

T H E

# Latham Letter

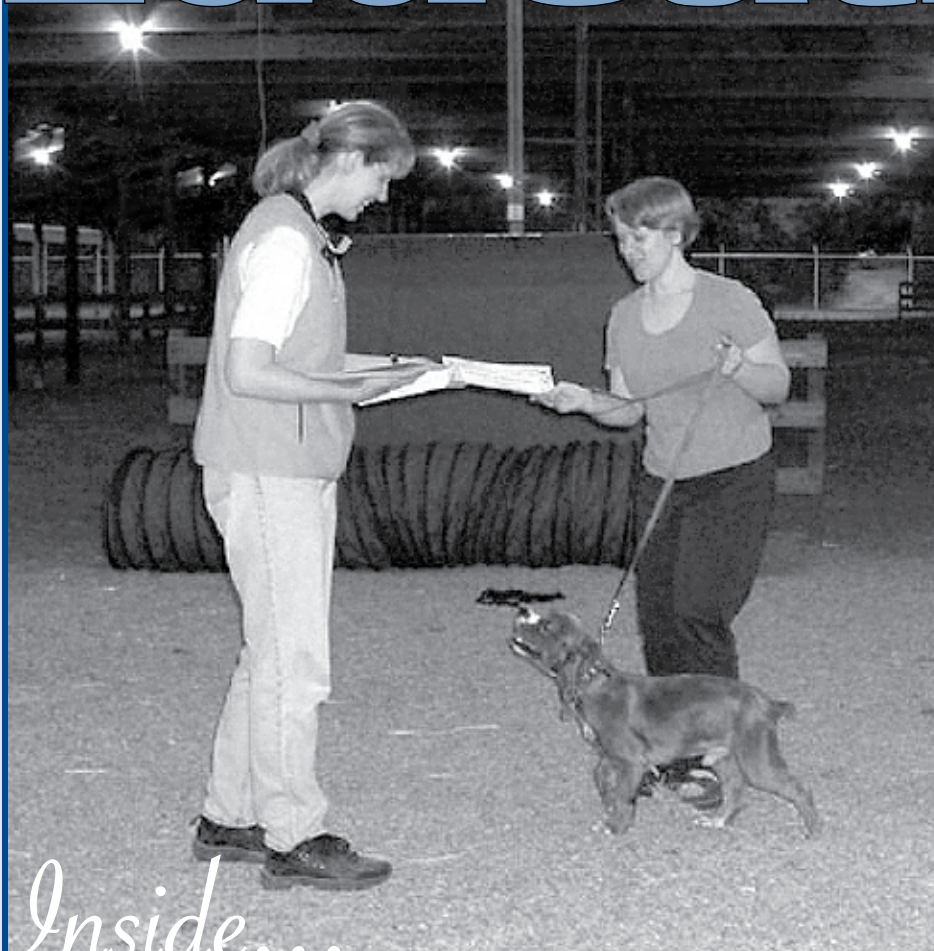
VOLUME XXIV, NUMBER 1

WINTER 2008

PROMOTING RESPECT FOR ALL LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION

SINGLE ISSUE PRICE: \$5.00

## Humane Education:



It's  
Not  
Just  
for  
Kids  
Anymore

*By Susan Helmink, M.S.*

*Inside...*

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### Animal-Assisted Therapy

- In Australia with Guinea Pigs *Page 10*
- In Massachusetts with Horses for Children with Attention Deficit Disorder *Page 12*
- In Arizona with "Luke," one of Gabriel's Angels *Page 18*



# *Edith Latham's Mandate:*

“To promote, foster,  
encourage and further  
the principles of  
humaneness, kindness  
and benevolence to all  
living creatures.”



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Promotion of Humane Education*

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# The Latham Letter

Volume XXIV, Number 1, Winter 2008

**BALANCED PERSPECTIVES ON  
HUMANE ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES**



The *Latham Letter* is published quarterly by The Latham Foundation, 1826 Clement Ave., Alameda, CA 94501.

Subscription Rates: \$15.00 One Year, \$25.00 for Two Years

Publisher and Editor     Hugh H. Tebault, III  
Managing Editor         Judy Johns  
Printer                     Schroeder-Dent, Alameda, CA  
Design                     Joann Toth, Scottsdale, AZ

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#### TO CONTACT LATHAM:

Voice: 510-521-0920  
Fax: 510-521-9861  
E-mail: [info@Latham.org](mailto:info@Latham.org)  
Web: [www.Latham.org](http://www.Latham.org)

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### **The Latham Letter**

Balanced perspectives on humane issues and activities

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## The value of teaching Humane Education

*Hugh H. Tebault, III, President*

The caller, a teacher from New Jersey, has been working for over 20 years in the classroom but only recently has recognized the value of teaching humane education and having animals in the class room and at home as part of the educational process. She professed to being so smitten with the benefits she has witnessed that she is a bit like a convert to good nutrition: she tastes it, and sees the results, but isn't yet able to explain why good nutrition is good for you.

Humane education is used by many parents. Early childhood lessons about a family pet, or showing respect to animals, are part of the parents' handbook. Teaching children how to respect animals using humane education in the classroom is a natural extension of the family lesson.

The communication between people is complex. Each social custom, style of clothing, and method of speech places layers of complexity on both the speaker and the listener that they must overcome before they can effectively communicate. When the communication is between a person and an animal, the complexity is much less. The animal has few pretenses about customs, clothing or speech, but responds to the basic stimuli of safety, food, water, and companionship.

When we were children, many of us experienced family pets, visited a farm or zoo, visited parks, and did other outings involving animals as part of our learning. If we were fortunate we may also have had elementary school teachers who used animals in the classroom or lived in communities with a visiting humane educator.

As adults, we refine our experiences as we grow. In early marriage, partners often will adopt a pet to join their developing family. This pet serves as a proxy child so the newly expanded family unit can experience the new dynamics. You can see how your partner reacts to the pet's behavior, and hopefully how your values grow to adopt this new family member. My wife and I had dogs long before our first child.

We are then better able to introduce our children to being responsible with our pets. Caring for their first pet, accepting responsibility and keeping it properly cared for is a big step in childhood development. The lessons learned include the value of reaching outside yourself to help another living thing. The values of compassion and empathy are developed. The personal sense of responsibility and pride in accomplishment help develop the ego and self image that is so important to each of us in life.

When teachers utilize the human-animal bond to teach lessons in a class, it adds to the value of the classroom time and gives diversity to the tools we use in communication. The values instilled by these lessons are core values that the students will remember for their life time. Think about your early classroom experiences – which teachers do you remember?

For over 89 years, Latham stories, books, and films have continued to document the humane education values created by the partnership between humans and animals. The values of humane education would seem self evident, but each generation struggles to identify its own reality.

