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Dogs helping people



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Manawatu Members Visiting Libraries

Supplied by Vicky Graham, President



In 2019 we received an invitation from the Children's Program Coordinator at Palmerston North Library with a view to becoming involved. After an initial meeting we were invited to attend the children's section as 'mystery guests'. Four member/dog teams attended. The children and parents loved this extra dimension library staff introduced to help the young readers become more active with their reading. This then became a regular event with a mix of large and small dogs.

The staff pay extra attention to having books about dogs and other animals. Some children prefer to sit and watch others reading to our dogs, but inevitably these children ask to read to the dogs during our next visit. Some visits are specifically dog-focused and the children loved our Dalmation member Arlo and Golden Retriever member Thumpa, both who appear in storybooks. Often sessions will end with question time on the care and responsibilities of owning a dog.

Since 2019 we have been regular visitors at Palmerston North Library during the school holidays in a quiet designated area. Our visits usually last up to one hour. Unfortunately Covid put a stop to these but we're back into gear in 2022, with two suburban libraries joining our list of venues. Our first visit back was publicised in local newspapers and radio. Te Patikiki Community Library was included towards the end of last year.

We visit these libraries with a small number of suitable dogs, depending on the area made available. These visits have now led to regular weekly reading sessions at City, Roslyn and Awapuni Libraries in a program called 'Stories Unleashed' which provides

one-on-one reading opportunities with each child, by appointment. Each of these sessions lasts around 15 minutes.

Here is some feedback we've received:

"The children really enjoy the novelty of the story time with a dog and the dog enjoys the pats and attention too."

"Who thought of this wonderful idea? What a great program."

"Library pairs with Canine Friends to provide kids with 'magical moments,'" wrote Sonya Holm for *The Guardian* newspaper.

"It's all about getting our children back into reading books and enjoying the process and wanting them to read more." 🐾

Ann Evans,

Manawatu Liaison Officer



If you and your dog would like to join us, please visit: www.caninefriends.org.nz