



# The Barker

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

NEWSLETTER  
EDITOR:  
Deborah Glessner

## Issue Highlights:

- NWR BECOMES A NON-PROFIT PUBLIC CHARITY
- CATHY GUENZEL AND RASCAL
- TEACHER PROFILE: CARLA FOY

Nor'wester Readers teams are currently visiting classrooms in:

- ◆The Center School Abington, PA
- ◆Council Rock School District
- ◆New Hope-Solebury School District

“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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## NOR'WESTER READERS GAINS 501 (c) (3) NON-PROFIT STATUS!

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!



The Nor'wester Readers (NWR) organization has taken a big step. We have been granted the 501(c)(3) non-profit status from the IRS and are now recognized as a public charity.

With the kind assistance and direction of Theodore Marasciulo, ESQ, of Offit Kurman in Philadelphia, we completed a lengthy application and accompanying narrative.

We had been advised that it normally takes about 7 months to be reviewed and approved, often with further requests for information from the IRS. But approximately two and a half months later, we received the letter notifying us of our new non-profit status. This will now permit us to do fund-raising and also to apply for grants.

We extend our gratitude and heartfelt thanks to Ted Marasciulo, a fellow dog lover, for his legal counsel throughout this process.

## THERE'S A DOG IN MY CLASSROOM!

On January 14, 2011, NWR co-directors Debbie Glessner and Wendi Huttner will be presenting a workshop at Council Rock High School-North as part of the district-wide DEEP SMARTS in-service day. It will be a wonderful opportunity for collegial sharing among teachers who understand the impact of having therapy dogs in the classroom.

## ~ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDERS~

**HANDLERS:** Remember to send us a xerox-copy of your therapy dog membership renewal ID before the expiration date.

**TEACHERS:** Please send us copies of any handouts you develop to use in conjunction with your therapy dog visits. Digital copies are greatly appreciated along with your permission to share on our website.

**PLEASE RECRUIT NEW THERAPY DOG TEAMS FOR OUR ORGANIZATION!**

[www.norwesterreaders.org](http://www.norwesterreaders.org)



## MEET OUR THERAPY DOG TEAM: Cathy Guenzel and Rascal

Cathy Guenzel and Rascal, a Cocker-Long-haired Daschund mix, have been volunteering with Nor'wester Readers since March 2009. "I love being a part of Nor'wester Readers," says Cathy. "It's a wonderfully well-organized, dedicated group of volunteers."

Cathy, who was born in Germantown, grew up on Pennypack Road in Willow Grove. She and her siblings played in the creek and woods that is now part of the beautiful Pennypack Trust Preserve. Today Cathy is a member of the Trust and a staunch supporter of saving the environment.

Cathy graduated from Temple University with a degree in Health and Physical Education and from Trenton State University with a Master's Degree in Health Education. She taught in Neshaminy School District for 8 years at Poquessing Middle School. Eventually Cathy decided she wanted a career-change and enrolled in the Hahnemann Hospital nursing program. Two years after graduating with her RN degree, Cathy returned to Neshaminy



where she served as an elementary school nurse until her retirement in June 2008.

One day while Cathy was still working in the hospital, a young man walked in with a Border Collie mix puppy, trying to find a home for him. Cathy immediately fell in love with Mr. Bojangles (BJ) and adopted him from the Morris Animal Shelter. He lived to the age of 15 and died in 1998.

Like most animal lovers, Cathy did not remain dog-less very long. About 8 weeks after "BJ" died, Cathy found herself roaming the Bensalem Humane Society during her lunch breaks. "On the 7th day," Cathy says, "I walked in, discouraged, and a new puppy had just been dropped off. His name was JJ." The dog ran around the pen and raced back to Cathy, looking at her as if to say, "I don't belong here!" Cathy knew this was her next dog; she survived a strict screening and adopted him. As soon as JJ set foot inside his new home, he raced around the house, grabbed a slipper and took off. He ran to Cathy with the slipper in his mouth, and she said, "You little Rascal!" And the name stuck.

