

Westmoore Elementary Celebrates Its Pet Advocates!

It was a very happy day on Monday, November 27, 2023, as the fourth graders at Westmoore Elementary School gathered to celebrate what they had learned during their six session Pet Responsibility program. The Pet Responsibility Committee (PRC) team that presented the program was led by volunteers Liz Surface with her therapy dog, Elmer; Mary Ann Root, and Sarah Johnson with her therapy dog, Dama.

The students learned about the "sad problem" in Moore County of too many abandoned, neglected pets ending up at the Moore County shelter and not enough adoptive homes for all of them. They learned that the best way to control animal overpopulation is by spaying and neutering our pets. They learned how to take good care of their pets and to make good choices when selecting a pet.

During the celebration, they were visited by Speuter, the PRC dog mascot. Speuter read a poem about her humble beginnings as a stray puppy on the street. The students learned that Speuter was lucky to have found someone to love and care for her and went on to live a happy, healthy life. Speuter encouraged the students to think about how much better the world would be if we all took it upon ourselves to save just one pet in some way.

As part of the program, the students were asked to write a "Speuter" story about how their pets would benefit from being spayed or neutered. All the stories were wonderful, showcasing all they had learned. Ten students were selected to be winners, receiving a framed certificate and a voucher for a free spay or neuter for a dog or cat. Winners were Sara S., Tucker D., Dalton S., Sophie M., Eli M., Ethan C., Cooper M., Madalyn A., Eli T. and Zachariah S. Gypsy, Chevy, Georgia Peach, Red, Tracker, Luna, Rebecca, Taffy and Jersey are among the pets who will be fixed and not add to the pet overpopulation situation in Moore County.

During the program, the students decorated paper lunch bags to be donated to the Sandhills Spay Neuter Veterinary Clinic in Vass. Each bag carries an advocacy message and will be used to dispense medications for pets after their surgery. There were some very creative and imaginative bags. Eight students were awarded certificates for their artwork and



Mary Ann Root introducing
Sergeant Tyler Skjellerup



Neil Copeland with Elmer Surface

messages. Those receiving awards were Alyssa, Emma, Heidi, Bryce K., Malachi, Raelynn, Skylar A., and Zainab.

We were pleased to have Moore County Animal Services Sergeant Tyler Skjellerup in attendance. He spoke about his work with Moore County Sheriff's Office helping animals and people. He's very dedicated to his work and enjoys it. He answered many questions the students had about his job.

There were two other special guests at the Assembly. Neil Copeland of Seven Lakes Kennels talked to the students about how he trains dogs. He

trains dogs who work with the military, law enforcement and private security companies or dogs who are pets and need some training to thrive. He took a lot of questions from interested students and parents. His training "partner" was Liz Surface's Elmer. Elmer was adopted out of a bad situ-



Winners of the Star Artist Awards for creative "clinic" bags with PRC Mascot Speuter

ation which Liz described to the students. Neil trained Elmer who is now a certified therapy dog, joining the PRC team in the classroom.

All the students recited a Promise together, taking to heart the words they were saying and then signed the Promise Poster, giving their intent to do their best for all animals.

A surprise was given to Liz and MaryAnn, the PRC volunteers, by the WES students. Students wrote individual Thank You cards to them, thanking them for bringing PRC to WES! The 4th grade classes also collected and donated over 160 pounds of pet food to the PRC Pet Pantry, which helps pet owners who are experiencing a temporary crisis, to be able to feed their pets.

We thank all the Westmoore fourth graders for being part of the team



Winners of the Speuter Story Contest

that makes life better for all pets!

Written by Mary Ann Root, Pet Responsibility Committee

Photos by Angela North Zumwalt, Pet Responsibility Committee