

# Camp Program Teaches Pet Responsibility

**BY ANGELA NORTH ZUMWALT**

Special to The Pilot

Pinehurst Parks and Recreation and the Moore County Citizens' Pet Responsibility Committee (PRC) partnered to bring a special and engaging new camp to kids participating in the village's summer camp program.

From early morning until noon, for a full week in the middle of August, a group of kids gathered with PRC volunteer Beth Skewis and her therapy dog, Jackson, to discuss what it means to be a pet owner and to give a pet the best life possible. They enjoyed conversations about their own pets, about the health and safety of their pets, and about staying safe around animals. Topics included how long various pets live and how they are part of the family for their whole life. The campers also enjoyed fun pet-related videos, activities and crafts.

The purpose of the week-long program was to discuss responsibility and respect through the lens of pet ownership. The young participants learned about about fleas and ticks and heartworm and unwanted litters, and how prevention is the key to it all.

They were often joined by PRC volunteer Wynne Wroblewski and her therapy dog, Noel. The volunteers led discussions about Jackson and Noel being therapy dogs, the training they went



through and what it means to be a therapy dog versus a service dog. Jackson and Noel brought joy and love to each day and also showcased a trick here and there. They demonstrated to the kids the importance of training a dog and how a dog can go almost anywhere when it is well-trained.

The camp was based on the Pet Responsibility Program currently presented to the fourth-graders of Moore County in the schools.

"The difference was that we were able to have some really great discussions with the kids about their pets and about the challenges of unwanted and neglected pets in our community. We were able to really listen to each other without the pressure of quickly moving on to the next topic," said Beth Skewis. "A number of the kids had been signed up to keep them occupied while their parents worked ... they were not totally into the program at first. This quickly changed

and they were sad when it all came to an end!"

Nicole Benbow, recreation program coordinator for Pinehurst Parks and Recreation, coordinated the offering with the PRC, ferrying the volunteers through the hurdles of background checks and insurance coverage. "It was well worth the effort required to get the program and volunteers approved," she said, "and we started brainstorming for next year as soon as it was over."

A parent texted Skewis and told her, "My son told me it was the best camp he'd done all summer!"

"We appreciate Pinehurst Parks and Recreation being willing to work with us on piloting this summer program," said Angela North Zumwalt, president of the PRC. "It was a great partnership, benefiting both kids and pets."

The PRC is currently presenting its program to the fourth-graders of Moore

CONTRIBUTED

Pictured above, Jackson, a PRC therapy dog volunteer, with camp kids; below, PRC volunteer Wynne Wroblewski and her therapy dog, Noel.



County in various schools. To secure a slot for your school this school year, contact the PRC at (910) 949-9953.