucks Dog Training Club offered a free-style doggy dancing exhibition and set up an agility course and gave agility demonstrations.

Melinda Berger of Dream Dogs LLC provided Canine Good Citizenship testing, the first step in becoming a registered therapy dog.

Professional photographer, Hillary Shemin, donated her time to photograph the event and posted a gallery of wonderful photos on her website.

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 Lower and Upper Elementary Schools in the New Hope-Solebury School District, all elementary and secondary Council Rock schools, Afton Elementary School in the Pennsbury School District, and Belmont Hills Elementary School in the Bensalem Township School District. We also provide four therapy dog teams to The Center School, a private school in Abington, PA and will be starting at Quaker School in Horsham this fall.

Due to the tremendous success of the first Family Dog Walk, the organization has decided to make it an annual event the first Sunday in May.

SAVE THE DATE FOR NEXT YEAR'S EVENT — Sunday, May 5, 2013 at Tyler State Park. Watch our website for details.



Continue to pages 6-7

MEET OUR THERAPY DOG TEAM: Carol Wagner and Kicho



Dina Muncer, 1st grade teacher at Holland Elementary in Council Rock School District, writes: "Carol and Kicho are an incredible team and an integral part of our classroom. As a regular education teacher of an inclusive classroom, I am amazed at the benefits of reading dog therapy for my students." These words, along with individual letters from her students, comprised a packet sent to the American Kennel Club (AKC) nominating Kicho for the AKC Therapy Dog title (THD). The management of the AKC special events department were so impressed, they sent a "care" package to the children and called Carol personally to congratulate her on the award and ask her permission to be featured in the summer issue of the AKC magazine. The **Nor'wester Readers** organization is proud to have Carol and Kicho as part of our

team and congratulate Kicho on attaining his THD title.

Carol tells us that she and her older brother were Army brats in the full definition of the term. "it's a different life," she says, "not better or worse — just different! It means I have no lifelong friendships, no hometown roots; but I have lived all over the great USA and have seen most of Europe. From Panama to Germany, I learned how to meet new people, appreciate their differences, and learned how to cope."

Carol is proud of her family — her wonderful husband with whom she shares a love for animals and nature, and her daughter Krista and her husband who have blessed the family with a remarkable young man, Mark, who is now 4 1/2.

Carol started dancing when she was 11 years old, and it became her passion in life. She studied with the wife of an Army sergeant who had escaped from Russia during the revolution with HER mother who had danced with the Bolshoi. Carol ultimately pursued higher education at the University of Oklahoma and Southern Methodist University as a dance major. She was an instructor for the Dance Masters of America Convention and also served on the faculty for the Dance Masters Teacher Training School. In 1984, she moved to Bristol, PA, opened her own studio, and operated a performing company known as Avallon Dance Company until her retirement in 2009. Recently she celebrated the recognition of one of her former students, Christopher Gattelli, who won a Tony Award for best choreographer for the Broadway show **NEWSIES**.

She speaks affectionately of many wonderful dogs who have shared life with her and her family. Brad-Man, a springer, from the Lahaska SPCA, became her studio dog. He would stroll through her dance class during barre and pay homage to the sweat and toil of the dancers. Karl, a black lab, was rescued from the cart corral at the local Pathmark. Jessica, a Border Collie mix, was adopted from the Bensalem Women's Humane Society. Scout, a Belgian Tervuren mix, inspired Carol to train seriously after her retirement, and she attained her CGC, CD, and CDX titles with the Australian Shepherd Club of America. She also earned her CD, CDX, and UD Utility titles with the United Kennel Club. After the AKC allowed mixed breeds to compete, Scout earned her AKC CD and rally novice titles. When Freestyle (dancing with your dog) was introduced, Carol eagerly jumped on the opportunity to marry her two passions of dogs and dancing. Scout became her partner and Freestyle demonstration dog.

