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Latham Letter

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PROMOTING RESPECT FOR ALL LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION

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THE GIFTED CHILD AS CHEETAH:



A Unique Animal-Assisted Literacy Program

By Lori Friesen, Ph.D.

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INSIDE

*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

Balanced perspectives on humane issues and activities

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The Latham Foundation, 1826 Clement Avenue, Alameda, California 94501

The Latham Letter

Volume XXXIV, Number 1, Winter 2013

**BALANCED PERSPECTIVES ON
HUMANE ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES**



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The Latham Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation founded in 1918 to promote respect for all life through education. The Foundation makes grants-in-kind rather than monetary grants. Latham welcomes partnerships with other institutions and individuals who share its commitment to furthering humane education.

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Using Common Sense

Hugh H. Tebault III,
Latham Foundation's
President

Since its founding in 1918, The Latham Foundation has enjoyed many successful years of promoting humane education. Latham worked diligently with other organizations and lawmakers during the 1930s and succeeded in having humane education integrated into the public school education laws. It was not a separate subject but was integral to all curricula.

The Foundation's Brother Buzz serialized stories introduced children to understanding and respect of the animal kingdom as a foundational principle that also called for respect of others. Brother Buzz was first broadcast as a popular radio program in the 1930s and 1940s. Later, the television programs of the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s resulted in tens of thousands of Brother Buzz Club members in Brother Buzz clubs across the country – each working with their own community values at the local animal shelter organization. The values those children learned about respecting others, compassion and personal responsibility were carried with them into adulthood.

One key to Latham's success was teaching humane education locally, incorporating local values and local requirements. Common sense also played a role, something we seem to have lost track of at times.

Recently our nation has witnessed horrendous violence perpetrated by sick individuals. As I write this editorial, I am concerned that rather than employ the tried and true methods of instilling kindness and morality to address an increase in violent behavior, some people are responding with an emotional reaction that defies common sense. The events in Colorado and Connecticut both occurred in 'gun free zones.' Both states have strict gun control laws. Would more laws restricting gun possession have prevented the tragedies?

To his credit, in January 2013 Governor Hickenlooper of Colorado spoke of the lessons learned and the plans to

improve his state's mental health programs: "We have to do a better job of identifying and helping people who are a threat to themselves and others. That is why we are requesting your support for a comprehensive overhaul of our state's mental health system." The media, however, did not cover the governor's comments.

Just two days after the Colorado shooting, an event occurred in San Antonio, Texas, that also did not gain national publicity – but it is instructive on what changing one variable might do. A criminal went into a movie theater to kill an ex-girlfriend. That theater was not a gun free zone, and a woman at the theater who had a legal weapon with her was able to "neutralize" that criminal without others being killed. The national media did not cover the Texas event where the criminal was caught and no one was killed.

When one uses common sense, I believe the lessons are fairly clear. When we teach humane education, the message of respect and care for animals and others, we reach everyone. The vast majority of those we reach will grow up to be very happy and productive members of our society. Our states have caring, compassionate safety net programs to help those who for whatever reason cannot operate safely, and a criminal system for the few that reject societal laws. Humane Education should be a part of it all. Humane Education is preventative, and it can be rehabilitative.

So how do we reduce the violence? I propose that we have reasonable discussions using common sense at the community level to tackle the issue of our local educational programs and safety nets. Do not give in to the tyranny of the urgent. Do not be pushed into a bad decision or an artificial time line based on emotional arguments. Realize there are no simple solutions to complex problems. Visit our website and take advantage of our free, downloadable *Latham Letters*. Read up on what programs have been successful. Consider our *Breaking the Cycles of Violence* book and video combo, or our newest film *Faith & Hope on a Farm* to see the rehabilitative side of Humane Education, and join the National Link Coalition. Finally, share the resources you find with your local educators or legislators.



UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Latham is pleased to count itself among the sponsors of the **2013 APHE National Humane Education Conference.**



April 11-12 with an additional excursion on the 13th.

Hosted by the Detroit Zoological Society



<http://aphe.wildapricot.org/events?eventId=543929&EventViewMode=EventDetails>

*Going to Animal Care Conference
in Sacramento?
February 24-26, 2013*

*Come say hello at Latham's booth and
tell us about the
important work you do.*

REMINDER:

The deadline to apply for Latham's Humane Education Business Model Challenge Grant is March 1st.

This is an opportunity to earn \$500 for your organization.

Details at www.Latham.org and page 16 of the Fall 2012 *Latham Letter*.

FOR THE BIRDS

In celebration of National Bird Day and in support of those organizations providing sanctuary or rescuing and re-homing homeless pet birds, the ASPCA issued a call for proposals to improve the welfare of birds at risk and save more lives.

They made up to \$30,000 available for this program, which had a deadline of February 15th. For results and program-related inquiries, contact:

Jacque.schultz@aspc.org



THE GIFTED CHILD AS CHEETAH:

A Unique Animal-Assisted Literacy Program



What we can learn from a gifted second grader's experience

By Lori Friesen, Ph.D.

Although it makes sense to many people how a child who struggles with or dislikes reading and writing can be inspired and empowered when reading to a dog as a non-judgmental audience, what may be less obvious is how these experiences can benefit children who are high achievers or, as they are often labeled, “gifted” children. According to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), gifted children “demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer).¹ Stephanie S. Tolan, a well-known author and highly sought after public speaker specializing in gifted children, has written extensively about gifted children’s experiences in school. She highlights the unique challenges that these children face in school through a brilliant metaphor of

the gifted child as “cheetah,” the fastest animal on earth.²

In this article, I will share one child’s experience of an animal-assisted literacy program in consideration of Abigail as a “cheetah,” and illustrate how reading and writing with a dog helped to nurture her unique brilliance in an otherwise constrictive experience of school. I will then outline five benefits of animal-assisted literacy learning experiences for high-achieving children, and five suggestions for working with gifted young children within these programs.

Gifted Children as Cheetahs?