I would hasten to add that the American Humane Association (AHA), American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), Best Friends Animal Society, the Royal Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), many local shelter organizations, and the Association of Professional Humane Educators (APHE) all are stakeholders in the humane education vision. Visit their web sites to learn more about tools that can help you in explaining the values of teaching humane education.





# Of Note



## K9 Moto Wins Animal Hero Award

In September, K9 Moto and handler Trooper Jason Knott were awarded the Animal Hall of Fame Award – Professional Division by the Washington State Veterinarian Medical Association. This award was presented to Knott and Moto in Yakima, Washington – a city which bans Moto's breed!

Moto and another pit bull puppy were found in deplorable conditions in a barn near Estacada, Oregon. Both puppies were taken into protective custody by the Clackamas County Animal Shelter. The puppies stayed in a foster home, then went to LawDogs ([www.lawdogsusa.org](http://www.lawdogsusa.org)), before being donated to the Washington State Patrol.

*The purpose of the Animal Hall of Fame is to celebrate the bond between animals and people. Each year, the WSVMA honors animals that exemplify the strength and value of this bond and the contributions they make to enrich human lives.*

## What matters to teens?

Research by DoSomething.org, an online service challenge for teens and tweens, consistently finds that animal welfare ranks among the top three to five concerns among youth.

Source: Sheryl Dickstein Pipe, Ph.D., ASPCA's Director of Humane Education.

*Thanks, Sheryl.*

## Which Dog is Right for You?



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Presented by

Urbane Adult Education

Companion Animal Resource and Education (CARE) Center



See Humane Education article next page ...

## Important online resource

Bibliography of the Link Between Animal Abuse, Child Abuse and Domestic Violence

Compiled by Phil Arkow Rev. 1/6/08  
Chair, Animal Abuse & Family Violence Prevention Project,  
The Latham Foundation  
[www.latham.org](http://www.latham.org) and Interim Director – Human Animal Bond,  
American Humane Association [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)  
(856) 627-5118 – [arkowpets@snip.net](mailto:arkowpets@snip.net)

<http://www.animaltherapy.net/Bibliography-Link.html>

### Categories:

- ✓ Link Overviews And Introductions
- ✓ Domestic Violence
- ✓ Children, Child Abuse And Child Development
- ✓ Adult Protective Services (Elder Abuse)
- ✓ Family Violence – General
- ✓ Law Enforcement And Criminal Justice Systems
- ✓ Criminology
- ✓ Psychological Assessment, Intervention And Treatment
- ✓ Veterinary Medicine And Veterinary Forensics
- ✓ Hoarding
- ✓ Bestiality And Zoophilia
- ✓ Community Coalitions And Cross-Reporting
- ✓ Animal-Based Rehabilitation Programs
- ✓ Miscellaneous

# Humane Education:

I continue to be amazed by the number and diversity of animal welfare groups across the United States and throughout the world. There seems to be no end to the creative ideas, collaborative efforts, and sheer dedication put forth to assist animals in need or to improve the lives of people and the non-human animals that share our lives.

**The CARE Center, or Companion Animal Resource and Education Center,** is one such group striving to improve its corner of the world in East-Central Illinois. Its mission: to provide education and resources that foster a mutually supportive bond between companion animals and people.

A study of the CARE Center's mission and programs provides a different perspective on humane education and animal welfare efforts.

## **The CARE Center's approach to humane education**

The CARE Center is quite unique on several levels. First, its primary focus is humane education rather than rescuing and adopting animals. The founders – Pam Lowrey, Mary Tiefenbrunn, Pam Wasson and myself – experienced in one form or another the immediacy and necessity of caring for homeless animals and recognize that education efforts often take a back seat when time and resources are limited.

Our goal was to create an organization that could devote its time to providing education and resources to our community while supporting the efforts of the local humane society, animal care and control department and rescue groups. If the CARE Center is successful, the burden on these groups should diminish.

Second, the primary audience for the CARE Center's programs is adults. This is a virtually untapped population in our community with unlimited potential. Many adults are simply not aware of proper care procedures and are glad to make changes for their pets' benefit.

Adults may also be unaware of changes that have occurred since they had a pet as a child such as advancements in preventative health practices, the prevalence of non-confrontational training methods, and the expansive variety of nutritional choices.

Of course, there is a segment of the adult population that is less receptive to new ideas that may threaten their long-held beliefs. Different techniques can be utilized to connect with hard-to-reach audiences. See the two-part series by Dr. Ann Reisner (*Latham Letter*, Fall 2006 and Summer

# It's Not Just for Kids Anymore

*By Susan Helmink, M.S.*

2007) for further discussion on this topic.

To be clear, the CARE Center fully supports and does provide humane education to children. Two of our newer board members – Rebecca Buraglio, DVM and Anna Lutgen – bring the skills and aptitude necessary for building and executing educationally sound programs for children.

## **A mission says a thousand words**

The CARE Center is relatively young, founded a few years ago in 2004. As the organization becomes better known in the community, we



are often asked “What is the CARE Center? What do you do?”

Agencies always hope that their name and mission statement will answer these questions; however, oftentimes it is not enough to help people conceptualize our work.

A core component of CARE Center’s mission is “to foster a mutually supportive bond between companion animals and people.” Whereas this organization seeks to help companion animal species – primarily cats and dogs – people are an equally important element and essential to helping the former. Therefore, the CARE Center’s programs strive to concurrently improve the quality of life for both populations.

For example, the CARE Center offers consultations to individuals or families who wish to add a dog to their household. Through a series of steps, the family is guided toward the type of dog best suited to its lifestyle. Reaching people before they obtain a dog provides potential benefits to both parties.

By selecting a dog that matches their activity level and personality the family is more likely to develop a long-lasting bond with the dog which is a vital protector against their relationship ending prematurely.<sup>1</sup>

- A family who has a strong bond with their dog is more likely to:
- Enjoy spending time with the dog: exercising, playing, cuddling;
  - Experience the benefits of increased exercise, social contacts, opportunities to play and laugh, and reduced stress from spending time with the dog;
  - Provide the best home life and medical care for the dog within its means;
  - Look for the dog should he become lost; and
  - Remain committed to its relationship with the dog through challenging times.

From the dog’s point of view, a strong bond also brings many benefits. He receives regular physical and mental stimulation to meet his physiological and emotional needs. Therefore, he’s less likely to engage in destructive behaviors that over time may harm the bond with his family. His needs as a social species are satisfied. He understands and appreciates a consistent communication pattern from the family. And he gets to have a lot of fun!

The success of the human-companion animal relationship depends on both parties. In its best form, the human and non-human participants fulfill each other’s needs while respecting one another’s inherent traits. The result is a mutually beneficial relationship that will last a lifetime.

When explaining the CARE Center to the public, we note the variety of classes and pet care and behavior materials offered to help people have a better understanding of their pet’s basic needs and to open the lines of communication. This is the first step toward the harmonious relationship we envision between people and companion animals.