Then along came Carol's therapy dogs. First was Kody, a Border Collie/Lab mix, and then her GENTLE GIANT, Kicho, a purebred Rhodesian Ridgeback. Kicho earned obedience titles but did not have the aptitude for the competition arena. He was a natural therapy dog and has worked at St. Mary's Hospital, Pickering Manor, and the Women's Shelter in Bensalem.

Kicho has been working with **Nor'wester Readers** since 2009, and Kody will be joining our ranks this coming school year. Carol found **Nor'wester Readers** on the internet by chance. She relates, "It was fate because the members of this group are special people and share an inner empathy and unselfish desire to reach out to lighten the load of others."

Carol reflects upon the recent honor bestowed upon her and Kicho. “Dina Muncer, our host teacher, also used the nomination of Kicho for the AKC therapy dog title as a writing assignment for her students. Each child wrote to the AKC personally to talk about THEIR dog and how he enhanced their reading experience.” She goes on to say that she is “. . . humbled by what my canine family does, not only for me, but for those they barely know.”



INTRODUCING BUYER TOPIA

Visit Nor'wester Readers' new fund-raising store!

Start shopping from a continually updated inventory of over seven million books, DVDs, CDs, calendars, gifts, games, and more.

15% of your purchase will benefit the Nor'wester Readers organization.

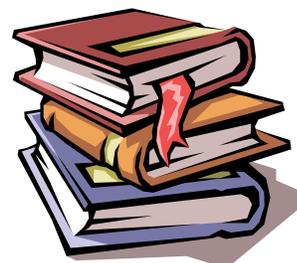
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<http://buyertopia.com/Shop/NorwesterReaders>

2. Create a customer account

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Every time you shop, you are automatically entered into a weekly drawing. Winners and the organization to which they donated will each receive a \$50 Buyer Topia Gift Certificate!

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Your contribution can:

- ~ Make a great teacher gift
- ~ Celebrate a graduation or learning milestone
- ~ Honor a person, pet, or favorite volunteer
- ~ Honor an anniversary or birthday

Your generosity and thoughtfulness will enable *Nor'wester Readers Canine Assisted Learning Program* to grow and to improve our services to the children and classrooms visited by our therapy dog teams.

Please use our PayPal button on our website or mail your tax-deductible donation to:

Nor'wester Readers
485 Worthington Mill Rd.
Richboro, PA 18954





The **Nor'wester Readers** organization will be providing therapy dog teams to the Elkins Park Free Library for their summer READ TO THE DOGS program which will run for three weeks in August.

Special thanks to Lou Mande with his dogs Bridget and Barkley and to Becky Weiss with Laila for volunteering their time. If any other **Nor'wester Readers** therapy dog teams wish to volunteer, please contact Elizabeth Corbett at:

215-635-5000

ecorbett@mclinc.org

WE WELCOME OUR NEW TEAMS!

Marilyn Campbell with Frisco
 Lisa Conicella with Annie
 Dolores Esposito with Daisy Rose
 Cathy Larrick with Brandon
 Lou Mande with Barkley & Bridget
 Mary McCaffrey and Hootie
 Tricia Thurm with Marley
 Carol Wagner with Kody
 Tina Walters with Bailey
 Dee Wilson and Zeus
 Becky Weiss with Laila
 Mikki Grossman with Blu
 Michele Rothstein with Summer & Darcy
 Nancy Jorzczak with Moon
 Judy Snyder with Sofie
 Ina Katz with Jessie
 Bonnie Pelberg with Sasha
 Judy Eckenrode with Casey

~ A STUDENT SHARES ~

REFLECTION ON HANNAH OUR THERAPY DOG

from

Sol Feinstone Elementary 5 O'Clock Times

Hannah is our reading dog. At the beginning of the year I was completely petrified of all types of dogs and wouldn't even go near one. Then when Hannah came, I thought there was no way I would read to her, or even pet her, and just be scared the whole year. Once it was my turn to be with Hannah, I decided to be super brave and pet her. I was glad that one of the first dogs I was petting for a while was a therapy dog because they are extra calm. After I petted her for my first turn, I thought it was a miracle I didn't freak out and that I was extremely calm.