As Stephanie Tolan explains, cheetahs are designed to run and are impressive in their speed. Even when they are not running, they stand out with their unique and distinctive markings. There is no mistaking a cheetah. However, certain needs must be met for a cheetah to run at top speed. They need to be healthy and need plenty of rest, they need wide spaces to run, and they need to be motivated to race, primarily through intense hunger. When these beautiful animals are caged in zoos, are sick, or are very young, they are not capable of running at top speeds.

Like cheetahs, gifted children have tremendous talents and may in fact find themselves in a small pool of elite IQs. They may stand out because of their unique and distinctive abilities and talents. And like cheetahs, a gifted child requires particular needs to be met if he or she is to be able to exercise their incredible gifts and reach their full potential. The problem is that too often schools become for gifted children what cages at zoos become for cheetahs. As articulated by Tolan, a classroom can become a 10x12 foot intellectual cage – a very limited space for a mind that requires room in which to stretch and develop the ability to run

at full speed. The question is, how might reading and writing with a dog offer gifted children unique and valuable social, emotional, and educational support?

Abigail as Cheetah

Abigail is a highly competent seven year old child who is incredibly easy to love. When I first met her, her large, downcast, brown eyes barely made contact with me as she peeked up under shiny dark bangs. We sat at the back of Abigail's second grade classroom on a soft blanket. A quiet giggle escaped her lips as she sneaked glances at Tango stretched out on her little dog bed between us. I worked gently, slowly, to engage her in conversation, to ask her questions about her life and to tell her more about Tango, but I found myself becoming slightly frustrated because she gave very little in return. Quiet, sweet Abigail didn't reach out to touch Tango even once during our first 20 minutes together. I learned very little about her beyond the fact that she had two older brothers and a reddish-brown and white Cockapoo named Polly. When she left her session, she waved a small good-bye, and I found myself wondering why she had even signed up to read with me and Tango. Abigail wasn't overtly excited about being with us as the other children had been. I wondered what, if anything, she had even gotten out of the interaction. I even began to question the value of what we were doing.

Little did I know then that Abigail was a gifted child. She was one of the two top readers in her class. She wrote beautifully, with compelling description for a seven-year-old child, and her mind appeared alive and filled with brilliant ideas and vivid imagination. What could she possibly get out of these sessions reading to my dog?

Later that morning, I still wondered about this. I thought deeply and felt distracted. Then, I felt a small tug on my skirt. I pulled myself out of my thoughts and looked down, and there she was. Little Abigail, like a tiny fairy with a giant secret. She looked up at me with her huge brown eyes and squealed, her hands clenched in two small fists, almost breathless: "Oh! That was so much fun today! I can't wait until next time!" And then she was gone.

Later that morning, I talked to her teacher about Abigail. I explained that I was a little confused about our interactions and wondered if she could offer any insight about this child. She beamed. "Oh, I'm so glad that you asked. Sweet Abigail! Honestly, if you could choose, you would want an entire class of children exactly like her. She is so smart, so kind, and just such a sweetheart."

This fit well with what I had learned about her so far. But the question still burned in my mind. What could a child like this possibly get from reading with a dog? Her teacher continued. "Although you wouldn't know it at first glance, Abigail lacks confidence. She follows me everywhere at recess time, like my

little shadow. She is so far above the other children intellectually that I think she has a really hard time relating to them. She puts so much pressure on herself to be perfect, and she is such an over-achiever. It is wonderful for her to finally have an experience at school where she can just relax, have fun with reading and writing, and be herself. Thank you."

Then she showed me Abigail's writing folder. When she opened it, what unfolded in front of me was a demonstration of pure love for Tango. Abigail had filled her writing folder with creative and compelling stories, songs, and letters to my little dog, with such heart-felt expression and love that reading them brought me to tears. In one of her letters, Abigail explained how much she missed her own dog while she was at school and that Tango really helped her to feel less alone. When I interviewed Abigail several weeks later, she told me how she really liked talking to animals, that it felt easier than talking to people sometimes.

Five Benefits of Animal-Assisted Literacy Programs for Gifted Children

Abigail's story offers us five key insights into how reading and writing with a dog can help to offer gifted children unique and valuable social, emotional, and educational support in the classroom.

1. Individualized Learning

Too often, curriculums in schools do not offer the motivation for gifted children to work to their full potential. They are often asked to learn the same material at much the same pace as their peers, with very little consideration for

“ Like cheetahs, gifted children have particular needs that must be met if they are to exercise their incredible gifts and reach their full potential. ”

these children's innate need and instinct to stretch their minds. Therefore, gifted children often do only enough to succeed within the guidelines set out for them. What a waste of potential!

The individual attention that children are offered during animal-assisted literacy sessions through the focused support of the adult can offer gifted children unique opportunities to read, write, and talk about books at an accelerated level. Abigail's writing folder is a clear demonstration of what gifted children are capable of when their brilliant minds are inspired.



cannot literally comprehend what they are saying, children have the feeling of being heard and being understood” (p. 51).⁴

2. Unconditional Acceptance and Companionship

When we think of children who don't fit in at school, we often think of children who are on the periphery of social relationships—they are somehow different. That usually means that they might have a different color of skin, they might struggle in a subject area, or they may be of a different ethnicity than many of their peers. But children who find themselves at the top of the academic achievement scale can also feel just as alone, as they say, because it's lonely at the top. Abigail's experience suggests that time with Tango helped her to feel less isolated in her special brilliance.

