



**Literacy Volunteers
of Somerset County**

1981-2021

Connections: A Student Newsletter

Volume 6 – June 2021

Connections A Student Newsletter

Welcome to the latest issue of Connections, a newsletter for the Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County community, prepared by the Student Outreach Committee.

In this issue, we give our community stories about pets. The diversity of the stories offer us experiences about what it means to love a pet and to have one in your life. Through memories about our most loved ones, or about a dream pet, we have created a collection of stories about the human need for connection, love and companionship as well as loving moments with our pets.

This edition has 17 articles. For their passionate and beautiful contributions, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the students and tutors who participated.

Finally, we would like wish you all a wonderful summer.

Thank you and we hope you enjoy our stories.

The Student Outreach Committee.

My Dream Dog

Written by Kim

I always feel like raising a big dog whenever I run into a person who is walking a dog in the park peacefully. Now, I have more desire to get a big dog after I met some in the mountains. The last time I went hiking in the Catskills, I also saw various breeds of big and nice dogs. Each of these big dogs was loyal to his or her family and checked to see if the family members were okay. They also led their family. It blew my mind! How awesome they were!!

My dream dog is a golden retriever, well known as a friendly dog. This dog has beautiful, shiny, golden brown fur like smooth silk, and a kind and nice personality. I already named my future dog "Guinness." I imagine myself from time to time lying on a beach chair by a wonderful, emerald blue sea with my dog in summertime, or going hiking with my dog, Guinness. I don't know when I will start to be with my dog, but imagining this puts me on cloud nine!



My memory with Puttu

Written by Archana Naik

I love all animals, especially dogs. Currently, I don't have any pets. But I have very pleasant memory of my neighbor's pet, during my childhood.

When I was in elementary school, my parents used to live in a place called Ankola in India. We used to live in a rental house. Our house owner's home was next to us and we used to share same wall like a townhouse. It was a big house with beautiful backyard.

Our house owner had a pet dog called Rani. Rani means queen. Rani was a female dog. Rani was quiet and friendly dog. She was not very young when we moved there. Rani would protect her owner's house from monkeys. Monkeys used to spoil their mangoes and other crops. Rani used to bark like a lioness.

The name Rani was perfect for her. Me, my brother and sister were very impressed by Rani. But she wasn't very close to us. Rani was very matured dog. She never wagged her tail. She was very serious; she would not do any silly dog stuffs.

One summer, me and my sister were very excited to know that Rani would deliver puppies soon. Few days later, we saw Rani sleeping in backyard with small puppies. They all were closing their eyes and feeding on their mother's milk. Rani was cool, she didn't mind when we gazed at her puppies. They were total six puppies. As the days passed by, puppies looked cuter and adorable. Some puppies were very fat, healthy and active. Some were normal in size and healthy too. Among them one of the puppies was very skinny. Later we learnt that he didn't get to drink his mom's milk because other pups didn't allow him to drink milk. They always fought for milk. He became very skinny and weak. Me and my sister used to feed the puppy cow's milk every day. Skinny pup would look exactly like her mother Rani. He was biscuit color pup and had

white dot on his forehead. All the pups were very curious. we felt amazing as kids so see those puppies. I enjoyed playing with them. They used to follow us wherever we go within the backyard. They would play with fallen dry leaves. They would chew twigs that fell on the ground. They would bark at small crawling bugs. They used to play with each others tails. Sometimes they would play with their own tails too. They were very silly. That was our best summer vacation.

Our house owner didn't want to take care all of them. He was a very busy man. His wife wasn't interested in animals. So, he gave away all of the puppies except the one which was very skinny. Nobody wanted weak and skinny puppy. He was all alone, because all his siblings were gone. We would feed him milk and biscuits. Our house owner didn't mind us taking care of his puppy since we shared same backyard. We used to give him bath too. We named him "Puttu". Puttu means tiny. Puttu's eyes were very beautiful with full of affection. He used to wag his tail every time when he saw us.

