



WELCOME TO READER DOG DOWNEAST

There is a new and exciting program here on Mount Desert Island in Maine, involving kids, dogs and literacy. The program is Reader Dog Downeast. Reader Dog Downeast is launching as a one-handler/one-dog community program volunteering in the local library.

In the Reader Dog Downeast program, children with reading challenges actually read books to a dog and the dog loves to listen! A child who may be hesitant to read to his peers is typically less stressed when reading to a dog and the dog is never judgmental of the child's reading ability.

Implementing the program will take some great kids who want to practice their reading with a great dog. Expanding the program will take a few good people with a few good dogs to succeed. Taking a therapy dog training class in order to certify as a therapy dog team is the first step. The means to do so here on

THE READER DOG DOWNEAST STORY

Not so long ago in the Pacific Northwest, MJ Penn and her Chesapeake Bay retriever, Kelvin, went to the Pet Exposition at the Evergreen County Fairgrounds in Monroe, WA. It was Mother's Day of 2002. While there, they passed by a booth with a banner saying "Reading with Rover". Inside the booth, a woman, Becky Bishop, was standing with her black lab, Boomer, who was sporting a red bandanna.

Out of curiosity, MJ and Kelvin stopped to inquire. Upon learning that Reading with Rover was a volunteer program in the Bothel Public Library, where kids came to read books to dogs, and that a few more dogs and handlers were needed to augment the program, and that a therapy dog

MDI are possible thanks to Acadia Woods Kennel and visiting instructors from Green Acres Kennel in Bangor.

The Reader Dog Downeast program is loosely based on the R. E. A. D. Program from Intermountain Therapy Animals in Salt Lake City, Utah, an affiliate of Delta Society.

Thank you for your interest. Looking forward to seeing you at a Reader Dog Downeast session!

For more information about how to participate in a Reader Dog session, contact Susan Plimpton of the Southwest Harbor Library. To learn how to become a Reader Dog team, contact MJ Penn of Reader Dog Downeast.

Thanks to Acadia Woods Kennel, The Southwest Harbor Public Library and Green Acres Kennel for their generosity and support.

training class, taught by Becky, would begin the next month at Cascade Kennels in Woodenville, WA, MJ and Kelvin signed up on the spot.

Kids, dogs and literacy all being dear to MJ's heart, the idea of training for, being evaluated and certified

as a therapy dog team and volunteering at the library were goals to be avidly sought. And so they were, with Kelvin's full participation.

King County (Seattle), having VERY strict prerequisite volunteer hours for therapy dogs BEFORE allowing them into the library, proved too bureaucratic for MJ and Kelvin. So they sought other

avenues and found willing acceptance with the Sno-Isle Library System branch in Mountlake Terrace, WA, where they had a wonderful time being part of the "Delightful Doggies" summer reading program. Moving to San Juan Island, WA the next year provided another library venue for another summer reading program.

And then it was time to end their Pacific Northwest sojourn. In the fall Of 2003, MJ and Kelvin returned home to Mount Desert Island in Maine. Kelvin, now four, having first graced the Southwest Harbor Library with his presence as a six month old puppy, was welcomed back as a legitimate therapy dog when MJ brought the idea of the Reader Dog

Downeast program to the library's director, Candy Emlen and Children's Librarian, Susan Plimpton.

While in development for several months, all the parts and pieces and preparations for the Reader Dog Downeast program came together in later part of February 2004. Beginning with a pawtographing session on Valentine's Day, participation in a Poetry Round Robin, attendance at the Afternoon Tea with an appearance at the Pajama Story time, followed by a presentation about the program, Reader Dog Downeast was set to launch with reading sessions scheduled for Wednesday afternoons in March.

Standby for updated and more information as the program gets underway!

USEFUL LINKS

Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A. D.)
Intermountain Therapy Animals
P. O. Box 17201, Salt Lake City, UT 84117
Tel: 801-272-3439 Fax: 801-272-3470 Toll Free:
877-485-1121
website: www.therapyanimals.org
e-mail: info@therapyanimals.org

Therapy Dog International
88 Bartley Road, Flanders, NJ 07836
Tel: 973-252-9800 Fax: 973-242-7171
website: www.tdi-dog.org
e-mail: tdi@gti.net

AKC Canine Good Citizen Program
http://www.akc.org/love/cgc/training_testing.cfm
AKC Operations Center
5580 Centerview Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606
Tel: 919-233-9767
website: www.akc.org
e-mail: info@akc.org

Delta Society Pet Partners Program
580 Naches Ave. SW, Suite 101, Renton, WA 98055
Tel: 425-226-7357 Fax: 425-235-1076
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