

Weekly R.E.A.D.[®]

Reading Education Assistance Dogs[®]

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Sniffing out the News: Tales Of Joy in Rio Rancho, NM

This week we're aiming our spotlight on another strong and exemplary R.E.A.D. program, TALES of JOY R.E.A.D.® in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. One of the things about them that inspires us at R.E.A.D. Headquarters is their clear, comprehensive and beautifully presented reports. They started with a pilot study when they began their program in January of 2006, and have followed up with an end-of-year report each year. You can now see their reports on our website (under R.E.A.D./Results), and also on their own site, mentioned below. You will find these reports to be powerful ammunition when you're trying to convince school personnel of the efficacy of R.E.A.D. Below, coordinator Theresa McKinney describes their program.



Our volunteers are the most amazing group of people and dogs! They are dedicated, committed, and thoroughly enjoy working with the students. They love to see the smiles, the joy, and the sense of accomplishment when the student reading to their dog blossoms into a confident reader!!!

Our teams volunteer on a weekly basis in our elementary schools, monthly programs at two of our libraries, and a weekly program at a book store in the summer. Several of our group also visits nursing homes with their therapy dog(s). We also conduct "Child/Dog Safety" programs at our local before and after school programs.

The TALES of JOY R.E.A.D. Program releases an End of the Year Data report with wonderful results for our students. The report for last year 2008-09 can be viewed on our website: www.TalesofJoyRead.com. For the second year in a row ALL of the students our teams work with have maintained or improved their reading level! We work with both regular education and students with disabilities and the results are something to be very, very proud of. Some of the parent comments are as follows:

"Reading to the dog has brought such joy to our child. Children seem to have a way of communicating with animals, (especially dogs.) Our son truly loves the dog. He looks forward to every time he gets to read to him. It has made him a better reader and he has a better understanding of what he is reading. They are not just words because he is convinced the dog comprehends what he is saying. It has been a truly positive experience! Thank you. We all love you."

"The change I've noticed in my child is that her reading level has gone up exceptionally high and I'm very proud of that. I'm very thankful for this program and would recommend this for any parent whose child is having problems in reading."

"My child enjoys reading – her self esteem is amazing because of her accomplishments – looks forward to go to school – more outgoing."

The advice we offer to other teams is to enjoy, have fun, and share the love of your dog with any and everyone you can; especially the children. Not only do the children's faces light up when they see "their R.E.A.D. dog" but I know the dogs are smiling too! Each dog forms a unique and true bond with each student they R.E.A.D. with and it is just amazing to watch that relationship grow.

The Weekly R.E.A.D. is a collaborative effort - designed and produced by Merilee Kelley of READing Paws, Orlando, FL. Our thanks to Nancy Brooks & Sassy of Minneapolis MN for her contributions.

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