Our summer vacation was about to end and we were getting ready for the school. Monsoon season was about to step in. Rani and Puttu used to sleep in a shed, that was in the backyard. Me and my sister made a blanket for him. Every day he used to sleep in that blanket.

Everyday morning, we would say bye to him before leaving for school. At school, all our friends would ask about Puttu and they would enjoy all the silly stories about him. In the evening, he would wait for us to come home, he would jump, wag his tail and lick our shoes and hands, when we came back from school. He was such a good and well-behaved dog. Puttu was good runner. He used to chase squirrels just for fun. Spending time with him was super fun. Day by day Puttu looked very healthy, happy and adorable. We thought Puttu would live with his mother Rani for rest of his life. But we were wrong. One evening, our house owner sold Puttu to one of his friends. That was shocking for us. Puttu was our owner's dog. It was his decision to give him away. We couldn't question him. Me and my sister were very sad. I waved at Puttu when he was

about leave the house. He looked at us with affection. His eyes were staring at us. He might not realize that he was leaving us and his mother Rani forever. My sister and me both cried when he left us. It took us few days to become normal. I always cherish those moments with Puttu.

In future, I am planning to get a puppy who would look like Puttu.



Picture of "Puttu"

My First Dog

Written by Llycela Garcia

When I was five years old, I had a dog. His name was Dustin. Dustin liked to play with me, running around the house. When I went to the farm, I asked him "Dustin, do you want to run?" He was very jumpy and ran around me in circles and I couldn't move. Dustin slept outside on the sidewalk and I tried to sleep with him for fun and he didn't like it and he would growl at me!



Hello, Marimo

Written by Jiyoung Kim

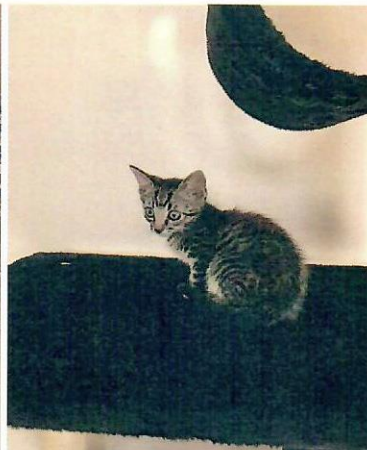
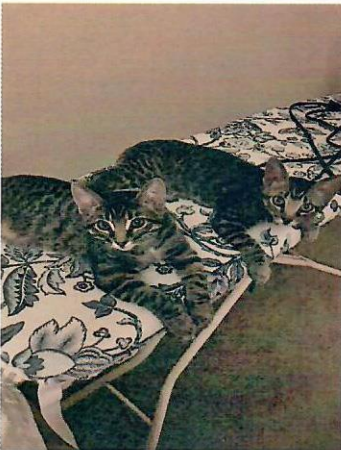
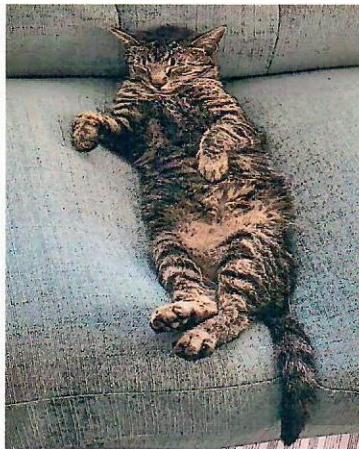
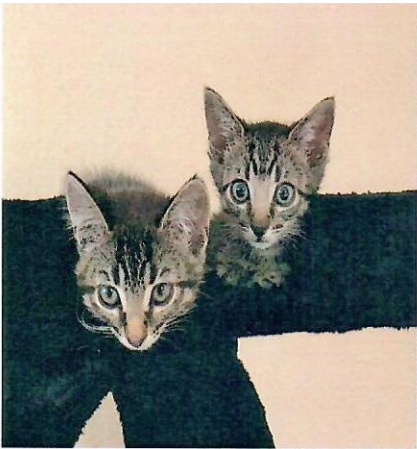
Do you know about Marimo? The name is so adorable, isn't it? Marimo is known as moss ball. Like other kids, my girls wanted pets like dogs or cats, but we were not in proper circumstances. Finally, we came to agreement about Marimo instead. My kids had interested in moss balls, so it was a good deal. They are two like my kids, and one is bigger than the other like a sibling. My kids named them, Leo and Lucky. They feed them every other day and change the water every weekend. Surprisingly, they sometimes float in the water after washing. My kids think that it means lucky. They also let me know that they live over a hundred year and grow 0.2 inch every year. I realized that my girls take responsibility for their pet, so I am so proud of them. I am happy that I have a chance to introduce my girls' special friends. Thank you for reading.