Reading and writing with dogs can be extremely valuable for children to gain a sense of comfort and companionship, the kind of companionship Abigail sought from her teacher at recess time, and the kind of comfort she drew from being with her own dog.³ As Gail Melson so eloquently writes about children's relationships with animals, “Dialogue with [animals] offer a time-out from the anxieties of human exchange ... Despite most children's acknowledgment that pets

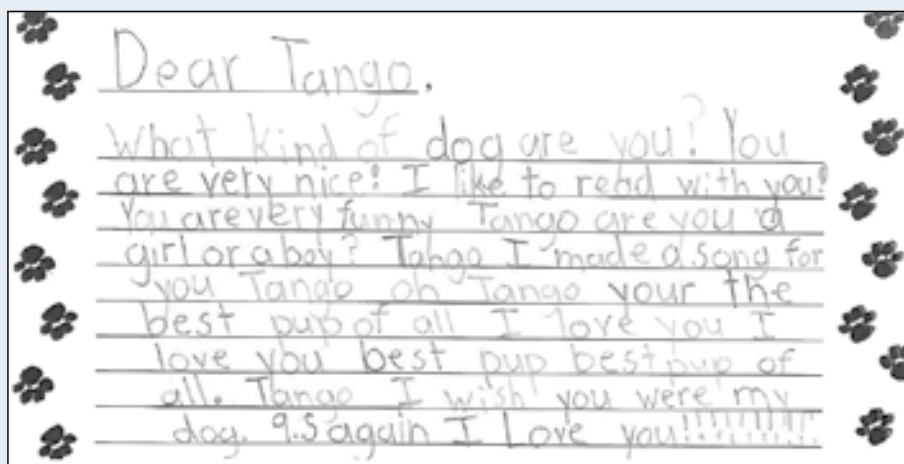
3. Relief from Perfectionism

In our success-driven society with a strong emphasis on individual achievement, reading with dogs can offer high-achievers like Abigail a valuable time-out from the complications and expectations of school and family life.⁵ Research examining gifted children indicates that they can be prone to perfectionism and therefore develop very high standards for themselves. Like Abigail, this can result in low self-confidence as they can feel that they are continually under-achieving in their self-determined goals.⁶ What Abigail sought from these animal-assisted literacy experiences was a space to be released from that pressure and to simply enjoy reading and writing. Because children understand that reading and writing with a dog carries no inherent risk and no demand to be perfect (because, quite frankly, the dog doesn't care if she makes a mistake), gifted children can be at least temporarily released from this expectation.

4. Motivation for Meaningful Learning and Advocacy

Gifted children are motivated to learn and to stretch their minds when they are inspired by meaning and purpose. As was illustrated by Abigail's beautiful stories, letters, songs, and poems to Tango, a child's genuine interest in a topic (such as learning about dogs) can inspire long term intrinsic motivation to learn.⁷ Further, many gifted children have increased capacities for empathy and compassion. Encouraging these children to research (under supervision, of course), how they might help animals in their own communities or neighborhoods

“ Gifted children can be temporarily released from the expectation to be perfect because they understand that reading and writing with a dog carries no inherent risk. ”



can inspire creative problem solving and making a real difference in the world. For numerous ideas and stories about how children are becoming advocates for animals, check out the *MISSION: HUMANE Action Guide*, published by the Humane Society of the United States.⁸

5. Increased Communication & Risk-Taking

Although Abigail is a child who is incredibly gifted in the areas of reading and writing, she was quite shy with me in the beginning and difficult to engage in conversation during the first several weeks that we worked together. Literacy educators have long been aware of how the environment in which a child learns greatly affects how much learning can take place.⁹ In short, children need to feel safe to be able to take risks in learning.¹⁰ And the beautiful thing about a dog is that this is their natural specialty. Children perceive dogs as non-judgmental friends in the classroom; dogs can encourage positive communication between students and can calm children through their modeling of acceptance, affection, and trust.¹¹ Dogs encourage children to be more open, inspire more social contact and interaction, and help to create a shift in the atmosphere that is characterized by warmth and acceptance.¹²

For a gifted child like Abigail who was slow to open up and engage in conversation during our first three sessions, I observed a clear desire to communicate with me over the ten weeks as we worked together. Her motivation to learn more about Tango inspired many in-depth conversations about what Tango liked and didn't like, what she ate, what her favorite treats were, how she felt about my other dog Sparky, where she slept at night, and what she thought about coming to school (among many other topics) and were woven into her many writing projects focused on Tango. Abigail's interest in and love for Tango resulted in increased communication and risk-taking for this young gifted child.

Five Suggestions for Working with Young Children in Animal-Assisted Literacy Programs:

1. Understand Each Child's Unique Gifts: Learn about specifically how this child is gifted by talking to their teacher or to their parents. Gifted children are individuals, just like other children. Being "gifted" in one area (such as mathematics, creativity, visual and performing arts, or leadership) does not mean

that this child is also gifted in other areas such as reading or writing. Ask to see examples of the child's work, if possible, that show what this child's special abilities are so you can better understand and nurture them during your time together.

2. Create an Atmosphere of Safety:

Gifted children need to feel comfortable in this space. As we've already discussed, many gifted children feel like they don't fit in with their peers and have great difficulty developing fulfilling friendships with children who are their own age. Therefore, it's important not to emphasize the child's giftedness (unless he or she brings it up and wants to talk about it). Remember, the dog has accepted this child just as he or she is and does not care what unique abilities or challenges they have.

3. Consider Creative & Purposeful Learning Opportunities:

Think beyond reading, and offer learning opportunities that will allow this child to stretch his or her abilities within this safe and accepting space. For example, engage children in meaningful discussion, research, and reading and writing activities on topics such as learning how to properly meet a new dog or learning about the unique needs of dogs. Then, you can work with the child to design a poster highlighting what they have learned to present to their classmates or to display in the school library. Individualized, purposeful activities such as this may appeal to a gifted child's heightened sense of right and wrong while also offering them the challenge they need.

4. Let the Child Lead: Because the school curriculum often results in a gifted child feeling "caged," this space

allows for a wonderful opportunity to ask the child, “What would you like to learn about, read with us, or write with us about today?” This flexibility and sense of spontaneity will not only offer the gifted child a welcome break in an otherwise regimented school day, but will also offer them an opportunity to exercise their intellect and superior creative thinking skills.