## ***A resource and education center***

While the long-range plan for the CARE Center includes a facility, community partnerships facilitate the CARE Center’s present efforts to provide materials and classes that are as accessible as possible with regard to cost.

Educational brochures, flyers and pamphlets purchased from organizations such as the ASPCA, HSUS, AHA and AVMA are provided to the community at no cost. The CARE Center offers these materials at community events including a summer farmer’s market that welcomes community groups.

Organized classes are offered through Urbana Adult Education (UAE),

a program of the local school system. This relationship allows for broader marketing of the CARE Center's classes and frees it from handling registrations. What began as a few classes has expanded into an entire pet section in UAE's course catalog.

Local, expert instructors volunteer their time to teach many of the classes, which include: Cats 100 & 101 (basic feline needs and behavior), Dogs Home Alone, Grooming Essentials, and Just How Serious Is It? (normal conditions vs. those that may need veterinary attention). Typically, six classes are offered each spring and fall on a rotating schedule.

Dog training classes are also offered, including beginner, puppy, and Canine Good Citizen classes. A new class beginning in February will allow kids and parents to train the family dog together.

In addition, the CARE Center fields phone calls and e-mails from community members who have questions or concerns about their pet's care, health, or behavior. For basic topics, such as housetraining, our team provides suggestions and resources. If the situation warrants veterinary services or a behavioral consultation, individuals are directed to appropriate professionals.

In response to an increasing number of requests for financial assistance, the CARE Center recently established a Helping Paw Fund to aid companion animal guardians in times of crisis and financial instability. Providing access to medical services – including spay/neuter surgeries – is yet another facet of the CARE Center's mission.

## Harmony in the community

While the CARE Center continues to grow as an organization, it has found itself in a unique role to potentially have a much larger impact in the community.

In October of 2006, the CARE Center and several other agencies arranged for a meeting of area animal welfare leaders with the goal of joining forces to collectively address the needs of our community's homeless pet population. The initial meeting brought together 24 representatives from the local humane society, animal control agencies, breed rescue groups, veterinarians, community college, and university.

The motivation to begin a coalition was inspired by a roundtable discussion of several groups with Ed Sayres, president and CEO of the ASPCA. Mr. Sayres – who was in town to provide the keynote address at a humane education seminar – graciously shared his recommendations for building a successful coalition based on his experiences in San Francisco and New York City.

Similar to perhaps many communities, philosophical differences and mistrust had prevented most of our community's animal welfare groups from working together in the past. The CARE Center offered to serve as facilitator for the group. Its relative newness in the community and focus on humane education provided a "neutral" party to oversee communications and meetings.

Over the past 14 months the coalition, recently dubbed the Central Illinois Animal Welfare Coalition, has met quarterly with 18 to 28 individuals from

11 to 16 agencies in attendance. These first meetings have been invaluable in making agencies aware of one another and the services they each provide. Moreover, individuals and agencies with prior differences have a new appreciation for the common goals they share to eliminate animal homelessness through spay/neuter surgeries, adoption and education.

A number of collaborative projects are already underway, including a comprehensive directory of services offered by participating agencies and a spay/neuter event targeting cats of low-income guardians.

Perhaps the brightest outcome of this coalition is the new and renewed relationships forming independent of the coalition. The CARE Center is proud to be a part of this opportunity to promote harmony in its community: between people and companion animals and between people who strive to improve the lives of our animal companions.



*Susan Helmink, M.S., is president and co-founder of the CARE Center (<http://carecentercu.org>). She also serves on the board of directors of the Association of Professional Humane Educators (<http://aphe.org>). Susan may be reached via e-mail at [susan@carecentercu.org](mailto:susan@carecentercu.org) or by phone at (217) 417-3160.*

<sup>1</sup> For example, see:  
Neidhart, L. and R. Boyd. 2002. Companion animal adoption study. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5(3):175-192.  
New, J. C., Jr., M. D. Salman, M. King, J. M. Scarlett, P. H. Kass, and J. M. Hutchison. 2000. Characteristics of shelter-relinquished animals and their owners compared with animals and their owners in U.S. pet-owning households. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 3(3):179-201.  
Patronek, G. J., L. T. Glickman, A. M. Beck, G. P. McCabe, and C. Ecker. 1996. Risk factors for relinquishment of cats to an animal shelter. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 209(3):582-588.  
Patronek, G. J., L. T. Glickman, A. M. Beck, G. P. McCabe, and C. Ecker. 1996. Risk factors for relinquishment of dogs to an animal shelter. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 209(3):572-581.





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Interested  
Writers...

# Author Guidelines



**T**he editors welcome manuscripts relevant to the Foundation's interests and mission but reserve the right to publish such manuscripts at their discretion. The Latham Foundation promotes respect for all life through education; *The Latham Letter*, now in its 26th year, presents balanced views on humane issues and activities throughout the world. We are particularly interested in articles that will appeal to the *Letter's* diverse readership. Subscribers include animal welfare and social service professionals, veterinarians, university students, and individuals interested in humane education, the human-companion animal bond, animal-assisted or animal-facilitated therapy and interventions, and the connection between animal abuse and other forms of violence.

Submissions should be between 500 to 2,000 words and, if possible, e-mailed as an attached Microsoft Word document with a brief cover letter explaining your submission. The cover letter should include authors' names in publishing order and the name, address, telephone (home and work) and fax numbers and the e-mail addresses for the corresponding (submitting) author. If the manuscript already exists in other document formats, please save it as a rich-text (.RTF) file before submission.

Photographs, tables, figures and other related graphics such as an organization's logo are encouraged. Photographs should be properly labeled with credit and captions and submitted either as high resolution files or as originals, which will be scanned (and returned if requested). Please include copies of all signed releases.

Tables and figures should be submitted as separate files in their original format. Please do not integrate them into the electronic text.

Submissions should conclude with a brief biographical paragraph about the author(s) including preferred contact information.

The ultimate decision regarding the appropriateness and acceptance for publication lies with the Latham Foundation. All accepted manuscripts are subject to editing for space and to conform to the *Associated Press Stylebook*.

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Send queries or manuscripts to:

Judy Johns, Managing Editor, *The Latham Letter*

The Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Humane Education

1826 Clement Avenue • Alameda, California 94501

Phone: 510-521-0920 • Direct: 323-340-1957

[JJohns@latham.org](mailto:JJohns@latham.org) or (Direct) [JudyJohns1957@sbcglobal.net](mailto:JudyJohns1957@sbcglobal.net)

# From Small Beginnings Great Things Grow



## Animal-Assisted Therapy in Australia

By Karen Damiani and Nerys Lewis

**T**herapeutic contact with animals occurs when humans and animals are brought together to achieve planned, positive outcomes that benefit all involved. This story is about an AAT program in Australia that seeks to mitigate the effects of neglect, abuse and violence on young people.

