

October 12, 2010

Therapy Dog

Ordinarily, you would not expect to see a dog at Big Hollow Elementary School. This year however, Mrs. Casper Provo's two year old Golden Retriever Cooper will be heading to class with her! Last year, Provo suggested the idea of a therapy dog to The School Board and enrolled Cooper in the Therapy Dog International's (TDI) certification process. Cooper soon passed the TDI test as well as a CGC (Canine Good Citizenship) class. After a delay due to concerns regarding allergies, the Board has allowed Mrs. Provo to begin a therapy dog program with Cooper this year on a trial basis.

For those wondering what purpose this new program will serve, Provo briefly describe some of the benefits of having Cooper at school: "The program provides 'therapy' to students, teachers and staff through petting, talking, and spending time with Cooper. Per the official TDI brochure, 'Four-footed therapists give something special to enhance the health and well-being of others. It has been clinically proven that through petting, touching, and talking with animals, people's blood pressure is lowered, stress is relieved, and depression is eased.' Therapy dogs are also used in hospitals, nursing homes, rehab facilities, etc. Eventually I would like to set up a 'Tail Waggin Tutors' program here at BH, but with me in the classroom, it's not possible right now," Provo said.

Provo hopes that having Cooper around will help relax some students who feel stressed about school. She is also looking forward to seeing students become more confident with reading or practicing their math facts when Cooper is around. So far, having Cooper in the classroom has been a great success. "The kids LOVE Cooper as well as Cooper LOVES the kids!! On days that he comes with me I slip his official TDI bandana on him and he goes right to the door as to say, 'Let's go to work, Mom!' I have heard nothing but positive comments about Coop from everyone. More teachers want to get involved with him and are working out ways to incorporate him into their classrooms. After only three visits he is no longer a distraction, rather an attraction that the students behave well for so we don't lose our privilege of having Cooper here," said Provo. For additional information about therapy dog programs, visit the Therapy Dog International website www.tdi-dogs.org.