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Carthage Elementary Rises to Pet Responsibility Challenge

BY ANGELA ZUMWALT Special to The Pilot Dec 14, 2018



Animal Services Deputy Tyler Skellerup talking to the students

PHOTO COURTESY OF ED PIECZYNSKI

On a brisk, sunny, November afternoon, a team of Pet Responsibility Committee (PRC) volunteers waited for the fourth-graders at Carthage Elementary School to gather in the outside auditorium in Nancy Kiser Park, next to the school, for a very special “assembly,” designed to celebrate all that the students have learned during their five week Pet Responsibility Program. The assembly includes a special guest speaker whose career usually involves working with animals.

The speaker who volunteered her time to talk with the Carthage Elementary fourth-graders arrived with a horse trailer in tow and with two colleagues to help her. Dr. Bri Gindlesperger, of Breeze Way Sporthorse and Diagnostic Clinic, in Vass, arranged to bring her own two miniature horses to meet

the students and reinforce her message.



Dr Bri Gindlesperger talking with the students, with miniature horses Wee One and Magic

PHOTO COURTESY OF ED PIECZYNSKI

The students were excited to meet Wee One and Magic, who were interested in tending the grass in the park. Longtime PRC volunteer Christie Hartlove asked Gindlesperger a number of questions, which in turn led to more questions from the students. Why did Dr. Gindlesperger want to become a veterinarian? What training is involved? How long did it take? What does she do each day at work? What is the favorite part of her job?

Gindlesperger also discussed with the students all that is involved in caring for horses and ponies, emphasizing how dependent they are on us for nutritious food, fresh water and regular visits with the vet.

Another special guest who also works with animals, Animal Services Deputy Tyler Skellerup, of the Moore County Sheriff's Office, told the students that he or a colleague would respond if lost, stray or abused pets were reported by the students or an adult in their family. He asked the students to always advocate for pets in trouble and to contact Animal Services for help.

A highlight of the assembly was the presentation by the PRC mascot, Speuter, of a framed certificate and a voucher for a free spay or neuter to the winners of "The Speuter Story" Contest. The contest involved the challenge of writing a story about how their pet and the community would benefit from their pet being spayed or neutered.



PRC mascot Speuter (Phillippa Davidson) and PRC volunteer Christie Hartlove with the Speuter Story Contest winners
PHOTO COURTESY OF ED PIECZYNSKI

There were many stories submitted, by far the most of any school in the county this school year. There were so many great entries that it was hard to choose the winners. Abby McKenzie, Alissa Crabtree, Anna Garner, Ashley Marsh, Carly Williamson, Emma Lewis, Gracie Stewart, Madelyn Perkins, Triton Blackburn and Zeon Jones were all selected. Because of their efforts, Brownie, Savage, Pepper, Prince, Apollo, Jackson, Lottie, a future rescue from Caring Hearts for Canines, Loki and Junior will be spayed or neutered to help prevent pet overpopulation.

The free spays and neuters were generously donated by The Moore County Kennel Club as part of their mission to promote responsible pet ownership and their support of the PRC. The PRC is also making arrangements to transport the pets to and from The Spay Neuter Veterinary Clinic of the Sandhills on U.S. 1 in Vass, where the procedures will be performed.

Mascot Speuter also shared with the students a poem about how she had been found homeless and hungry by a young boy who had rescued her, given her a forever home, and had her spayed. She ended the poem by stating, “Just think of the good we would do if each of us helped one or two! So, let’s not delay. Let’s start right away. It’s all up to me — and to you!”

The program closed with each student getting the opportunity to meet the miniature horses and chat with Dr Gindlesperger.

The six-week Pet Responsibility Program is presented to more than 1,200 students in one school year. It depends on teams of PRC volunteers with a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. Barb Ross, Christie Hartlove and her therapy dog Bonnie, Shawna Muhly, Elaine Wilderson, Ursula Walsh and her therapy dog George, Phillipa Davidson, Tammy Foster, Mary Ann Root, Mary Smith, Ed Pieczynski Gindlesperger, together with Animal Services Deputy Tyler Skellerup, were all key to the success at Carthage Elementary School.

For more information on the Citizens’ Pet Responsibility Committee and its volunteer opportunities, visit www.mcprc.org.

Angela Zumwalt is chair of the Citizens’ Pet Responsibility Committee of Moore County.