There are over 20 beings in the tin shed at the back of the dog adoptions area, and a good deal of movement and noise. The four adults – a teacher, an animal behaviorist, and two children’s workers – share a smile. They have faith that the chaos will subside soon, when the real work of the morning begins. Another session of ‘Animal Group’ is underway.

‘OK, is everyone ready?’ Part of the chaos is from having six

children under nine years of age all wanting to help hand each other the necessary equipment – a small blanket, a soft brush and a handful of celery, carrot and leafy greens. Finally enough people are seated to make a start. The 14-year-old ‘junior leader,’ a graduate of the program, starts asking the key question. ‘Who do you want to hold today?’ Some answer quickly, others ponder. ‘Can I have ButterFingers?’ ‘Little Fish for me, of course.’ ‘Is Tufty here?’ ‘Who needs a cuddle today?’

The important ‘people’ in question are our therapy guinea pigs. Raised with children and used to the seeming chaos, they settle quickly into their routine, wriggling into a comfortable space on each small lap, munching a favourite delicacy and being gently brushed by loving hands.

Why guinea pigs (also known as cavies)? Each child is able to experience hands-on contact with a living animal at the same time. The children are giants compared to the cavies: for once in their lives, they hold all the power in the relationship. Few children arrive with baggage or expectations of these animals, perhaps because few people value guinea pigs in the same way they do dogs or cats. Interacting with guinea pigs is, therefore, a safe thing to do. As the risk is low, reaching out to these small animals is something even the most shut-down child can manage.

The children work with the same animals each week. They form strong relationships, becoming experts on the character, likes and dislikes of their animal friends. One serious six year old informed an

adult visitor to the group, 'Tufty is a naughty teenager and he always looks for trouble. But we just love him anyway.' We emphasize the children's role in helping us with the animals; that each time they hold an animal, it learns about whether people are gentle and kind, or unpredictable and frightening. We ask them to be good teachers, and not one of the forty who have completed the program in the last two years has let us down.

These children know plenty about unpredictable people. All come from a background of homelessness and family breakdown due to violence. Most have experienced neglect; some have witnessed abuse of their pets, some have been involved in the harming of animals. During this program, they practice being gentle and caring towards small animals, over whom they clearly hold power. Once their skills



are honed, they are also able to work with other small animals within the shelter – kittens, rabbits and guinea pigs waiting for adoption into new, safe families.

The children create their own meaning from their contact with the shelter animals, some relating strongly to the animal's situation. Others seem simply to value the opportunity for regular animal contact as an anchor in their rapidly changing lives. The outcomes have

been staggeringly positive – schools reporting improvement in children's attendance, communication and behaviour, and families offering thanks for the return of their children's smiles.

---

The program runs in a shelter in Victoria, Australia. Designed and delivered by Nerys Lewis and Karen Damiani of Empathy Education & Training, the program represents an innovative community partnership between RSPCA Victoria and WAYSS Ltd., an accommodation and support agency. More information can be found on [www.animal-assisted-therapy.com](http://www.animal-assisted-therapy.com) or by contacting us on [empathy@ozemail.com.au](mailto:empathy@ozemail.com.au).

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We are indebted to the work published by the Latham Foundation about the value of animal assisted therapy in strengthening the empathy of young people whose lives have been blighted by violence, abuse and neglect.



# EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A THERAPEUTIC HORSEMANSHIP PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT CHARACTERISTICS

## A Study at Perkins School's Rein in a Dream

Authors: Laura Beckman-Devik M.A. and Cherie Ansin



**"There is not better treatment of the body and the soul than many tours each week in a saddle."**

LORD THOMAS SYDENHAM, 1607



### INTRODUCTION

*The potential psychological benefits of therapeutic horsemanship programs remain a promising area for continued study. To date much of the information available in the field is based on anecdotal reports or case studies with limited verifying research data. Despite this, current literature indicates that there are positive benefits from animal assisted therapy. For instance, Savishinsky (1992) suggested that animals were beneficial in fostering socialization, enhancing morale, reducing the need for psychotropic drugs, and accelerating treatment.*

Within the field, professional and clinical interest has grown in studying the benefits of Therapeutic Horsemanship and Equine-Facilitated Therapy with children and adolescents. However, currently only a small amount of research evidence exists that speaks to specific benefits. With an interest in expanding knowledge in the field, Perkins conducted a limited study to explore if children with attention and self-regulation deficits would show positive improvement both in class and at home as a result of regular participation in a therapeutic horsemanship program. The program used its specially designed curriculum which integrates structured lessons with hands-on activities that require planning, sequencing, and memorization. These skills are necessary for successfully riding a horse independently. We were interested in measuring if the development of these skills in one setting would be carried over to another setting and if children would demonstrate improved sequencing, organization, and focus in both their academic and home settings.

Our therapeutic horsemanship program has been recognized statewide and nationally for its efforts utilizing riding as an educational and therapeutic tool. Perkins is one of the few programs in the region holding the status as a Premier Accredited Riding Center of the North America Riding for the Handicapped Association



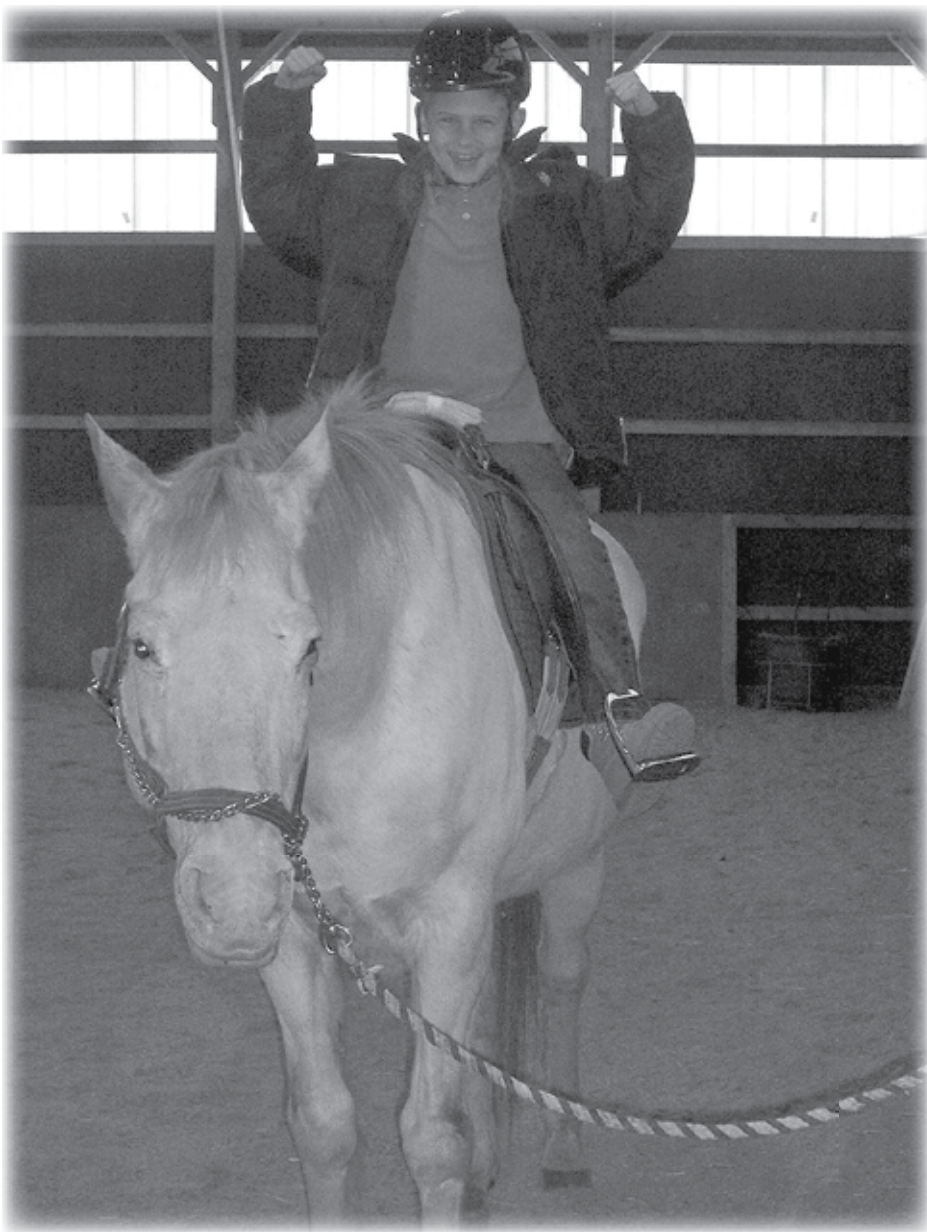
(NARHA), a designation that reflects excellence in providing quality, professional therapeutic riding programs.

