



Edu♥PUPS is a venue of our Petting♥PUPS (pet therapy) program. Dogs are placed in a classroom environment to enhance learning, teach responsibility and aid in the emotional leveling of children.

PUPS♥Teach♥Us is an educational outreach program designed to teach the public about the benefits of the human-animal bond, responsible pet ownership and the rights and access issues of service dog/handler teams.

## Fact Sheet

- ♥ Pets teach children to be better communicators and more successful. Interviews with CEOs of Fortune 500 companies indicate that 95% of them had pets growing up.
- ♥ Humane education is more than pet care information. Teaching responsible pet ownership is part of humane education. Studies of human animal interactions have shown that people are more likely to speak to each other, and to have more meaningful and significant interactions when animals are present.
- ♥ Research has shown that children who can care for a dog or cat have better social skills. They are more cooperative and sharing. They are also more socially competent and are better at understanding other children's feelings.
- ♥ For children who have suffered from emotional neglect, pets can serve as a buffer for loneliness. They often confide in the animals, and the animals make them feel better when they are upset.
- ♥ Animals have had a big impact on the development of children. Children who own dogs score higher on tests of popularity, social skills, and compassion for others. A study showed that children who had inadequate human contact found that children age six to eleven who owned pets had a higher self esteem and lower anxiety than those children in the same age group that did not have a dog.
- ♥ Young children need to know that they are being loved unconditionally and consistently. Children find this in dogs and they are often more comfortable sharing feelings with the animal.
- ♥ It has also been suggested that children who own pets have a better time maintaining relationships with peers especially in grade school (National Institute of Health, 1987).
- ♥ "Okoniewski and Zivan (1985) found the human-animal bond can alleviate depression, decrease feelings of loneliness, and heighten self-esteem in adolescents by creating feelings of being needed, accepted, and loved."
- ♥ Young children can learn about responsibility, gentle handling, animal behavior and death from living with a pet. Due to these characteristics developed from owning and caring for a pet it was reported that children are less likely to be criminal offenders when they grow up. In addition it was found that children show better social skills and empathy as contrasted to children that did not grow up with pets.
- ♥ Pet ownership also has a beneficial effect on family harmony. Research shows families spend a lot more time interacting after the acquisition of a pet. Pets provide a focus for fun activities and friendly conversation. The relaxation and relief from stress provided by animal companionship also yields measurable health benefits for parents. By nurturing animals that need constant care the children learn that they too will be nurtured.
- ♥ One study of the effects of animal assisted therapy on children with attention deficit disorder showed an overall reduction in aggressive behavior.
- ♥ "Pet programs have proven superior in producing psychosocial benefits in comparison to some other alternative therapies (e.g., arts and crafts programs, friendly visitor programs, and conventional psychotherapy)" (NIH, 1987).
- ♥ The Delta Society conducted a number of studies on the interaction between pets and children. These studies indicate that pets play a major role in child development. "For example, toddlers are more likely to hit, poke or grab their animals. Three and four year olds tend to pet their animals, while five and six year olds generally hug, stroke, and massage their pets, suggesting more sophisticated and gentle physical contact patterns, and more empathetic social relationships" (AAHA). These age-based patterns of interaction with pets are parallel with the interactions that these children have with humans. Caring for pets may also develop the child's sense of responsibility. One woman stated that her two-year-old daughter has the job of feeding their pet fish. One day she went to feed it and the girl got up from the chair and said, "That's my job." Family relationships in general benefit from the presence of a pet.
- ♥ A study of sixty families showed that the closer the pet was to the family, the better the family was. The children argued less and cooperated more. The parents also got along better.
- ♥ Pets give us a sense of optimism, safeguard us from depression and loneliness and break down the barriers that isolate us from one another.
- ♥ Studies of young children, both with and without pets, have shown that the children who do own pets demonstrate improved social competence and self-esteem. Pets also provide something else to focus on, a sense of attachment and of being valued unconditionally. Their impact is similar to what you find in studies of human social support: they give feelings of validation.
- ♥ In today's world of high tech toys and video game systems that improve seemingly as fast as personal computers, kids should learn how to care for something other than themselves. "Pets can act as 'security blankets,' unquestioning confidantes and valuable companions. These aspects are increasingly important as family unit size shrinks."
- ♥ The presence of a companion animal also aids in our development of patience, emotional control, and self-discipline.
- ♥ Parents may use pets to assist in teaching their children. Children brought up with pets show better social skills and empathy with others than children with no pets.