My Pets

Written by Gulsum Atceken

Two years ago, we adopted two cats which were twins. We named them hazelnut (male) and pistachio (female). They were six weeks old when we got them. They look very similar so I had hard time distinguishing them. They were very cute kittens. My daughter and my son became very happy. My husband too. It was like we had two more kids. They were very happy and fun. But when they grew up, they wanted to explore outside and we let them so one by one we lost them. We looked for them everywhere but we were not able to find them. We became very very very sad, especially my daughter. Now we have a red Betta fish named Lava. Here some pictures of them.



My first dog

Written by Kathy England, LVSC tutor



When I was 9 years old, we got my first dog. He was a purebred dog, so he came with a fancy name – Reynolds Von Waddlehausen III, but we renamed him Fritzie. This is a picture of me and my brother Bruce with Fritzie. My youngest brother Kenny wasn't born yet at the time this picture was taken.

We all loved Fritzie very much and he was a regular member of the family. He lived to be 13 years old. After Fritzie passed away, I often had dreams about him. In the dream he would come wagging his tail and I was always very happy to see him. Finally in one dream he looked very old and tired. In the dream I said to him "I'm sorry, it isn't fair to you for me to keep calling you back in my dream. I won't do it any more so you can rest." That was the last time I dreamed about him. But I always remember him with lots of happiness.

My little puppy

Written by Simone Hitomi



In March of this year, my husband and I watched a video on Facebook from a dog shelter showing which dogs were up for adoption. There were many large and small puppies and adult dogs, one prettier than the other.

In the middle of the pandemic, the shelter held an adoption fair, so we decided to go to the adoption fair to see the dogs. I once read that it's not humans who choose their dog - the dog chooses them. And it was no different on that day.

When we got there, there were already more than 20 families in front of us waiting in line, and it was unbearably cold. Because of the pandemic, each family could look separately and when it was our turn, Milou was inside a small pet travel carrier, shivering, scared and cold. He was the only small-sized puppy left. I took Milou in my arms and I looked in his eyes, and I couldn't say I wouldn't take him! That's how we met Milou!

The girl at the adoption fair said Milou came from Texas and he was abandoned on the street. Maybe that's why he had so many worms. I've had approximately 14 dogs when I lived in Brazil, and most were stray dogs, but I've never seen so many worms in a puppy like this! The girl gave me the medicine which Milou was taking in the shelter, but I took him to the vet and the doctor prescribed another medicine to kill the worms.

In the beginning, he was very afraid of going out on the street, of people and of trucks. Now he wants to get close to all the dogs, and he likes to play with people, jump in the wet grass, catch bees, birds and roll in the grass, sometimes grass with poo! Milou learns everything very fast and wakes up around 6 am, looks like a rooster, and he keeps looking at movement outside through the window.