## **THERAPEUTIC HORSEMANSHIP PROGRAMS AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Today, the literature regarding the clinical benefits of therapeutic horsemanship programs, although based on small samples or case studies, consistently points to the powerful benefits of working with horses including: increased confidence and self-esteem as well as a reported sense of control, personal accomplishment, and a sense of well being (Levinson, 1969; Varker, 1999; Parshall P., 2003). Other mental health improvements have been noted in children's ability to improve in social interaction and social skills (Friedmann and Thomas 1995).

The ability of therapeutic horsemanship programs to elicit change may lie both in their unique appeal to the universal animal-human bond (Fraser A.F., 1987) as well as their focus on the practical skills they require for proficiency. Katcher & Wilkins (1998) observed that the animal directs the child's attention outward, giving the child an opportunity to perceive the behavior of others more accurately.

Basic riding skills require memorization, sequencing, consistency, teamwork, and attentive listening. A student must learn to correctly identify and interpret the horse's behavior. He also has to work in harmony with the



horse to motivate it to respond (Rector, 1992). Riders must also understand that their actions or reactions can have a positive or negative impact on the horse. Given the size and strength of the horse, the individual must not only control his/her own actions and reactions but must learn to self-monitor personal behaviors in order to develop a trusting working relationship with the horse. This requires the rider to be attentive, alert, focused, and sequential.

## **PERKINS STUDY DESCRIPTION**

Perkins designed this study to investigate if there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate a connection with the consistent instructional rigors of a therapeutic riding program (sequencing, attending, organizing, behavioral self-control) with a positive outcome on improved self-regulation, attending skills and sequencing in other areas, most notably school and home.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), states that children with attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) experience difficulties with paying attention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. These symptoms are often seen in behaviors that include being easily distracted; difficulty sustaining a task across of variety of settings (including school, home and play environments); forgetfulness; careless mistakes; and appears to not listen when spoken to. This study examines if participation in a therapeutic horsemanship program can improve planning skills and self-regulation among children with a diagnosis of attention deficit disorder. This study explored whether the provision of weekly, structured hands-on lessons which require correct sequencing and planning of pre-mounting activities before riding as well as the sequence skill of riding would have a positive effect on children who are diagnosed with attention deficit disorder. Evaluation included measuring if children demonstrated improvement in their ability to self regulate, attend, and sequence in other settings such as home and school.

Through a generous grant from the Red Acre Foundation, Perkins designed and carried out a 28 week study. There were three groups in the study each consisting of four children. Group I received 28 weeks of 1.5 hours a week of riding instruction. Group II received 14 weeks of no treatment and 14 weeks of 1.5 hours a week of riding instruction. Group III received no

riding instruction at all during the 28 week study.

The study was conducted in collaboration with a local public school. The students in the study were in third grade and they ranged in age from 8 to 10 years old. There were 12 students altogether, 6 boys and 6 girls. All students were referred because of concern about their inattention and hyperactivity. Eleven of the parents reported that their children had been diagnosed with ADHD, and 11 students were taking medication for ADHD.

Sample size was small so the statistical analyses should be viewed as preliminary data to understand the effects of the therapeutic horsemanship program on the attention and self-regulation skills on a small group of children.

Parents and teachers of all participants completed the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function and the Connors scale at six intervals: (a) before the first group cycle, (b) mid-cycle, (c) at the end of the first group cycle, (d) before the second group cycle, (e) midcycle, (f) at the end of the second cycle.

## **FINDINGS**

At the conclusion of the 28-week study the results of the statistical review of the data from the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function and the Connors were analyzed by an independent psychologist.



Using the Behavior Rating Scale, teachers observed pre-treatment/post-treatment differences at a significant level in the children's self-monitoring skills, and in their overall classroom functioning. However, the differences were not dependent upon the group to which the child was assigned.

With the Connors there was a between-groups difference noted in the Social Problems Index scores, suggesting that for children who participated in the riding program, teachers observed improved social interactions with peers. Likewise teacher recorded data also found that children in the riding program were calmer, less self-involved, and had better attention in class.

Parents observed a significant difference in children's capacities to inhibit unwanted behavior, and to organize their work/play spaces. Trends toward improvement were seen in overall behavior regulation. However, the improvements were not dependent upon the group to which the child was assigned, indicating that involvement in any after-school activity helped the children with these skills. However, between group differences emerged that indicated that children enrolled in the riding program demonstrated better behavior and more emotional stability and better overall behavior regulation than those not enrolled.

On the Connor, when pre-treatment measures were compared to post-treatment measure results, parents saw no significant pre-treatment/post-treatment differences. There were between group differences measured in the Connor's Hyperactivity, Anxiety/Shyness, Perfectionism, Social Problems, and Emotional Lability subscale scores. Children who were enrolled in the riding program were observed by their parents to be less hyperactive, less anxious, and had improved social skills.