5. Take Pleasure in Playfulness: Allow yourself to relax into an atmosphere of playfulness, imagination, and fun. As previously mentioned, many gifted children feel pressure to be perfect and set unrealistically high standards for themselves, and in the process, may have a very hard time just letting go and being kids. A dog’s natural goofiness and playfulness can invite numerous opportunities for laughter and fun (as can the many hilarious children’s books and joke books written about dogs and other animals). When the dog nuzzles under the child’s arm, when he places his head in her lap, or when he wags his tail with his butt up in the air as he tries to get the child to play with him, don’t be so quick to correct this behavior. Sometimes, a little bit of play can go a long way towards a deepened relationship and an overall sense of well-being for everyone in the group.¹³

ENDNOTES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lori Friesen completed her Ph.D. in Education at the University of Alberta. She was awarded a SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) Doctoral Fellowship, the Isaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship, the University of Alberta Doctoral Prize of Distinction, and the University of Alberta Ph.D. Recruitment Scholarship for her doctoral research which explored how one class of grade 2 children experienced an animal-assisted literacy program.

Her doctoral research has been published in various peer-reviewed journals, including *Early Childhood Education* (2009), *Learning Landscapes* (2009), *Language & Literacy* (2010), *Childhood Education International* (2010; 2012), and most recently in *The International Journal of Learning* (2012).

Lori is represented by Dreisbach Literary Management and is currently writing a book titled *How Your Dog Can Help Your Child Read, Lead, and Succeed*. This book is designed to teach parents, volunteers, and educators how they can help children become stronger readers and writers, gain more confidence, and enjoy better relationships through focused interactions with dogs.

Lori lives and writes in San Diego, California. To contact Lori and to learn more about her work, visit her website at www.lorifriesen.com.

Learners' Grades Improve by 20% and School Principal Gives the Credit to Humane Education

Mr. Joseph Sitzer, Deputy Chief Education Specialist (Life Skills and Life Orientation) at the Western Cape Education Department, receives a complimentary copy of the learners' book, *Earth Keepers*.



In mid-2012, the principal of Golden Grove Primary school in Cape Town, South Africa, gave The Humane Education Trust an opportunity to bring humane education to a class of 7th Graders. Part of the program was to make authors and illustrators of the entire class by compiling and publishing their own book on animal issues, entitled *Earth Keepers*.

After two terms of humane education, this is what Principal Tony Austen said:

"In the time that our learners in Grade 7 received humane education, their grades for Life Orientation improved by a full 20%."

"It became apparent that humane education strongly improved their ability to express themselves, to read, write, and discuss issues intelligently and to think creatively."

"What humane education achieved for these learners is remarkable."

"The Golden Grove learners are truly honored to have the opportunity to interact and engage with Humane Education."

Latham congratulates and applauds the efforts of all concerned.

For more information visit www.animal-voice.org and www.humane-education.org.za



"You may think you have the best shelter in the world, but if you don't have Humane Education, you don't have anything."

Mike Arms, President
Helen Woodward Animal Center

Benefits of the Human-Animal Bond Demonstrated in Newtown, Connecticut

By Laura Carlson



Grace, my appropriately-named dog, and I returned very late on Sunday night from Newtown, Conn., where we ministered to the grieving families of Sandy Hook children, teachers and staff. Many of you have asked me to share what we witnessed there, so I thought I would write it down and share with all of you. Two things I know for sure: the human-animal bond is deeper and more

powerful than even I had imagined, and being at Sandy Hook Elementary School changed me forever.

We spent Saturday at Edmond Town Hall, where counseling sessions and a stuffed animal give-away were taking

place. Grace was at her best, doing what she does best: giving unconditional love and letting children (and adults) reach out and pull her into warm, but often very shaky embraces. And if people didn't come to her, she went to them and put paws up on laps and shoulders – doing anything to make a connection. I watched as she took people in with her soft brown eyes and accepted whatever they had to share – even if it was just to

let their tears fall on her little head.

We met one very, very small girl with bruised-looking eyes, who wasn't able to speak at all. She looked exhausted, scared and completely overwhelmed by the towering piles of stuffed animals at the give-away. As she walked towards us, she suddenly pulled away from her mom, knelt down in front of us, reached out to Grace, held her very close and looked into her eyes. And then, slowly, deliberately, and with great tenderness, she kissed Grace on the head about 12 times. And then she smiled – first at Grace, then up at me and her mom. And then she kissed Grace again.

Her mom told me that was the first time she's seen her daughter smile since sending her off to school on Friday, December 14th.

On Sunday, near the school and the memorial sites, we continued to meet folks who just needed to share a few





minutes with a gentle dog. Along with kids and parents, we visited with lots of police officers, firefighters and other first responders. One really big, tough-looking cop, who wiped away tears when he held Grace for the first

time, kept coming back to visit with her over and over again - and every time he did, he brought different fellow officers and first responders with him, saying "take off your gloves and just pet this dog..."... If they hesitated, Grace stood on her hind legs and put her paws and head on their chests ... just absorbing their immense sadness until they caved in, smiled and cried, and gave her a hug. I've never seen anything like it.



Laura Carlson is the founder and director of Tails to Teach, a Rhode-Island-based nonprofit dedicated to providing humane and animal-assisted education in Rhode Island's under-served urban schools. You can read more about her program in the Summer, 2012 *Latham Letter* and at www.tailstoteach.org. Laura is also a Certified Animal Safety Representative™ for the American Humane Association's Film and Television Unit.



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Introduce a friend to the latest news and activities in the world of animal welfare and humane education.

Bulk issues are also available for conferences and speaking engagements. Call 510-521-0920 or email info@latham.org with your request.



Sample *Latham Letters* Available

Contact us if you would like sample issues for a library, colleague, or friend and help spread the word about issues and activities in humane education.

Porky Pets

Overweight animals have a new place to go to shed pounds. The new Tufts Obesity Clinic for Animals in North Grafton, Mass., is one of the country's first weight-loss centers for obese pets. Besides helping pets lose weight, the clinic researches treatment methods and teaches pet owners and veterinary professionals about animal obesity. "Obesity is a serious problem with companion animals and, as with people, can contribute to other health problems such as diabetes, respiratory disease and joint disease," says clinic director Deborah Linder.