Once it was my next turn I took another big step in my dog fears and started to read to Hannah and pet her at the same time! I kept doing this every time it was my turn with Hannah.

Now it is the end of the year, and I am not scared of Hannah at all. Also, my fear of dogs has dropped a little bit. When I pass dogs on the street or anywhere I now don't jump and hide behind anyone. Also, I went to someone's house, and their dog was so calm that I didn't need my friend to hold the dog by the collar every time we were on the same floor level. If you have a horrible fear of dogs, and if you want to overcome your fear, I suggest starting with a therapy reading dog!

By Chelsey Seigel

Ms. Becky Petravage's 5th grade



Chelsey (left) spends time with Hannah during her last class

TEACHER PAGE: Featuring Katie Lang

NWR: Talk about your childhood and family – where you grew up:

I am the youngest of eight children. We grew up in Langhorne, attending the local parochial schools. I worked at Sesame Place and Express Learning through high school and college. There are a lot of teachers and nurses in my family. My siblings teach at Maureen Welch (Council Rock) and LaSalle High School. My sisters are nurses at St. Mary's. I have 16 nieces and nephews and now live in Newtown.

NWR: Talk about your education:

I grew up with siblings that worked in the summer camps at Easter Seals, and my mom worked with adults with head trauma, so I had a sensitivity to disabilities from an early age. I knew my heart was in special education early in high school after helping my older sister (a teacher at Welch) at a camp for kids with special needs. I went to Kutztown for my undergraduate degree and have just completed my Master's degree with a Reading Specialist Certification from Cabrini College.

NWR: Share anything about the dogs you've had in your life – or if you haven't had any dogs in your life, perhaps share your feelings about dogs.

We always had a dog while growing up; we were big Labrador Retriever lovers. They were always another "sibling". Even though they got into tons of trouble, there was that unconditional love that was so easy to give to them. I have my own dog, Sadie (Goldendoodle) who has a ton of energy. I love taking her to the dog park at Core Creek. She will run for a full hour and then take a 3 hour nap at home. I think dogs are the most patient "listeners." You can just lie down with them and de-stress a bit.



NWR: Why did you decide to pursue education? Why special education? What is your philosophy of teaching and learning?

My favorite phrase to use with my kiddos is "You are more than able." I truly believe that with each of my students. I do think it is essential to reach them in whatever way is possible (Universal Design). I am a big advocate on person first language. Gone are the days of (fill in the blank with a disability) child. Now it is child with (a disability). I began working for the Bucks County School Intermediate Unit #22 in 2002. I have taught Multiple Disabilities and Specialized Learning Support and have seen every type of unique learner. I have taught for the IU at several different schools and districts. I have been at Armstrong Middle School (Bristol), Willow Dale and McDonald (Centennial), and Albert Schweitzer (Neshaminy). I am currently at Afton Elementary (Pennsbury) in Yardley with Kindergarten to 2nd grade.

NWR: How does your philosophy affect your decision/desire to pursue a therapy dog for your classroom?

Growing up, I "talked to my dogs" when I was sad or was dealing with emotional issues. They truly are the most patient listeners. The kiddos I have right now struggle with reading with confidence. I have a wide range of levels of readers, and I had a hunch that a patient listener, not an adult but a dog, could be key to boosting their confidence. Through the past year of working with Brandon and his handler, Cathy, it is so evident! Brandon gives the same encouragement to a child who is reading short passages as he does to a child that is signing their sight words.

Continued on page 6

(Katie Lang continued)

NWR: Share an experience or two with your TD that demonstrates the types of breakthroughs they are capable of fostering.