I'll tell a pretty tragic funny story about my puppy Milou from when he was still learning to make poo and pee in one spot. I was busy in the kitchen cooking lunch, when Milou started barking. He never barks at home, so I stopped everything to check what had happened. He had pooped on the carpet and Roomba found it. When I saw it I didn't believe it. I had forgotten to turn it off and Roomba had not only slid through the poo, it had spread it through the living room. Luckily, Milou barked before Roomba could spread it all over the room. My Roomba became Poomba. I almost bought another one, but this idea was too expensive, so I cleaned it and started using it a month later!

I'm a dog lover, it's hard to imagine how anyone could mistreat and abandon a four-legged friend. Some of the lucky ones find their way to shelters and rescues where they are given a second chance at a happy ending and can be adopted. The number of euthanized animals could be reduced dramatically if more people adopted pets. Many pet owners want a purebred dog, but they are not only found in a pet shop or breeder. But, actually many dogs that are in shelters are purebreds. Sometimes, they are rescued from the "puppy mill" which leaves the pups and their mothers in horrific conditions, so it's important also to check where the mom lives before buying a dog. Now, Milou is almost 5 months old. I love him so much! I'm already thinking about adopting another little brother for Milou , but that's another story!

Companion Plants

Written by Sunny Lee

I think Americans have an extraordinary love for their pets. These are some things I noticed while living in the U.S.

For example, I can easily see pets in magazines and TV advertisements. There are many pet chain stores like Petco, PetSmart, Petland, etc.

To add, when I'm driving, I notice family stickers on the back window of other cars. The stickers have grandparents, parents, children, pets, and even goldfish in a tank.



I remember what a Korean-American tour guide said when I visited the U.S. a few decades ago. He said that if he were on a rapidly sinking boat, he would be rescued after pets, even though he cannot swim. He thought pets' lives were better than his, and that their social status was higher.

My family has no pets, but we grow plants and keep a vegetable garden. Although pets can walk and "talk" on their own yet plants cannot, I think watching them grow from babies or seedlings can be a similar experience. Taking care of them gives me a sense of gratitude, joy, and love for Mother Nature. They reward me much more for my efforts.



I'm sure everyone who owns pets will agree with this point. These days, the words "companion animals" and "companion plants" are used more often. We all are a part of Mother Nature. I think we have learned that we must control our greed and adapt ourselves to nature throughout this pandemic.

The story of Azabache and Mia.

Written by Glorys Bueno

I don't have a pet and I don't consider myself to be much of a pet person. I like my friends' pets although sometimes I can be easily intimidated by pets I just met. I love - maybe envy is a better word - the relationship between owner and pet. Even though I have always admired and respected it, I have to confess that I have never been able to understand the passion and love one has for pets. Perhaps it's something so natural and obvious that you have to have lived it to understand it.

When I was a child we had a dog, well, actually it was my father's dog. His name was AZABACHE. Azabache was a beautiful, big and slightly terrifying German Shepard dog; his fur was completely black, except for his cream chest. My dad trained him and they had a very close relationship. Every day, me, my sisters and Azabache all greeted and said goodbye to my dad with same discipline and affection. Aza (his nickname) was able to fetch the ball, sit down and say hello, giving you one of his legs, all this under my dad's voice commands. I remember he spoke to the dog in a very low voice and, to me, it seemed as if Azabache reacted without the need for my father's commands. I felt admiration about how Aza did these things. But his main mission was not playing with my dad, or to be our big brother, his most important mission was to keep our home safe. Azabache was a very smart, active and lively dog; I remember him as my mom or my father's assistant. Azabache knew when the school bus was about to arrive and would signal when it was time for us to hurry up and be ready at the door. He would tell us when my mom or dad's cars were arriving, or when the garbage truck was coming and we had forgotten to put out the trash. My mom prepared his food and kept him clean. I remember seeing her get upset when Azabache used to run through the sheets being hung to dry in the patio – now, she had to wash them again.