Score progressions from time one through time six showed that children who participated in the riding program were seen as less oppositional by their teachers. Also children enrolled in the therapeutic riding program were noted by their parents to have improvement in inhibition, emotional control, overall behavioral regulation, the capacity to shift one's thinking to a new set (or a better space), initiative, mental concentration and thinking, planning and organization, self-monitoring, and overall mental regulation. There were indications that parents saw their children as less oppositional, less anxious and shy, and as having fewer social problems. On the overall indicators of the Connors, parents of children enrolled in the riding program observed more of a reduction in the hyperactivity of their children than a reduction in inattention.

Other changes that held up, statistically, when examining factors that distinguished the therapeutic riding groups from the no-treatment group included: teacher views of better mental control in the students; parental views of reduced hyperactivity; better concentration and thinking skills; improved overall behavior regulation; improved cognitive flexibility; improved overall mental control; improved self-monitoring; and a reduction of social problems in the children.

## SUMMARY

Although this was a limited study comparing small samples of treatment and non-treatment groups, the preliminary findings of the benefits of a therapeutic horsemanship program on social and self regulation skills in children are encouraging.

Key changes in classroom functioning were: improved social interactions with peers; reduction in oppositionality; better mental control; and better attention in class.

In the home setting key changes included: reduction in hyperactivity; anxiety, shyness, and oppositionality; and better concentration; improved overall behavior regulation; improved cognitive flexibility; improved overall mental control; improved self-monitoring; and a reduction of social problems.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*Laura Beckman-Devik M.A., Chief Operating Officer, has been with Perkins since 1987. She has advanced post graduate course work in developmental psychopathology, holds a master’s degree in counseling psychology, and a bachelor’s degree in special education. Her child welfare experience spans thirty years including work in residential treatment, family treatment with high risk populations, independent court evaluations, clinical private practice, and consultation to nonprofit child welfare organizations with special emphasis on managing organizational change, program development, and organizational review and quality practices.*

*Cherie Ansin, Director, Rein In a Dream. Under Ms. Ansin’s leadership, the program has grown in scope and depth, providing animal assisted activities/therapy services. She has developed numerous therapeutic programs for residential and day students at Perkins and co-developed an innovative tuition assistance program that offers services to local schools and social service agencies serving children with mental health challenges. Ms. Ansin is a life long equestrian and has been a NARHA Certified Riding Instructor for more than 20 years.*

## ABOUT PERKINS SCHOOL and REIN IN A DREAM

For more than 111 years the Doctor Franklin Perkins School in Lancaster, Massachusetts has provided intensive support to children and adolescents whose challenges exceed the capacity of traditional schools. Our mission is to provide day treatment and residential services for children with emotional and psychiatric disabilities, behavioral challenges, and cognitive limitations. Perkins has helped countless children and their families overcome personal obstacles and tragic histories.

Since 1989, our therapeutic riding program, *Rein in a Dream*, has been an enormously successful tool in their treatment and healing. The campus offers serene riding trails as well as an oversize indoor riding arena.

Through weekly horsemanship and riding lessons, *Rein in a Dream* provides students with the opportunity to grow, learn and expand their horizons. Instructors continue to see enormous gains in participants, including increased self-confidence, attention, and improved self-esteem. Through participation, students enhance and enrich their lives and their relationships with others. Therapeutically, it gives students something to care about, something to feel good about, and something to look forward to. For these reasons, they are better able to care about themselves and make progress in other areas of their lives.



## Of Note



**Feral cat feeding station, St. John, US Virgin Islands.**

# Raising Arizona's Homeless Children with My Canine Companion

By Debra J. White, MSW



I teach kindness, compassion and empathy to Arizona's homeless children with my dog, Luke. We're from Gabriel's Angels whose philosophy is to break the cycle of violence in abused and at-risk children through pet therapy.

On our first visit at LaMesita Family Shelter in the summer of 2001 a dozen children swarmed around me and Luke, all begging for a piece of my dog, a wiry-haired mutt I adopted from the county shelter.

"Luke wants to meet you too, but everyone has to line up to be introduced," I said, attempting to maintain order around children

jostling to be first. "There's plenty of time. You'll all have a chance to pet my dog."

After each child stroked Luke's head, told him he was a good boy, and rewarded him with a treat, they settled down. As we sat around a table, they peppered me questions about Luke's habits. What does he eat? Where does he sleep? Does he watch the Animal Planet? At the end of our visit, I reminded the children that Luke and I would return every Tuesday afternoon. That was the beginning of my rewarding six-year journey with Arizona's homeless children.

A serious pedestrian car accident on January 6, 1994 ended my working career. When I adopted Luke I thought about pet therapy because of his mild manners. Pets helped me heal when I was in recovery so I wanted to return the favor.

Homeless children are often emotionally fragile. Some had beloved pets ripped from them when their families' lives crumbled. In some cases, lucky dogs and cats were cared for by friends or relatives. Others were given up to animal shelters with uncertain fates. Losing a pet leaves children feeling confused, uncertain and angry.

Adjusting to a homeless shelter can also be traumatic. Not only have these children been banished from their homes, they've changed schools and severed community ties. They left behind neighborhood friends. Luke and I bring stability along with hope.

The population at the LaMesita shelter shifts constantly. Some families stay briefly while others remain for the maximum four months. In exchange for free housing and child care, parents have to secure employment, a place to live, or both. Able-bodied parents pitch in and perform chores to keep the shelter tidy. Each family is assigned a case manager to ensure a smooth transition to independence. Families actively using drugs or alcohol are excluded.

Some children come with single mothers. Others arrive with both parents. Now and then single dads find themselves at LaMesita. On a few occasions, I've met grandparents who lost everything but refused to give up. Most families scrape by in low-wage jobs. Health care, if it's offered, is usually beyond their means. Affordable housing is the big hitch. Demand for a decent place far exceeds supply, especially for large families.

I focus on the children. Over the years hundreds have passed through LaMesita. I can't remember them all, but each and every child mattered. Along with my dog Luke, we taught good will not just for animals but for each other.

One week two adorable pig-tailed girls got into a brawl while we assembled a jigsaw puzzle. I

separated them and said, "Ladies, please stop fighting. Tell me what all this is about."

"She called my mother a name," Veronica said jabbing her finger at Tracy. "No I didn't," Tracy said, as she lunged at Veronica. I pressed myself in between them.

"This has to stop," I said. "No screaming, yelling, or hitting. You two make up. Who will say sorry first?" Faces gnarled, the two girls sat with their arms wrapped around their bony chests.

"Veronica? Tracy? Who will it be? We don't have all day," I said, glancing at the rest of the kids eager to resume the puzzle. When neither girl spoke, I headed towards the door.

"Where're you going?" Veronica asked. "What about Luke?"

"I'm leaving," I said, holding my dog by the leash. "As long as you two are acting up, there's no point in me staying. The other children don't like it when you fuss and argue either. Luke and I are going home."

Veronica and Tracy quickly made up. Although I have a master's in social work, I lacked training in early childhood development. I wasn't sure what to do but my idea seemed to work, at least for the moment. I came back and we finished the puzzle.