One girl uses an iPad to communicate and has some words that are clearly understood. After a few meetings with Brandon, she signed and then said "dog" for the first time. It was amazing to experience!

When we would read through sight words with the kids, we usually hear "When am I going to be done?" I don't hear that when they are reading to Brandon!

NWR: Share with us your feelings about the Nor'wester Readers organization. How did you learn about us?

My first conversation with Wendi Huttner was so positive, and the organization did an amazing job finding a dog and handler that fit so well with my teaching style and the needs of my kiddos. I was able to bring my dog, Sadie to the Nor'wester Readers Family Dog Walk and saw the amazing work they do behind the scenes with fundraising. One of my little girls came with her mom and her dog. It was a great bonding experience for my student and me outside the classroom walls.

NWR: Please share any advice you might have for other teachers interested in utilizing therapy dogs in their classrooms.

Have structure in place. We had three small groups that rotated through sitting with Brandon. We had a separate area set for him. Follow the handler's lead about what your therapy dog can handle in the beginning visits. No one knows a dog better than its owner.

NWR: Do you have any ideas to share with other host teachers for maximizing the learning environment through the presence of a TD?

Take lots of pictures and provide them to your students' parents as often as you can. It helps to engage them as well.



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CANINE BOOK BUDDIES
SUMMER 2012 READING PROGRAM
AT
THE FREE LIBRARY OF NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP
 Submitted by Milly Neff

This summer for six Wednesday afternoons, forty-five children and sixteen therapy dog teams participated in the second 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
 Carol Wagner with Kody & Kicho
 Lisa Conicella with Annie
 Becky Weiss with Laila
 Nancy Jorczak with Moon
 Kelly Wolff with Miss Daisy
 Bob Muska with Jillian
 Judy Eckenrode with Casey
 Michele Lecker with Rory
 Mikki Grossman with Blu

Michelle Rothstein with Summer & Darcy
 Cathy Guenzel with Kerrigan
 Kathy Winters with Odessa
 Debbie Glessner with Hannah
 Melinda Berger with Hannah
 Tina Walters with Bailey

Photo: Waiting for the kids to arrive!

Standing (from left): Kathy Winters with Odessa, Bob Muska with Jillian, Carol Wagner with Kicho, Nancy Jorczak with Moon, Michelle Rothstein with Darcy, Millie Neff, coordinator. Seated (from left): Michele Lecker with Rory, Lynne Weiser with Teddy, Lisa Conicella with Annie, and Judy Eckenrode with Casey.





NOR'WESTER READERS
485 Worthington Mill Rd.
Richboro, PA 18954

215-504-0154
Lab324@aol.com
Dglessner2@comcast.net

Directors:
Wendi Huttner
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 year in Nor'wester Readers! Much has happened since the release of the winter issue of *The Barker*.

We've added a large number of therapy dog teams and will start this school year with 42 handlers and their dogs visiting four districts and two private schools. We have recently welcomed Pennsbury School District and the Quaker School in Horsham to our growing list of institutions served by **Nor'wester Readers** therapy dog teams.

Along with our highly successful Family Dog Walk in May, we have also done presentations to the Northampton Township Seniors and the Coalition of Elementary Schools (PTO) in Pennsbury School District. In addition, we have done publicity at the annual Pet Valu Adoption and Customer Appreciation weekend and hope to set up our booth at the October Crafts in the Meadow event held annually at Tyler State Park.

Our teams have also been volunteering at special events such as the Makefield Elementary (Pennsbury) READcess, Special Equestrians Summer Camp for children with special needs, extended school year (ESY) classes at Council Rock High School—South, Elkins Park Free Library, and the Free Library of Northampton Township's summer reading program.

PLEASE NOTE: We are putting out a call for new dog-themed items to include in raffle baskets for the October Crafts in the Meadow event. Medium and large sized empty baskets or attractive containers are also appreciated. If you have anything to contribute, please see that Wendi or I get the items prior to October 1st.

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

