

Pets & People Helping Each Other

OBJECTIVE:

To learn about how service dogs assist disabled people and why their jobs are so important. To promote an empathetic attitude toward people with disabilities.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

Read the book, *A Service Dog Goes To School*. Have the students write a summary of the book and define a list of vocabulary words from the book. If possible, invite a disabled person with a working dog to speak to the students about their experiences and their relationship with their dog.

MATERIALS:

- 🐾 Book: *A Service Dog Goes To School*, by Elizabeth Simpson Smith
- 🐾 List of vocabulary words (attached)

ACTIVITY:

Preliminary Discussion

- 🐾 How do animals help people? Ask for specific examples.
- 🐾 Define the words "disability" and "disabled."
- 🐾 Why do some people with disabilities need help from animals? What if these people didn't have this type of help?
- 🐾 If you see a person with a disability, how does it make you feel? How are they different than you? Explain that it is our differences that make us unique and special.
- 🐾 What are some other things that make people unique? (i.e. skin color, hair color, race, religion, nationality, etc.). Ask them to pick a student in the class and make a list of five things that makes that student different from them.
- 🐾 What are some things that make animals different from each other?
- 🐾 Do some animals have disabilities? How do these pets get help from people? Explain that the Dumb Friends League often takes in dogs with three legs, cats with one eye and pets with other disabilities. These animals can be wonderful, happy pets even though they are "different."

Procedure

Read the book, *A Service Dog Goes To School*. Because of the length of this book (62 pages) it will take several days or weeks to read, depending on your schedule. After reading the book, ask the students to summarize it in written form, highlighting the main points and characters. Give each student a list of the vocabulary words and terms from the book, have them write out their definitions and discuss their summaries with the class. If possible, invite a person with a disability, who has a working dog, to come to your classroom to speak to the students. It may be helpful to contact an organization that works with and trains dogs for this purpose, such as "Canine Companions for Independence," or "Freedom Service Dogs." Have the guest speaker discuss their experiences, their relationship with their dog and how their dog helps them to be independent and self-sufficient.

Post-Discussion

- 🐾 Why are service dogs so important? How do they help people?
- 🐾 Why is their training necessary?
- 🐾 How can you help a disabled person feel comfortable when you approach them and their dog?
- 🐾 What did you learn from the speaker? How has their service dog improved their life?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Have the students write a letter to the guest speaker, telling her or him what they learned from the visit. Another good book about service animals is *Animals Helping With Special Needs*, by Clare Oliver, which explores a variety of different animals that help people with disabilities, including monkeys, dolphins, cats and horses.

"A Service Dog Goes to School"

VOCABULARY WORDS AND TERMS

Each word or term below is from the book, "A Service Dog Goes to School." Write out the definitions next to the word or term.

1. Service Dog: _____

2. Paralyzed: _____

3. Canine Companions for Independence: _____

4. Disabled: _____

5. Independence: _____

6. Canine: _____

7. Natural Tendencies: _____

8. Praise: _____

9. Aggressive: _____

10. Submissive: _____

11. Socialize: _____

12. Bonding: _____

13. Motorized Wheelchair: _____

14. Manual Wheelchair: _____

15. Obedience: _____

16. Verbal Signals: _____

17. Excursions: _____

18. Affectionate: _____