Luke's winning ways charmed the children, some of whom needed special attention. Workers explained that Kevin, a sandy haired seven-year old in a wheelchair, didn't talk. Because of his spastic movements and inability to walk, I assumed he had cerebral palsy. Kevin's school bus dropped him off after I started our session so he joined in later. Luke rubbed up against Kevin and he giggled.

"You like dogs?" I asked. Kevin nodded that he did. "We come every Tuesday," I said. I guided his hand along Luke's fluffy back, watching Kevin's eyes gleam as Luke slobbered on his hand.

"Luke's silly, isn't he?"

We followed this routine for a few weeks when one day Kevin whispered, "The dog."

"Luke's right here, Kevin," I said. "He's a good boy, isn't he?" Kevin smiled as Luke sat next to him. Afterwards, I knocked on the supervisor's door. "Kevin talked to me," I said. "albeit briefly and in a barely audible voice. Does he get therapy for his CP?"

Vaughn, the worker, said, "He doesn't have CP. His mother's ex-boyfriend Joe bashed his head in when he was a toddler."

"He what?" I blinked back tears.

"Kevin's cries irritated this goon and he went nuts," Vaughn said. "Joe whacked him from one side of the room to the next."

Sniffing, I thought of this adorable, sweet child who would spend the rest of his life confined to a wheelchair because of a cold-hearted brute. Due to privacy laws, Vaughn wasn't free to talk about the family's current situation or what happened to the ex.

A few weeks later, I read stories to the children. Katy, Kevin's five-year-old sister, sat next to me. Out of nowhere, she tugged on my arm and said, "Joe made Kevin cry. He used to hit him."

I was totally unprepared. Social work school or volunteer training hadn't prepared me for this.

"Joe's in jail now," Katy said. Then she changed the subject and

talked about a spelling test she passed. The family moved out several weeks later. I often think about Kevin and regret that his life will always be compromised by senseless violence.

One afternoon, I brought math flash cards. Homeless children sometimes do poorly in school because of the disruptions they face. If large families are cramped into a one room apartment children rarely have quiet time for homework. Stressed out parents may not help children with their studies. And children may react to their parent's anxiety about finding a place to live and not concentrate on their work. Any extra time I spend with them is a plus.

As we went around the group with subtraction cards, a freckle faced boy about twelve years old had tears in his eyes. His lips quivered. I put down the cards and asked, "Jarrod, what's wrong?"

"I was bullied on the bus by a bunch of girls," he said, glancing at the floor.

"Tell me about it," I said.

A group of homeless girls living in another shelter whacked Jarrod and his younger brother Jimmy a few times with their backpacks. Then, they blasted them with a slew of curses that crushed Jarrod's feelings. He asked the bus driver to make the girls stop but to no avail. I knocked on the supervisor's door and asked Vaughn to step in. The school

principal needed to know what happened.

"This is a serious problem," I said.

"I already called and left a message," Vaughn said. "I told the school secretary what happened. She said the principal left for a district meeting but he'll call me first thing in the morning. If not, I'll call him. We take bullying very seriously at LaMesita."

I scrapped the flash cards and spent the rest of the session engaging the children in a discussion about bullying. We talked about why it happens, how to prevent it, and what to do if someone bullied them. As I left with Luke at my side, I waved goodbye. A single tear crawled down Jarrod's cheek. He had the saddest face I'd ever seen. I held his hand and said I was sorry. Luke sat next to Jarrod and handed him a paw. For a tiny second, Jarrod cracked a smile.

About once a month, I bring a stethoscope and let the children listen to Luke's heartbeat. They're fascinated.

"Luke has feelings too," I said, as each child takes a turn listening to the thumping inside Luke's chest. "He feels happy, he feels sad and pain hurts him."

"Who'd want to hurt Luke?" a little boy asked.

"I hope no one would," I said.

"Making animals cry is bad and so is hurting each other."

Grooming is also another popular activity. I bring a few brushes and each child gets a chance to brush Luke. My dog rolls on his back and patiently goes through the process. He's never resisted, even when one boy put a Walk Man on Luke's ears while he spruced him up.

Any number of reasons can shove working families off the edge. The car breaks down and families can't afford repairs or a replacement. Job loss follows. Absent parents fail to pay child support and the state, with meager resources, can't track down the deadbeat dad or mom. A child's illness consumes their meager savings.

**M** My dream is that homelessness will end not just in Arizona but across America. Watching families struggle tugs at my heart. Most of them are decent people who've stumbled across hard times with few resources to help claw their way out. I have only myself and my dog.

Luke and I will return each week and impart our canine wisdom to soothe the children's wounded souls and bring cheer into their mixed up world. This is our service to Arizona's homeless children.



## Upcoming Workshops, Conferences and Events

Have your event listed in our next *Latham Letter* ... E-mail your listings to [info@latham.org](mailto:info@latham.org)

May 15-17 HSUS Animal Care Expo, Orlando, Florida [www.animalsheltering.org](http://www.animalsheltering.org)  
Sept 18-20 American Humane Annual Conference, San Diego, California



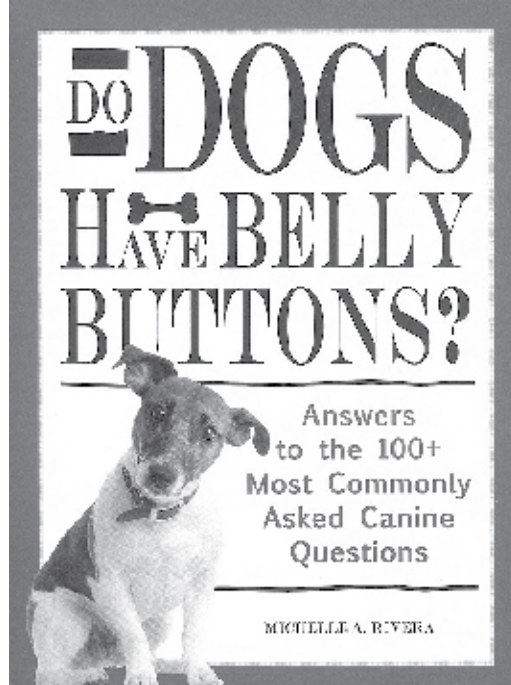
# Media Reviews

## Do Dogs Have Bellybuttons?

Answers to the 100+ Most Commonly Asked Canine Questions  
Author: Michelle A. Rivera

Reviewed by Judy Johns

“Bellybuttons” could just as well be titled, “Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Dogs but Were Afraid to Ask.” Author Michelle Rivera combines a wit to rival Woody Allen with an impressive amount of scientific and behavioral expertise to answer all (and I do mean *all*) kinds of questions about man’s best friend. If you’re already an expert, you’ll find yourself smiling and nodding in agreement, possibly thinking, “Oh this is a good way to explain such and such to so and so. If you’re just beginning to learn about dogs, you’ll be shaking your head in amazement at the myth-busting facts in these pages.



