

Pawed friends help young readers

Gentle, patient canines are the stars of Dallas Library's Read to the Dog program

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Davos, the Bernese mountain dog, was in for a treat June 3 at the Dallas Public Library.

One of three dogs in the library's Read to the Dog program, that afternoon he was more than just a patient listener, but the audience for a spontaneous puppet show.

After reading to Davos, Kyra Weeks, friend Maria Mabry, and Kyra's younger sister, Cierra, wanted to spend more time with the gentle giant. They put on a show using all the puppets in the children's section of the library in their impromptu production.

Davos, panting happily the entire time, and his owner, Jean Nielson, watched until it was time for the trio to check out their books.

"I love the program because some kids who are intimidated by reading in front of an adult don't mind reading to a dog," Nielson said. "I love it when they show him the pictures. It cracks me up — it's so sweet."

A therapy dog, at times Davos does more than just listen. An intimidating sight at 122 pounds and a face the size of a platter, small children can be nervous around him. Davos knows just the trick to calm those fears.

"I think he senses when they are not comfortable, so he will slowly go into a down — he will lay down — so they are not so intimidated," Nielson said.

Before long, children realize he is just a big, fluffy teddy bear. They treat him as such when they read to him.

"Sometimes he doesn't act like he is paying attention, but he will lay and he will sprawl and he loves to have the kids come up and cuddle him," Nielson said.

Davos seems to have been born for that type of interaction, whether it be with children learning to read or



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Davos listens as Kyra Weeks reads a story on June 3 at Dallas Public Library. The Bernese mountain dog is one of three dogs in the library's "Read to the Dog" program.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Kadence Morrison, center, reads a book to Davos on June 3 as his owner, Jean Nielson, left, looks on.

adults in nursing homes or care facilities.

"When he was a puppy, we took him to the beach, and instead of playing with the other dogs, he would walk up to people," Nielson explained. "He would sit down and look up and wait for them to pet him."

When Davos was about 2 years old, he was trained through Paws for Love to become a certified therapy dog and has been winning

hearts since.

Wednesday he had to wait about 15 minutes for someone who wanted to read to show up with a book, but, as always, Davos was ready.

"Are you going to listen?" Nielson said to Davos as third-grader Kadence Morrison approached.

When she began reading Davos would simply watch, still panting, or look at the pictures she would show him.

Next in line was Kyra. She typically visits the library on Tuesday afternoon, so it was a special treat to read to him. She chose "10 Rubber Duckies" for her first book, then picked out "Draw Me a Star" for her second.

"I like that I got to read to him," she said. "It feels special to me."

Betty Simpson, the librarian in charge of children's activities, said Davos has endeared himself to the library users and staff.

"He sits on your feet if he likes you," she said, smiling.

Two other dogs, Percy, a Great Pyrenees, and Bella, a spaniel, are also part of the program.

They all have fans among the youngsters.

"They come for certain dogs," Simpson said. "They have their favorites."

Simpson said adults want to help kids sound out words, but dogs allow them to read at their own pace.

"The dogs just sit there and listen," she said.

ACADEMIC HONORS

Local students graduate from LBCC

ALBANY — The 47th annual Linn-Benton Community College Commencement Ceremony will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Linn County Fair and Expo Center in the Willamette Event Center in Albany.

LBCC will award 1,065 degrees and certificates to 824 students this year.

In addition, approximately 25 students completed LBCC's General Educational Development program and will receive their certificates at commencement.

The following local students will receive degrees:

Dallas: Jason L. Bayne, associate of applied science water, environment and technology; Robert J. Boatman, associate of applied science drafting engineering graphics tech; George P. Evans, associate of arts Oregon transfer; Felicia L. McConnell, associate of science business administration emphasis; Jordan Stan, certificate — one-year dental assistant; Hannah J. Swan, associate of applied science medical assistant; and Lynne M. Wiensz, associate of general studies.

Independence: Nuria Bloom, certificate — one-year medical office specialist; John P. Tessier, associate of applied science heavy equipment/diesel tech; and Kayla R. Vandervelden, certificate — one-year medical office specialist.

Monmouth: Todd D. Caudill, associate of applied science machine tool technology.

Dallas Lions award scholarship to BYU

DALLAS — Hannah Johnson was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship from the Dallas Lions Club.

Hannah will attend Brigham Young University in the fall to pursue a degree in nutrition and food services.

Dallas students graduate from OIT

KLAMATH FALLS — Three Dallas residents graduate in June from Oregon Institute of Technology.

Robyn Cole will graduate with a degree in diagnostic medical sonography; Cassandra Nicole Breedon will graduate in dental hygiene; and Kara Randall will graduate with a degree in diagnostic medical sonography.

Roth named outstanding graduate

MONMOUTH — Kylie Roth of Dallas received the Julia McCulloch Smith Award for Outstanding Graduating Woman for 2015 from Western Oregon University. She will speak at commencement at 11 a.m. on Saturday.

Local students awarded GFU degrees

NEWBERG — George Fox University awarded more than 700 degrees during commencement ceremonies May 1-2. In total, eight Polk County students received their degree.

The following local students received their degrees during the ceremony.

Dallas: Hilary Broadus, bachelor of science in nursing; Joanna Crawford, master of arts in school counseling; Anna Spence, bachelor of science in nursing; Victoria Wilson, bachelor of arts in management.

Independence: Julie Hedrick, bachelor of science in elementary education.

Monmouth: Katherine Bryant, master of arts in teaching; Christopher Parks, bachelor of arts in history and politics; Katherine Vanlandingham, bachelor of arts in journalism.

Central grad earns degree from Wooster

WOOSTER, Ohio — Bjorn Olsen, a graduate of Central High School, received a Bachelor of Arts degree from The College of Wooster during commencement exercises on May 11.

A studio art major who graduated cum laude, Olsen is a resident of Monmouth.



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