Before the pandemic, one of my sisters came from Venezuela to the US to visit her son for Christmas holidays. She loves pets and she had gotten a baby puppy named Mia. Her trip was only supposed to last three months and she had prepared everything so my other sister and nephews could take care of Mia during her absence. At the beginning, they chatted often by video and text and everything seemed fine. Although I understood she

missed Mia, all of this seemed like a little too much for me. I was not prepared for what I would see when the pandemic arrived. The Pandemic changed her plans, she had to stay here for one year. This tore her world upside-down. But what she couldn't stand the most was to miss seeing Mia growing up - how she was passing from eating liquids to solid food, the visits to vet for vaccinations, or when she went to doggy-school. There were two things she told me that really broke my heart. One of them was when she told me she was afraid Mia would forget her. The other one was that she was yearning to feel, in her own arms, exactly how much Mia was growing. I was able to feel, through my sister, that this was a real fear, a real possibility, a real emotional pain. Time passes so fast in this phase of the puppy's life, my sister told me. My nephews decided to use technology to share the everyday of Mia's life so my sister could feel close to her.

My sister went back home March 2021, she has since regained Mia's love. Mia is a grown-up happy, healthy and playful dog. Today, I'm able to see plainly the bonds between owners and their pets in a dimension of unconditional love, companionship and familial connection.

My lovely Pets

Written by Tracy Ho



My daughter loves all kinds of animals, and she always wanted a pet, so I got her two dogs and hamsters. Later she left for college, then I had to take care of her pets. Although I was very busy with work by that time, I still loved spending time with them. I loved them, they were sensible and cute, they were my best friends. I spoiled them, I knew I should not feed them table food, but I didn't want them to be unhappy when I ate my food that

I didn't share with them. Anyway, they had a healthy and long life, one lived for 16 years. I miss them so much.

My lovely cat

Written by Nadezda Ivanov

Cats are cute, furry, and one of the most common house pets in the world. I can't say that I don't like dogs but I'm definitely cat's person.

Cats are incredible creatures and unique in so many ways. Cats may be quiet and fond of their alone time but there is much more to them than meets the eye. You can spend a lot of time watching them and you won't be bored.

There have been several cats in my life. They were all females because I prefer the female's cats. Male cats are very different from female cats. My husband has always



had male cats and our first common kitten was a girl. My husband once told me that he cannot believe that a cat's behavior is dependent on gender. But our pet shows it to him every day!

This pandemic has brought us a big problem. A few weeks before the start of taking quarantine, our cat became seriously ill. She spent 3 days at the veterinary hospital and returned home before the pandemic came. The result of this disease was a diabetic, so she needed a lot of treatment. She was losing weight; she could eat only special food twice a day. We did not know how to do this, because, as you remember, all businesses were closed, people were in a panic, pharmacy had shortage some medicine. And now I want to say a huge thank to all the veterinary clinics, and specialty our vet, that worked at this difficult time. It took her recovery for few months and our cat received all medical services that she needed.

Torch is the official name of our cat. She was so named from the ginger hind right leg. And our Torch is now in good condition. We still check this for every 3 months. We really hope that she will be able to fully recover, because, as our veterinarian said, cats are tricky, they can lose diabetes unlike humans.

My family truly believe in this!

My pets in my childhood

Written by Li Dezheng

I grew up without a mother. My aunt, who was like my mother, raised me. She didn't live long either and she left me a dog and a cat to accompany me playing and sleeping. My dog was named John and my cat was named Pacy. Their names were given by my aunt. They were my dear friends. Every night Pacy was lying on my right side and John on my left side. At my age in the 80s, lots of memories have faded away. But the memories of my dog and cat in my childhood are still so vivid. In my mind they were like my best buddies and I could share my happiness and sadness with them. We developed a strong bond. They accompanied me until they passed. The year John died was when I was about to enter junior high school and Pacy died three years later. My childhood experience with them made me a lifelong pet lover. I have had dogs or cats for most of my life.