Cathy quickly realized that Rascal loved people, so she decided to pursue therapy dog testing with the Comfort Caring Canines organization. Once he was certified, they visited Luther Woods, Chandler Hall, Bee-Long (daycare for seniors), and Abington Hospital.



After Cathy retired, she committed to weekly visits with Dotti Brady's 4th grade at Rolling Hills Elementary in Council Rock School District. Rascal knows he's going to work as soon as his blue TD tag is clipped to his collar, and he even knows his way to the classroom! He greets each child with a wag of his tail, a sniff, and often rests his head against them while they read and stroke his soft coat. Everyone remarks about Rascal's big brown eyes and his blue-black marbled tongue. This year Cathy and Rascal are visiting Jacquelyn Higgins's 3rd grade class at Rolling Hills.

In her spare time Cathy sings alto with the Bucks County Choral Society of which she has been a member for 16 years. She also enjoys photography with her new Canon DSLR camera.

"Having been a part of many therapy dog groups over the last 10 years," Cathy muses, "Nor'wester Readers is the niche for me and Rascal. This is the best place for us."



## TEACHER PAGE: Featuring Carla Foy

When Carla Foy was studying for her Master's in Elementary Counseling, she had a vision of the impact that therapy animals could have in school classrooms. This led her to doing her Master's thesis on this topic. In her research she discovered massive documentation that proved how valuable it was for children to interact with animals, especially in conjunction with learning. Now that Carla is a host teacher for one of our NWR therapy dogs, she knows that having an animal in her classroom is beyond "cute and fun." It is profoundly powerful.

Carla grew up in Bethlehem, PA. Her father was an airline pilot and her mother owns a used/rare bookstore called The Old Library Bookshop. She has always loved children and teaching, and she was encouraged by her grandmother to pursue education as a career.

Carla attended Rider University for both her undergrad and graduate degrees. Before coming to Council Rock, she taught in a Catholic school in Princeton, NJ, and a year in Trenton, NJ. She has been at Richboro Elementary for 18 years.

Carla lives in Richboro with her husband Ed and her three children: Valerie, John, and Kelly. Willy, their 10 year old black Labrador Retriever, is a much loved member of their family. "I can't imagine a home without a dog," says Carla . . . and we know she feels the same way about her classroom.

Carla shared a story with us about a student in her classroom:

"I had a little boy in my class this year named "S" who had a multitude of learning and behavior problems. He has an autistic brother at home who seems to get all the attention that S so desperately needs. S lacks social skills, and so most of his classmates shunned him. He had no friends. As a teacher I tried the interventions I thought would be most beneficial. Nothing seemed to help. When our therapy dog, Wes, started his visits, I began to notice a change in S. He worked harder to read more fluently—especially on Mondays when he knew Wes was coming. With this change, the students started to accept S, and he began making a few friends. At the end of the school year S wrote a note to Wes.

*"Dear Wes, thank you for coming to our class. When I read to you, you were the only one who didn't laugh at me when I got stuck on a word. I read better now because of you. Please don't leave us. Your Friend, S."*

As a teacher who was an observer of all this, I cry every time I read S's letter. He got the attention and love he wasn't getting at home, and it changed him in a million ways."

### IDEAS FROM CARLA FOY:

1. I keep a basket of dog books from which students can choose for independent reading. I have "book-talked" these books, or we've read them together as a class. These books are in great demand. Sometimes a student will request that a book be included in the basket. If the book is appropriate and centered around dogs, I will honor the request.
2. We have a blog on my class webpage. When students are reading independently they may come across a book they would like to read to Wes. The blog is a place for them to share the title and the reason why they want to share it with Wes.
3. I also use golden tokens I got from the Crayola Factory with students who have behavior issues. They can earn golden tokens for extra time with Wes.

Our organization encourages sharing among our host teachers of ideas and lessons that have been successfully implemented to maximize the impact of therapy dogs in the classroom. (editor's note)



Carla with her dog Willy



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## 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.

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