— *Katherine Borgerding for the aarp.org/bulletin November 2012*

Alberta SPCA Study Confirms Animals Become Pawns in Domestic Violence Situations

Victims delayed leaving and were controlled by threats to animals



The Alberta SPCA has released a landmark research report, *Inside the Cruelty Connection: The Role of Animals in Decision-Making by Domestic Violence Victims in Rural Alberta*. The study by Drs. Donna Crawford and Veronika Bohac Clarke documents a year-long survey of 296 women residing in five rural and suburban women's shelters in the Canadian province.

The 116-page study addressed three main concerns: (1) how ownership of companion or livestock animals affects the decision-making of domestic violence victims; (2) how children are impacted by animal abuse; and (3) what steps can be taken to address the animal abuse/domestic violence links.

One of the study's key findings is that more than half of abused women who have animals reported that they delayed leaving because of their animals.



"As the provincial humane society, the Alberta SPCA has a unique perspective of the multi-faceted relationships between people and animals in all areas of Alberta. This project harkens back to the birth of the humane movement in the province, when in 1904 Louise McKinney encouraged humane education and formation of humane societies as a way to counteract domestic violence. We are proud to continue in that tradition," said Tim Battle, Director of Education.

To address this situation, the Alberta SPCA has formed a multi-disciplinary group to examine the obstacles and gaps in service, and to suggest solutions that won't add to the burden of organizations currently helping both human and animal victims of domestic violence. The Alberta Alliance for the Safety of Animals and People (AASAP) is comprised of professionals from the law enforcement, social services, veterinary, health, animal welfare, legal education and other communities.

Other findings include:

- 36% of abused women with animals reported that their abuser threatened or harmed their animals.
- 85% of the threats against animals were carried out.
- In cases that involved children as well as threatened animals, 85% of women reported that the children witnessed the threat or harm to the animal
- In half of those cases, it was the child's own pet.
- 27% of abused women with animals were afraid to seek help out of concern for their animals.

The report can be accessed at www.albertaspca.org/cruelty (<http://albertaspca.org/neglect-abuse/cruelty-connection/resources.html>).

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RedRover Relief Program Helps Animals – and Women – in Crisis



By Esperanza Zuniga

“There are so many victims in abusive relationships who don’t leave home because they have nowhere for their pets to go,” said Diedra Davis of the Resource and Crisis Center of Galveston County, Inc. in Texas. “To know that their pets are in a safe place is such a relief. RedRover’s help is potentially lifesaving.”

Last July, a domestic violence shelter in California encountered a situation that was too big to handle: two horses belonging to a woman escaping an abusive living environment. Although the shelter was equipped to house cats, dogs and small animals on site, it lacked the facilities to accommodate horses owned by people seeking refuge.

But turning away the woman and her children – all of whom would benefit from being able to keep their beloved pets, regardless of size – was not an option for this shelter.

Shelter staffer Lori was referred to RedRover, a national animal welfare nonprofit, by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV). Upon receiving Lori’s inquiry, RedRover issued a \$500 grant, enough to cover the horses’ boarding for one month at a local rescue.

This case is just one example of many, which is why RedRover has initiated programs to bring direct relief to victims of domestic violence and their pets.

According to the NCADV, more than 70 percent of pet-owning women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their batterer had injured, killed or threatened family pets for revenge or psychological control. As many as 48 percent of domestic violence victims are unable to escape their abusers because they fear what will happen to their pets when they leave.

Because so few shelters have the ability to accommodate pets, victims often feel like they only have two options when it comes to their animals: to leave them behind or to remain with their pets and endure continued abuse.

While the need to include pets in domestic violence services is strong, only a fraction of the 2,500 shelters in the United States report having the ability to house animals on site, according to Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T), a national initiative that guides family violence shelters on how to welcome families with their pets.

RedRover offers two grant programs to address this issue:

- **Safe Escape grants** offer timely financial support to enable victims and their pets to leave abusive homes. Grants, up to \$500, are available on a case-by-case basis throughout the United States and may be used to pay for emergency boarding and veterinary care. For safety reasons, applications must be submitted online by a case worker or domestic violence shelter representative.
- **Safe Housing grants** enable shelters to create space so that pets can be housed on site. Grants, up to \$3,000, are offered on a one-time basis throughout the United States. RedRover partners with SAF-T to help shelters implement the program.

In 2012, RedRover attended the NCADV conference and partnered with organizations like SAF-T and the National Link Coalition to raise awareness about the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty.



Safe Escape grants: Providing peace of mind

Due to increased awareness, RedRover experienced a significant increase in the number of incoming applications for the Safe Escape grant program last year. They received 61 applications for domestic violence victims seeking to escape abuse with their pets in 2012 compared to 27 in 2011. Fifty-five animals were sheltered through the Safe Escape program in 2012, bringing the total nights of pet sheltering provided through the program to 1,500.

In one case, RedRover awarded a \$300 grant to a woman seeking a protective order against her husband, who had threatened to drive her cats into the woods and abandon them. Another applicant finally found the courage to leave her abusive husband, but said she would sleep in her car before she gave up her 12-year-old pug.

A grant recipient wrote to RedRover, "My dog is everything to me; she is all I have left in my life. She is my baby ... You are a wonderful organization to help people in need, at a rough time in their life. You were God sent to me I feel. I can't express my thanks enough. Thank you again."

Safe Housing grants: Keeping families together

In 2012, RedRover distributed a total of \$10,000 in grants to six domestic violence shelters through their newly created Safe Housing grant program. Funds will be used to help the shelters create space to house pets on site with their families, a much-needed solution for families facing domestic abuse.