My name is Betta

Written by Kala Sivasubramanian, LVSC Tutor



My name is Betta and I am betta' than any other fish! I really belong to Kala's friend, but when my owner had to visit India, I came to live with Kala for a month. Did I mention that Kala is a terrible pet owner and had no idea how to look after me?

Kala would leave for many hours each day for work 😞. I got so bored! I had no one to play with. She would leave some food in the tank, but I would finish eating in like 5 seconds. The rest of the day, I swam around my tank. When she returned home in the evening, I would come racing up to the top of the water tank, saying "Hi, hi! You are FINALLY home, I am SO bored, play with me!". I would swim around eagerly, showing off my moves and she would look at me with surprise. What?! I may be a fish, but I am just like a dog, I need company too.

I am a Siamese fighting fish and I am native to Southeast Asia. I am aggressive by nature and I love to fight with other bettas. Don't ever put two of us male bettas in the same tank, we can fight each other to the death. To keep me healthy, Kala would place a mirror in front of my tank for 30 minutes once or twice every day. I was so happy to see an opponent, I fought this guy every day. I would swim at him, pretend to bite

him, hit him with my fins. Actually, I was just fighting my mirror image, but I didn't mind!

One week, Kala fed me so much food that I got sick. I tried to tell her I was sick by floating in my water bowl, not moving and staring at her with sad eyes. It took her a couple of days to figure out that something was wrong. She got me some medicine that made the water blue. Boy, that scared me! But the blue medicine made me better and I got back my energy. When I started swimming again and flying up and down my tank, she was so relieved. I guess she loves me after all ❤️. What can I say, I am a handsome guy with a great personality! 😎

My daughter's dream pet.

Written by Artur Gawkowski

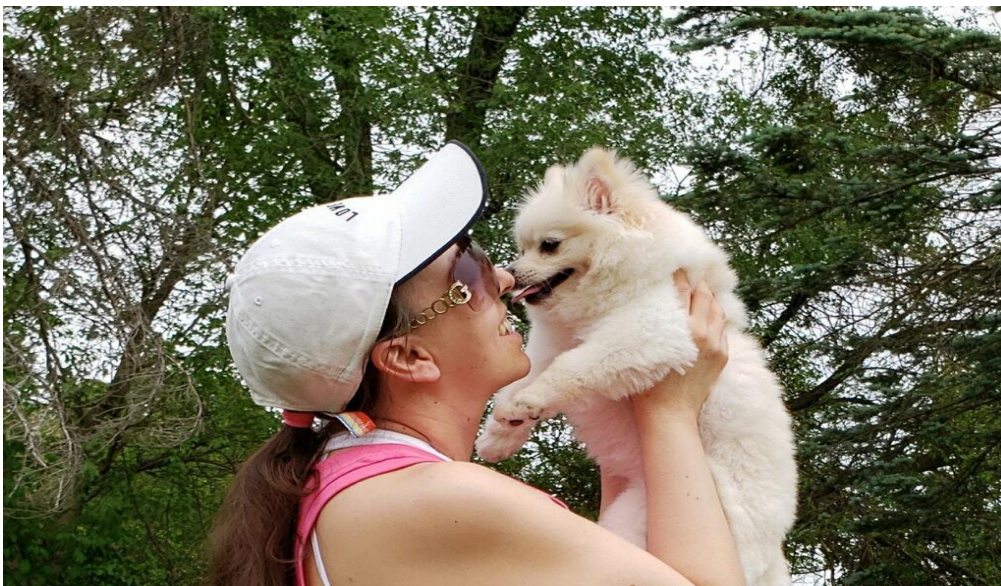


The pet that my daughter dreams about is a dog. The breed that she wants is a golden retriever. The golden retriever is one of the most popular dog breeds in the United States. The breed's friendly, tolerant attitude makes them great family pets, and their intelligence makes them highly capable working dogs. My daughter has always dreamed of a dog because she is an only child and needs a friend, but cannot have one because of responsibilities and many other things. My wife and I have thought about having a dog, but the biggest reason we can't have a dog is because of our job. My wife and I are usually not home and our daughter has school. The dog wouldn't get as much attention as everyone would be busy. However, one day I will think about buying for my daughter because of her very good academic results and her daily help with cleaning inside and outside the house.