With an appreciative foreword by Susan Helmink, (a self-confessed non dog owner), and a helpful index, *Do Dogs Have Belly Buttons?* belongs in every curious dog lover’s library.

*Michelle A. Rivera is the founder/executive director of Animals 101, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to humane education. She is the author of Hospice Hounds: Animals & Healing at the Borders of Death, Canines in the Classroom: Raising Humane Children through Interactions with Animals, and The Simple Little Vegan Slow Cooker as well as many articles on both wild and domestic animals. She lives with her husband in south Florida along with their standard poodle, greyhound, and three cats.*

### Do Dogs Have Bellybuttons?

Author: Michelle A. Rivera  
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## Three Black Ants

were in the cookie jar so I spilled them outside on the grass.

I told my laughing daughter, “They’ll stand up for me at Judgment Day.” She shook her head, so I said:

“They’ll form a line in my defense and surely St. Peter will smile on beetles, spiders, moths, and ants?”

Carol Smallwood  
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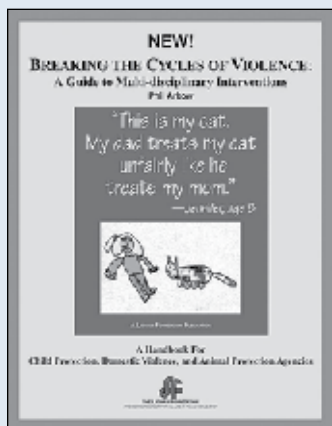
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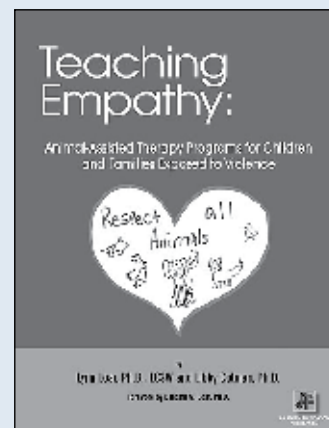
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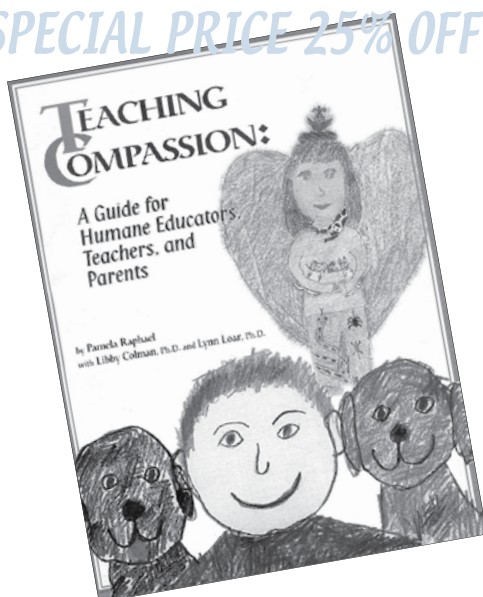
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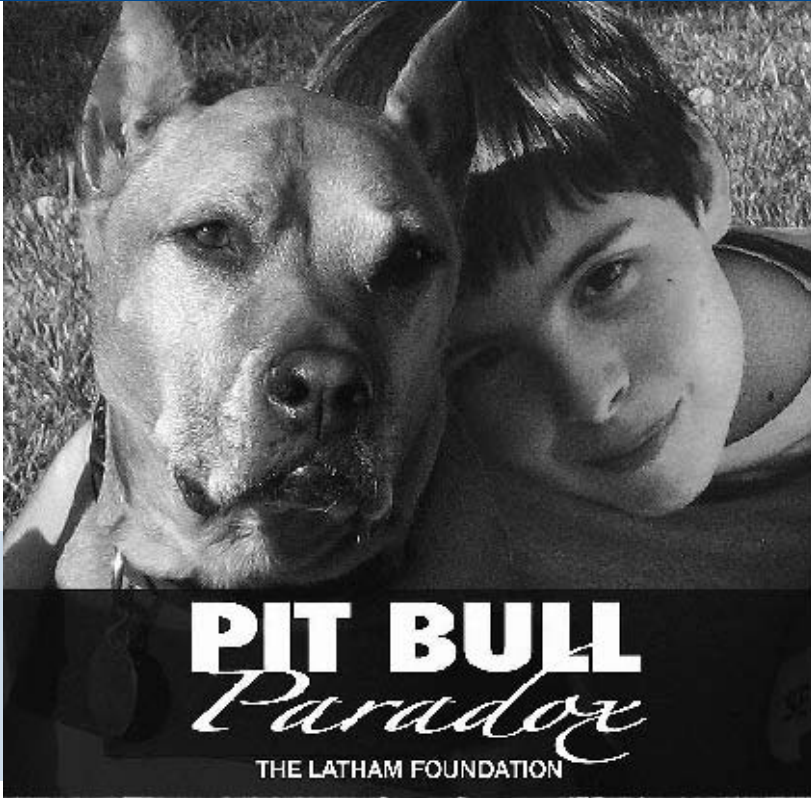
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**A new DVD for potential Pit Bull adopters, new owners, shelters and rescue groups**

Produced by the Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Humane Education

Written and Directed by Tula Asselanis

The purpose of the **Pit Bull Paradox** is to promote understanding and appreciation of the breed and encourage lifetime adoptions by well-informed, responsible owners/guardians.

*" Mindfulness and heart!  
I've been waiting for a video like this ... it will be a great tool to help educate potential adopters."*

*Elana Rose Blum, Pasadena Humane Society and SPCA*

It's a tragic sign of our times that in some communities shelters euthanize all Pit Bulls and in others many who would make wonderful additions to a home and family wait in vain for adoption.

*Pit Bull Paradox* puts the breed in historical and contemporary perspective and shows Pit Bulls in a variety of scenarios. It also examines some of the complications that people who choose to share their lives with a Pit Bull may encounter such as fear, prejudice, misunderstanding, and regulations affecting housing, insurance, and licensing.

The *Pit Bull Paradox* offers sound advice from breed experts for successful, rewarding adoptions. It emphasizes the need to consider one's lifestyle and personality, and the dog's need for daily, hard exercise, and thoughtful, consistent training and management.

True, Pit Bulls are not for everyone. Yet as Katie Dineen of the Peninsula Humane Society reminds us in the film, "There are far more Pit Bulls living happily in people's homes as average companion animals than most people ever suspect."

Latham applauds this fact and honors the many people and organizations who work to help Pit Bulls – and *all* dogs – find loving homes. Hopefully, *Pit Bull Paradox* will contribute to this effort.

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two eyes,  
one heart.  
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toward humans,  
severe shyness,  
and fearfulness  
are not  
characteristic  
of Pit Bulls and  
are undesirable in  
any dog."*

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