

Students get Ready for Dog Days of Summer and Reading



Arthur D. Healey School students are getting ready for their Summer reading, and excited to share their personalized bookmarks—courtesy of Therapy Dog Team and Reading Partner volunteers Linda and her West Highland Terrier, Posy. Healey Educator Alison Bougas was delighted to have Linda and Posy visit her classroom throughout this school year, working with students in becoming eager, joyful and confident readers. “Our Therapy Dog Team, Linda and Posy are amazing,” says Bougas. “Linda is incredibly professional and great with the students. Their being in our room this year helped several students be more calm and content.”

Asked if they'd like return visits next school year, Bougas says she'd be thrilled for them to continue, “especially since we loop students (keeping same teacher and classmates), and both Posy and Linda have built such strong relationships with the students.”

For therapy dog volunteer Linda Magram, the experience was equally rewarding. “My time with 3rd grade students and teachers at Healey School has been wonderful,” Magram says. “What an incredible group of children—funny, curious, clever, wise, loving and appreciative. It has been an absolute joy getting to know them and an honor to spend time with them every week. I have enjoyed every aspect of this experience—from our initial meeting to the first time I signed in at the Healey School office, all the way to today when Posy and I got to hear several students’ playground presentations—very impressive. [Teacher] Allison Bougas has been terrific — it is quite obvious what a gifted teacher she is. I enjoyed spending time in her classroom, and volunteering in teachers’ Julia Hermann and Ben Garton’s classrooms. The Healey School is a special community, and we felt that from the moment we arrived.”

Linda and Posy are on board for returning to the Healey School next year to work with the same students.

Somerville Public Schools welcomes trained and certified therapy dogs to serve in classrooms and with school counselors once a week or bi-monthly. This school year 13 volunteer therapy dog teams served regularly with Somerville Public Schools. Most SPS teams are trained and certified through Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dogs of Massachusetts (Dogs Building Opportunities for Nurturing and Emotional Support), a statewide organization providing intensive therapy dog team training workshops for qualified teams.

For more information about volunteering—with or without a therapy animal in Somerville—visit www.somerville.k12.ma.us/volunteer or call 617-629-5475.

