

# Notre Dame Academy has gone to the dogs ... and cats

BY PAULA DEANGELIS-STEIN

As a parent, how many times have you heard your child say, “I hate reading out loud?” I bet just about as many times as you’ve heard, “Can we get a dog?”

Who would have thought an animal would be a perfect solution to help a child read out-loud? The SPCA, that’s who.

It is on the SPCA Serving Erie County Paws for Love Facebook page, where you will find interesting information about reading programs, and visitations they make. Volunteers bring their dogs and cats to facilities in Western New York such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities, courts, group homes, Hospice locations, children’s facilities, the Buffalo Niagara International Airport, colleges, elementary schools and even funeral parlors. The simple act of petting an animal reduces stress levels. Animals don’t judge. They just want to be petted. Paws for Love is a community service offered by the SPCA and is a completely volunteer run program with over 500 teams that conduct visits all over WNY.

The animals in the Paws for Love program are the handler’s personal pets, and they are assessed by certified animal behaviorists at the SPCA. Once approved the volunteers are put in touch with those requesting visitation, and a schedule is then set. For the past four months, members of the SPCA’s Paws for Love program have been bringing their four-legged friends into Notre Dame Academy, so students can practice reading out loud.

“I learned about this program from a friend,” states Amanda Peterson, Title 1 Reading teacher at Notre Dame Academy. “I have read a lot of articles on how reading to animals can boost confidence and motivate students. Once I saw pictures of dogs in the classroom, I knew that I had to get NDA involved! So, I reached out to Mrs. (Tristan) D’Angelo the principal at



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The SPCA Serving Erie County Paws for Love volunteers brought their dogs and cats to Notre Dame Academy so that the students could read out loud to the animals. Reading out-loud to animals on a regular basis helps to significantly increase the reading skills of the reader.

Notre Dame Academy and to Debbie Braun, the contact person for Paws for Love, and soon after that, the students in my classroom were reading to both dogs and cats!”

Recent studies found, children who read out loud to animals on a regular basis, experience a significant increase with their reading skills. It is through this unique program that Notre Dame Academy can provide students with the support they need, and do it in fun, stimulating and stress-free way. “I have received a ton of positive feedback from my students and their parents,” commented Peterson. “I am so happy with the results, that I have already scheduled dogs to be in my classroom at Notre Dame Academy during our summer school session.”

If you are interested in learning more about the SPCA Serving Erie County Paws for Love program, contact Program Coordinator Deborah Braun: [pawsforlove@yoursPCA.org](mailto:pawsforlove@yoursPCA.org).

If you are looking for a great Catholic school for your children or grandchildren, there is still time to register for 2019-2020 school year at Notre Dame Academy. Call 716-824-0726 to schedule a shadow day.

*For more information on South Buffalo Catholic School Notre Dame Academy visit [www.notredamebuffalo.org](http://www.notredamebuffalo.org)*