The following shelters received grant awards in December 2012:

- Alle-Kiski Area Hope Center, Inc. in Tarentum, Pa.
- Blue Water Safe Horizons in Port Huron, Mich.
- Colorado River Regional Crisis Shelter in Parker, Ariz.
- Metropolitan Center for Women and Children, Inc. in Jefferson, La.
- Safe Harbor of Northeast Kentucky, in Ashland, Ky.
- Shelter House, Inc. in Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

"By supporting shelters with the start-up costs needed to provide on-site pet accommodations, we are creating a more sustainable model so pets can reach safety with their families and provide emotional support for years to come," said Nicole Forsyth, RedRover President and CEO. "RedRover's Safe Housing grants make it possible for victims to receive lifesaving sheltering services, reassured that their pets are protected."

According to grant recipient Deniese Perez, Executive Director of the Colorado River Regional Crisis Shelter, "We frequently have women who are reluctant or refuse to leave unless they can take their pets with them call or come to us for shelter. Pets are an important part of their support systems and families; they just need an appropriate place at our shelter. This grant will mean so much to the families we shelter."



RedRover is partnering with SAF-T to work toward the goal of having at least one pet-friendly domestic violence shelter in each state by 2015. Approximately six to eight grants are available in 2013. Applications are due on May 15 and October 30. Learn more about eligibility requirements at www.redrover.org/domestic.

RESOURCES

RedRover provides additional information and direct links to resources at www.redrover.org/dvresources. Find domestic violence programs offering both off-site and on-site sheltering for victims and their pets:

Ahimsa House: Safe Havens Directory
[www.ahimsahouse.org/directory]
(off-site housing for pets)

Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)[™]:

Directory of Participating Shelters
[www.animalsandfamilies.org/shelters]
(on-site housing for pets)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
[www.thehotline.org]

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [www.ncadv.org]

National Link Coalition
[www.nationallinkcoalition.org]

A Not-so-Positive Benefit of the Human-Animal Bond

Brazil inmates train cat for prison break

A cat trained by prisoners to deliver cell phones and tools to dig tunnels was caught at a jail in northeastern Brazil after sneaking in with forbidden items strapped to its body.

According to news in Brazil, a cat trained by prisoners to deliver cell phones and tools to dig tunnels was caught at a jail in northeastern Brazil after sneaking in with forbidden items strapped to its body.

The cat had often been seen coming in and out of the Alagoas jail but a guard took a closer look when something about it seemed wrong. He found a bag tied to the animal's body filled with saw blades and drill parts for concrete drilling and digging tunnels, along with a cell phone complete with battery and charger.

In what must surely be one of law enforcement's most unique understatements, the prison agent is reported to have said, "We were very surprised by this new tactic."



Hello my name is Piko and I live at...

MSNBC reports that a pet parakeet was returned to its owner after the lost bird told police its home address.

According to AFP, the male bird – named Piko – had flown the coop, escaping from its owner's home in the city of Sagamihara, west of Tokyo. It was discovered by a guest at a nearby hotel and handed over to the police. Then, AFP reports that Piko suddenly began to talk – repeating his full address to amazed police officers.

Piko's 64-year-old owner said that she jumped for joy when she heard the news that her bird had been found. She added that she had trained Piko to repeat her address and phone number after losing another bird a few years ago.



Hartsdale Pet Cemetery Becomes First Animal Burial Ground Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

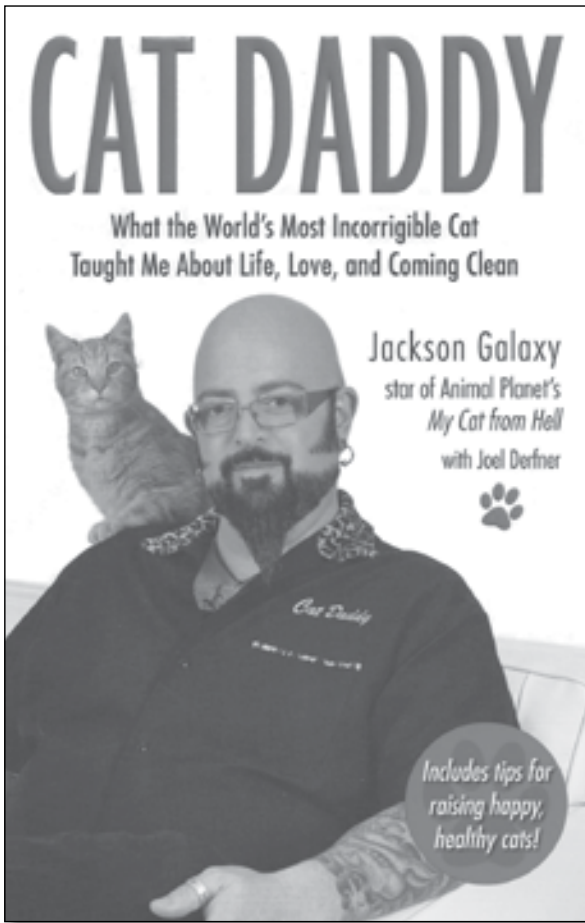
Historian Mary Thurston reports that in recognition of the social history and landscape architecture of Hartsdale Pet Cemetery, the National Park Service has listed America's oldest continuously operated animal burial ground in its National Register of Historic Places.

Also known as the "Peaceable Kingdom," Hartsdale is the first pet cemetery to be listed in the National Register. It is located about 30 miles north of Manhattan.

Since 1896, Hartsdale Pet Cemetery has been the final resting place for pets of every description, including all manner of dogs and cats as well as a number of more exotic pets, including a lion who lived at the Plaza Hotel.

The Cemetery hosts annual public events including pet adoptions, a Blessing of the Animals ceremony, historical walking tours, national Pet Memorial Day, a War Dog Memorial ceremony and a holiday tree lighting ceremony that includes a food donation to the local animal shelters and pet rescue groups.





Galaxy provides insight into the feline psyche. His writing is upbeat, amusing and informational. Following his advice will certainly help those who have chosen to share their lives with cats to enjoy them for who they are and not be frustrated for who they are not.

I think *Cat Daddy* belongs on the book shelf of every home owned by a cat where the resident humans can refer to it often.

