

COMMUNITY COURIER



JANUARY 20, 2016 | SERVING THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES SINCE 1954 | VOL XXVII • NO 49



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Children Invited To Read To A Friendly Dog

By Francine Fulton

Children in the community are invited to practice their reading skills with the help of a certified therapy dog at the Chester Springs Library. Lizzy, a Pembroke Welsh corgi, is available by appointment at the library on Sundays from 1 to 2 p.m. and on Tuesdays from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Lizzy is accompanied to the library by her owner, Marian Potts, a child care professional from the Audubon YMCA, who also takes Lizzy to work with her. Potts explained that Lizzy has been certified with Therapy Dogs International (TDI). She also earned her K-9 Good Citizen award and completed basic obedience classes before taking part in therapy dog training.

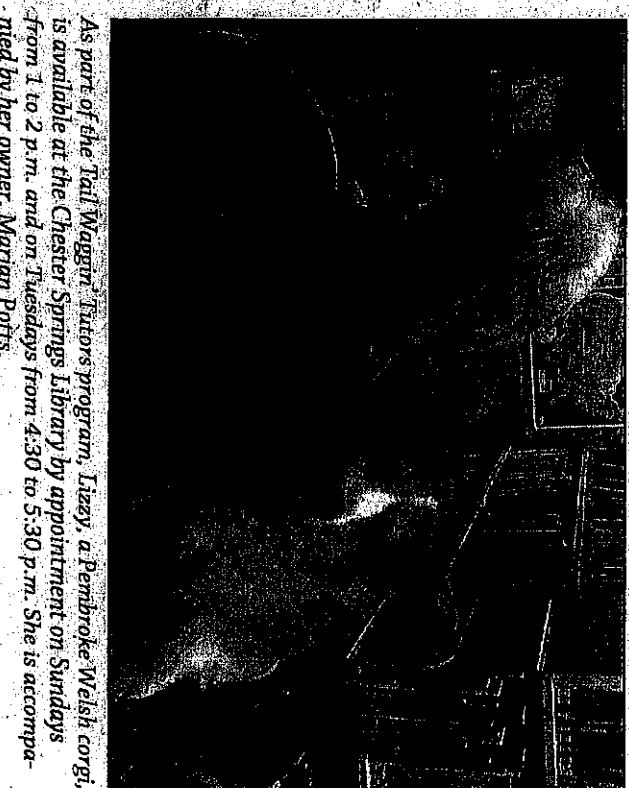
After the training, she went through an evaluation to get her certification. She is very calm and quiet, so this is a good fit

for her. This is her first job," noted Potts.

According to www.tdi-dog.org, the purpose of the K-9 reading program is to provide a relaxed atmosphere that allows students, particularly those with reading issues, to practice reading with a non-judgmental friend. By sitting down next to a dog and interacting with and petting it, children are often better able to relax and focus on their reading skills.

"A lot of the children, especially kids who struggle to read out loud, find it comforting and less intimidating to read to a dog," Potts said. "In fact, (Lizzy) may be working with a lady who went through a bad car accident and has to (learn how) to read again. Her doctor recommended this program, so it is good for all ages."

Potts noted that TDI regularly posts openings for facilities interested in having a therapy dog visit. "The Chester Springs Library) has two other therapy



As part of the Tail Waggin' Tutors program, Lizzy, a Pembroke Welsh corgi, is available at the Chester Springs Library by appointment on Sundays from 1 to 2 p.m. and on Tuesdays from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. She is accompanied by her owner, Marian Potts.

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Read To A Dog *from pg.1*

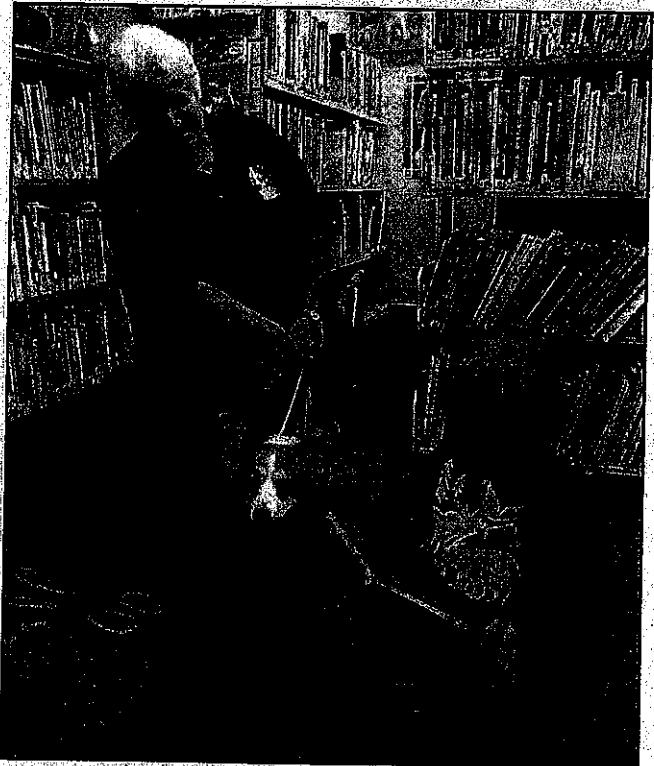
dogs - a German Shepherd and a poodle - and they had a waiting list of kids who wanted to read to a dog. They wanted to bring on another dog, so it worked out," Potts noted. "The kids really seem to like her."

According to TDI, teachers nationwide have also endorsed the reading therapy program. "It is a successful program across the country. Some people call it the READ Program - Reading Education Assistance Dogs. In this area, it's called Tail Waggin' Tutors," Potts said.

Potts owns another corgi puppy, which she also plans to enter into the dog therapy field. "It wasn't my intention when I first got (Lizzy), but she has such a good, calm, quiet demeanor, and when we started some of her training, I thought it would be a great thing for her to work with kids," she said. "It was a natural progression."

Two people touched by Lizzy were Jody Reinbold of Chester Springs and her kindergarten-age daughter. At the suggestion of library director Nancy McLaughlin, Sheehan brought home a book for her daughter to read titled "Ball" by Mary Sullivan. "It is a book about a dog who wants his ball thrown. And the only word in the book is 'ball,' repeated many times," Reinbold said. "When (my daughter) finished the book, she was so proud of herself."

Knowing that she was going to get to read the book to Lizzy at the library, Reinbold's



Ben Sheehan (right) enjoys reading to Lizzy, a certified therapy dog, at the Chester Springs Library. Lizzy and her owner, Marian Potts (left), visit the library during set times on Sundays and Tuesdays.

daughter excitedly continued to practice her reading. "We arrived at the library and met Lizzy. She was a beautiful dog with such a pleasant disposition," Reinbold recalled. "My daughter snuggled right up to Lizzy and read her the book. That was such a wonderful day that I will never forget."

Chester Springs Library is

located at 1685A Art School Road, Chester Springs. Registration to read with a therapy dog is required, and time slots are available by appointment only. Sessions will be scheduled in 15-minute increments. For more information or to schedule an appointment, individuals may call the library at 610-827-9212.

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