

PAWS for Reading™

We are an all-volunteer, pet-assisted literacy program of PAWS for People, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to lovingly provide therapeutic visits to any person in the community who would benefit from interaction with a well-trained loving pet. PAWS for People serves parts of DE, MD, NJ and PA.

PAWS for Reading offers children and adults the opportunity to read aloud to a well-trained therapy dog (cat or bunny) in order to improve their reading and communication skills.

Types of Programs

Library PAWS - Open to readers of all ages and stages, public libraries offer PAWS for Reading sessions on a regular schedule. Register for a session with one of our furry friends with a participating library.

School PAWS - In select elementary schools, certified PAWS for Reading teams work with identified struggling and/or reluctant readers. The therapy team works with the same kids throughout the school year and success is measured through increased confidence in reading aloud.

Crossover PAWS - Kids with special needs may want to read some days and other days may need the love and comfort of a PAWS therapy companion. In this special program, our therapy teams are encouraged to gauge and meet the child's varying needs on a regular basis. Goals are set by teachers and therapists as necessary.

PreK PAWS - Designed for our youngest (almost) readers ages 3 and up, the PreK PAWS program offers fun and nurturing reading experiences through age appropriate, animal-themed activity packs that the therapy team facilitates during one-on-one sessions.



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PAWS for People is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) volunteer organization devoted to improving the emotional and physical lives of everyone we visit.
Tax ID # 76-0780197

"PAWS gave me a reason to read."
- Student Participant

"It's a winning situation all around:
dogs + kids + books = magic."
- PAWS Volunteer

"PAWS for Reading is amazing!
I am so thankful for the time
the teams shared with the kids
...it has changed their lives."
- Head Start Teacher

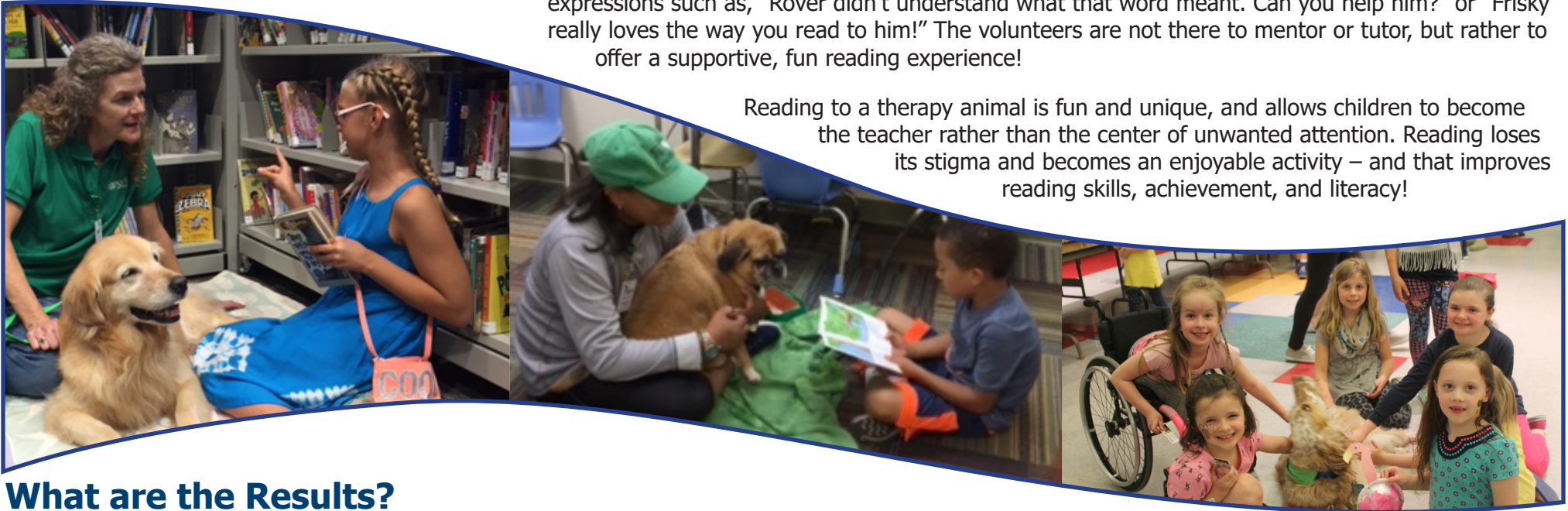


How Does the Program Work?

PAWS works with teachers and librarians to set aside regular times for students to receive 10-15 minutes of individualized reading time with a highly-trained therapy team. After the session, our readers are given an incentive such as a bookmark, a sticker, a pet calling card for a job well done! Kids also have an opportunity to sign the pet's 'paw-to-graph' book and are encouraged to continue to read at home.

School-age readers will also receive a "Sky Dog," a small plush dog as an additional incentive, if they commit to continued reading to Sky on a daily basis! A PAWS volunteer helps facilitate the session by providing support. They can act as the 'interpreter' for the pet. Volunteers encourage readers with expressions such as, "Rover didn't understand what that word meant. Can you help him?" or "Frisky really loves the way you read to him!" The volunteers are not there to mentor or tutor, but rather to offer a supportive, fun reading experience!

Reading to a therapy animal is fun and unique, and allows children to become the teacher rather than the center of unwanted attention. Reading loses its stigma and becomes an enjoyable activity – and that improves reading skills, achievement, and literacy!



What are the Results?

PAWS for Reading volunteers, teachers, and librarians are seeing improvement in reading and communication skills, self-esteem, social skills, confidence, and students' attendance rates. Nationwide, similar programs have tracked a rise in students' reading test scores and attitude toward reading.

Education experts agree that a child who falls behind in reading as early as the 1st grade has a significantly greater chance of staying behind and never catching up to their grade level. The National Reading Panel reports that about 10 million children (17.5% of all students) experience reading problems in their first three years of school. And according to a recent Associated Press poll, one in four adults has not read a single book in the previous year.

PAWS for Reading is a program that addresses these concerns by giving young and struggling readers (including English language learners) the extra help they need, when they need it, instilling a life-long love of reading!