Author and cat behaviorist Jackson Galaxy stars in

Animal Planet's *My Cat from Hell*, a reality television program in which he visits homes of cat owners to resolve conflicts either between the human owners and their cats or between multiple animals. He also works closely with animal shelters and rescue organizations, teaching his Cat Mojo lecture series to volunteers, staff and adopters, and helping with both behavioral and environmental enrichment programs for their feline residents.

Cat Daddy: What the World's Most Incurrigible Cat Taught Me about Life, Love and Coming Clean

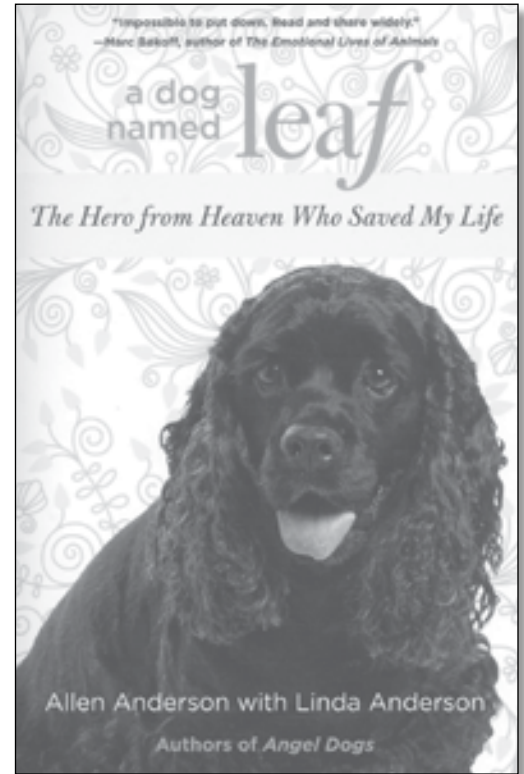
ISBN 978-1-58542-937-0
Tarcher/Penguin
www.tarcherbooks.com

By Jackson Galaxy

Reviewed by Stacy Baar

Cat Daddy is not your usual cat training book. It is the author's story of how he (rather reluctantly) found his calling and discovered his gift of understanding the uncanny nature of cats. Jackson Galaxy's ability to communicate with the world of felines changed his life as well as the lives of many cats and their humans.

Cat Daddy is filled with non-nonsense practical ways to solve feline behavioral issues which often result in attitude changes on the part of the family members involved in the situation. Galaxy seems to possess the innate ability to view the world from a cat's perspective and he translates the language of "cat" so the rest of us can learn to live in harmony with our feline best friends.



A Dog Named Leaf: The Hero from Heaven Who Saved My Life

By Allen and Linda Anderson

In 2006 Allen and Linda Anderson adopted a rescued cocker spaniel from an animal shelter. Seven months later, "Leaf" was turning the couple's home into a war zone and they were regretting their impulsive choice. At the same time, Allen, who had spent eight years as an active duty police officer and had survived many close calls, received a call that made him think his luck had finally run out. Allen had an unruptured brain aneurysm that would be fatal if not operated on immediately. And the surgery itself might be fatal, or very debilitating. Having seen his father live for years with the effects of a massive stroke, Allen was thrown into a panic that the worst fate might not be death. What Allen didn't know is that what would save him was another miracle: the miracle of a certain dog entering

the life of a certain man at exactly the right time.

“Although my wife Linda called me ‘Miracle Man,’ because I’d survived so many close calls while doing police work,” Anderson says, “with this diagnosis I thought my luck had finally run out. I could die suddenly or be debilitated like my father who suffered for years after a massive stroke. I had no clue our troubled new rescue dog would hold the key to my survival in a profound spiritual experience we shared. Hopefully our story will make people more aware of the blessings animals deliver every day with their unconditional love and ability to heal human hearts.”

New York Times best-selling author Gwen Cooper says, “A Dog Named Leaf is a remarkable story. It will reaffirm your faith in the unique and mutually healing bond that can form between humans and animals.”

In 1996, Allen Anderson and his wife Linda Anderson founded the Angel Animals Network. Their fourteen books about the spiritual qualities of animals have been featured on Oprah.com, the *Today Show*, ABC’s *Nightly News*, *BBC Radio*, *Washington Post*, *LA Times*, *Amazon.com’s Hot 100*, and *B&N’s Top 10*. They live in Minneapolis with their dog Leaf, cat Cuddles, and cockatiel Sunshine. The Andersons donate a portion of their books’ proceeds to animal welfare.

A Dog Named Leaf: The Hero from Heaven Who Saved My Life

By Allen and Linda Anderson
 Lyons Press, an imprint of
 Globe Pequot Press
 ISBN: 978-0-7627-8165-2
 \$16.95
 Paperback



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Sue Sternberg’s Dog Park Assistant App for iPhone

Whether or not to visit dog parks is controversial. If you do, you owe it to your dog(s) to be prepared and there’s no better way to be prepared than with this brand new mobile app that you can take to the dog park with you.

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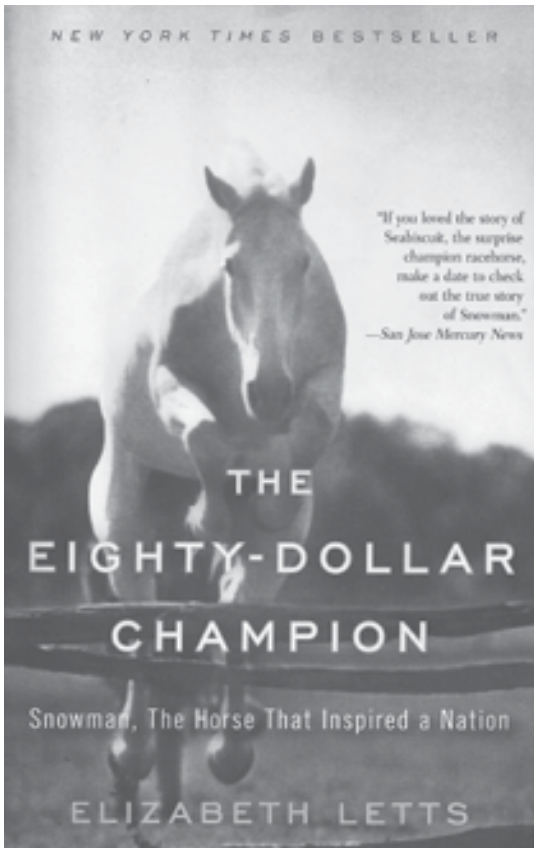
- Extensive video library of dog behaviors including aggression and play
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Available on the App Store
 For more information: DogParkApp@gmail.com or visit
www.GreatDogProductions.com

