

“PATs” ~ Paws and Tales

One of the many Pacific Animal Therapy Society programs

The mission of “Paws and Tales” is to improve the literacy skills of children using a unique approach: Reading to a dog!

The Pacific Animal Therapy Society utilizes registered therapy dogs (and cats too) that have been trained and tested for health, safety, skills and temperament. These special animals volunteer with their owners, offering children an irresistible opportunity to improve their reading in a setting that has proven to be effective and fun.

One key to the success of the experience is a shift away from the children viewing themselves as the target of yet another remedial program and toward seeing themselves as tutors and helpers for the dog. This is liberating and satisfying for the children and frees them from performance pressure.

When a “Paws and Tales” dog is listening, the child is excited to read and tell the dog the story. The dog’s handler supports the child’s efforts and helps build vocabulary, increase comprehension and as a result the child reads with greater fluency.

PAWS and TALES is based on the Reading Education Assistance Dogs program. READ began when Intermountain Therapy Animals started a pilot program at an elementary school in Salt Lake City, Utah. The pilot study revealed rapid increases in reading skills and comprehension as well as greater confidence and self-esteem, improved performance in homework completion, improved attendance and the development of a strong empathetic relationship the dog.

Our purpose –

“Paws and Tales” in the schools

- To provide opportunities for children to express themselves through both verbal and non-verbal expression in a safe and comfortable setting using dogs as active participants and listeners with a teaching professional in a support role.
- To help students gain self-confidence and self-esteem through their success in reading as well as in both verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
- To help children gain awareness, empathy and sensitivity towards an animal as a partner in their learning and in exploring the world around them.

The Dog –

“Piper” (CD Qyn’s Challenging Lacey) is a registered Australian Labradoodle who is carrying on the legacy begun by “Benson” and “Cooper” the Golden Retrievers who served for over seven years in the schools and care facilities of Greater Victoria. Piper received her initial and basic obedience training with Jane Beauchamp, registered animal trainer in Saanich. Further training was gained with her owner and trainer. Piper is fully licensed in Saanich and up to date with all vaccinations. Her health record is on file with the Grace Veterinary Hospital in Saanich.

Certification –

Piper has been certified and insured as a “Therapy Pet” (“Animal-Assisted Therapy”) through the Pacific Animal Therapy Society that has been providing therapy animals on Vancouver Island since 1988. At the present time there are over 140 volunteers and their animals providing these services on Vancouver Island. Therapy animals have been visiting hospitals, schools, sheltered workshops, care facilities, homes and institutions including “Hospice” since 1988. Their certification has included an independent assessment as to their attitude and behaviour by an independent Registered BC Veterinarian. Both dogs and their owners are registered with the Pacific Animal Therapy Society – Web Site: www.patspets.ca

In addition, Piper has also been certified and registered as an Animal Assisted Therapy Dog (AAT) with Intermountain Therapy Animals and R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dogs) of Salt Lake City Utah.

Piper is a Registered “Multigenerational Australian Labradoodle.” Her registered name is “Canadoodle Qyn’s Challenging ‘Lacey’”.

Piper comes from a lineage of dogs specifically bred to become service and therapy animals. Her ancestors came to Canada some 35 years ago and have served in these capacities with distinction. They have been especially bred as to temperament, hypo-allergenic attributes and calm demeanor with a strong desire to please.



The handlers / owners –

All PATS volunteers are required to have special training in listening and support skills and have attended workshops and / or have specialized training in related fields of support. In addition, those involved in the “PAWS and TALES” reading program have been trained in using the R.E.A.D. Program from Intermountain Therapy Animals.

Gary Walmsley – volunteer

Is a retired BC classroom teacher, administrator and University of Victoria educator; recipient of the 1999 “Distinguished Education Alumni Award” from the University of Victoria. Gary has a B.Ed. (hon) UBC in Elementary Education and History and a M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction – UVic. He has taught grades two through ten in the Vancouver, Nelson and Greater Victoria School Districts and has been both a school-based administrator and Supervisor of Instruction with the Greater Victoria School District. He was seconded to the Ministry of Education for three years to assist in the development and implementation of the Intermediate Program resulting from the 1988 Royal Commission on Education. He has also retired from teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in curriculum and instruction and the supervision of student teachers for over 15 years at the University of Victoria.

Gary and his two Golden Retrievers, “Benson” and “Cooper” provided volunteer service to children in a number of schools in Victoria, Saanich and Sooke for over seven years. Sadly both Benson and Cooper passed away within six months of each other so Piper is now carrying on their tradition.

Further information is available from these websites:

See: <http://www.therapyanimals.org/R.E.A.D.html> and <http://patspets.ca/wordpress/>