— Interesting Resource —

For information on sustainable seafood and related topics:

<http://www.fishwatch.gov/index.htm>



The Eighty-Dollar Champion Snowman, The Horse That Inspired a Nation

By Elizabeth Letts

Reviewed by Judy Johns

This book caught my eye in the airport, in the “read and return” section to be exact. It’s a good concept: buy the book, read it, and return it to the same bookstore where you’ll get half your money back. I’ve done this several times when I didn’t want to wait for a copy of a best seller in the library.

When I picked up “Snowman,” I had every intention of returning it but I loved story so much, I couldn’t just put it back on the shelf. I passed it along to a dear friend who, as much as anyone I’ve ever known, understands how powerful the

connection between a horse and his human companion can be.

Here’s what the author says about her decision to tell Snowman’s and Harry de Leyer’s story.

“A writer is always on the lookout for a good story, but the first time I saw a striking old photograph, I didn’t realize that I had stumbled across a tale so extraordinary that it had the power to change lives.

“The old black and white photo showed a horse and rider team in the midst of a crazy feat – jumping right over the back of another horse. What stopped me in my tracks was the expression on the jumping horse’s face. Even in the vintage picture I could see that the horse had absolute trust in the man who

was asking him to make such a tricky leap. I wondered why.

“Unable to forget the photograph, armed only with the rider’s name, I tracked down an address, not sure if I would find him there, or even if he was still alive. Just a few days after I mailed him a letter, my telephone rang and a voice on the other end said, “Hallo, this is Harry de Leyer.” The man in the photograph, now in his eighties, was on the phone. The first time we spoke, Harry told me a story that gave me butterflies in my stomach and made my palms sweat – that’s how badly I wanted to write about what he’d said to me and share it with the world.”

I’m so glad she did.

Harry de Leyer first saw the horse he would name Snowman on a truck bound for the slaughterhouse. He saw a spark in the eye of the beaten-up nag and bought him for eighty dollars. When it became clear how much Snowman loved to jump, the unlikely duo rose to stardom

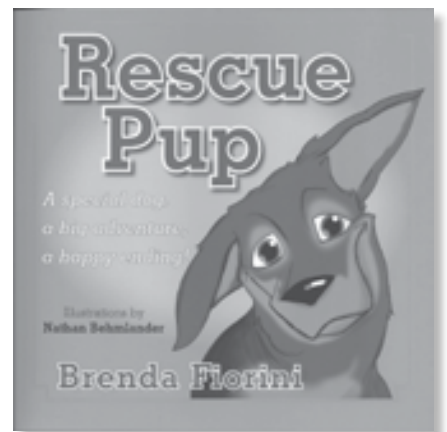
in the rarified sport of show jumping, capturing the hearts of everyone, rich and poor, in Cold War-era America.

Gwen Cooper, author of *Homer’s Odyssey*, says, “This is a wonderful book – joyous, heartfelt, and an eloquent reminder that hope can be found in the unlikely of places. Most of all, it’s a moving testament to the incredible things that can grow from the bond between animals and humans.”

\$16.00

Ballantine Books

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Told as an easy-to-listen-to, easy-to-read poem, *Rescue Pup* is sure to delight while it encourages responsibility, friendship, and love. Author Brenda Fiorini honors Buddy in this adventure story with a happy ending.

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By Brenda Fiorini with

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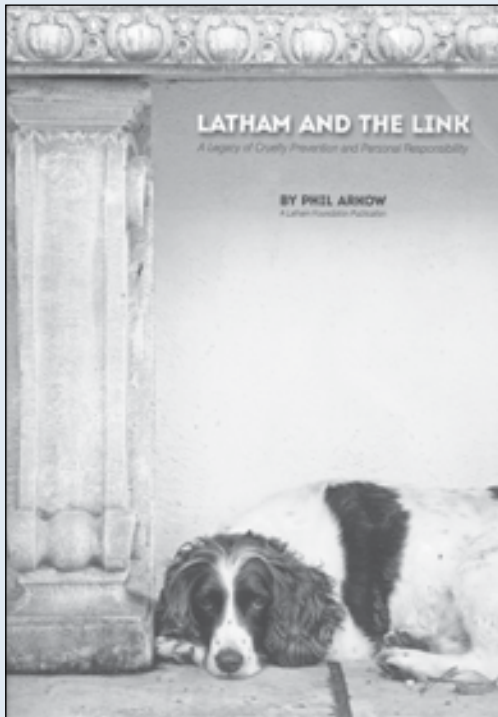
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BISAC: Social Science/Violence in Society



FAITH AND HOPE ON A FARM



See a clip at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaR6ds_2ops&feature=youtu.be

Do you want a reminder of why we teach compassion, empathy, and respect to help break the cycle of abuse? Are you looking for inspiration?

Look no further than ***Faith and Hope on a Farm***.

This 15-minute DVD highlights **Forget Me Not Farm** on the grounds of Sonoma Humane Society in Santa Rosa, California, where at-risk children and animals bond and heal. At this safe haven, children learn gentle touch and respect for both other humans and animals through animal-assisted and horticultural activities.

The film features Faith, a formerly-abused child who was adopted by wonderful parents. You'll see her blossom, and you'll be reminded that where there's life, there's hope.

This is the first in a new series of films that will examine a variety of animal-assisted therapy programs across the USA – programs in which children help animals, and in turn, animals help children.

Order at www.Latham.org



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snow dogs wear
collars and ID*

Photo courtesy of Janice Mininberg



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