My therapist has four legs.

Written by Yorleny Fuentes

I call her my therapist, because without her I'd fall apart. Her name is Chanel, my best confidant and companion. I can tell her anything and she'd never spill the beans. She's the most adorable and cutest puppy I've ever seen. She came along when I really needed her the most and changed my life. Her love truly is unconditional and beyond doubt, that's why I cherish her so much. She always sticks with me through thick and thin and she always finds a way to cheer me up when times get hard. She makes me laugh when I don't even want to smile. She also takes me for walks. I say that, because even though sometimes I'm really beat and I refuse to go, she finds the way to force me to do it. She's so hilarious, boisterous and frisky. Her sticky tongue wakes me up every morning and that makes my day. Even though sometimes I get mad at her when she steals my slippers, I do love her so much. I love the goofy way she looks at me when she behaves out of line. I melt. I love her naughtiness. It's amazing how much love she brought into my life. She makes me so happy every time I get home, even if I just leave the house for five minutes, she goes crazy when she sees me. She wags her tail so fast and hard that sometimes I'm afraid she will break it. My fur ball is just my little bundle of happiness.



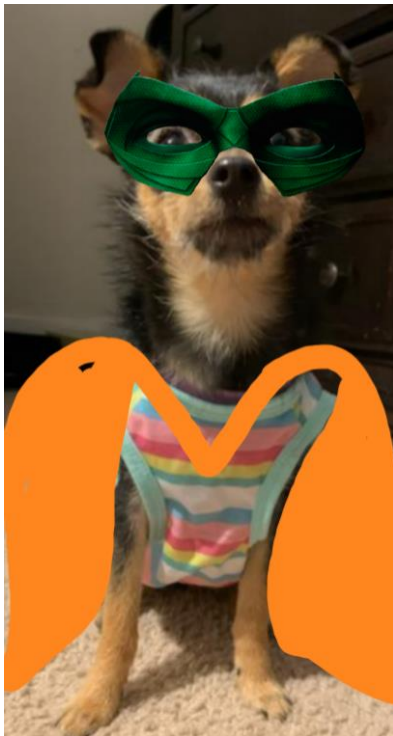
Cookie and her adventures

Written by Andrea Serrano

Once upon a time there was a Chihuahua named Cookie, her mom named Cookie because she was very small. Cookie lived with her family in a small house.

Cookie had a special characteristic that caught the attention of many. Cookie did not have a tail, her family loved Cookie so much, they did not pay attention to that.

Cookie had a superpower that nobody knew about, not even her mom. Cookie could jump as high as flea, as high as cricket, as high as a frog, as high as a rabbit, as high as kangaroo.



Cookie always listened to her mom, she always ate all her food, drank all her water, brushed her teeth every morning, took her vitamins, every morning. Cookie enjoyed going to the park and running on the grass and observing everything around her, but this time it was very different.

Cookie heard this little bird that spoke loudly to her, saying: "Hello shrimp, without a tail".

Cookie felt so sad and began to cry, but at the that moment something happened, the little bird leaned so far from its nest that it fell heavenly on the hard pavement.

Cookie approached the little bird, immediately hugged it and jumped so high that it almost reached the tall tree and put it back in its nest. The little bird was very grateful and said, "Thank you very much for helping me, if it had not been for you, I probably

wouldn't have gone home, because I don't know how to fly!". From That day they became good friends.

Now the little bird knew about Cookie super power's. She could fly as high as a flea, as high as a cricket, as high as a rabbit.....end.

Animals make us better humans

Written by Allison Caulfield, LVSC Tutor

Caring for an animal can bring out the best of humanity. Animals are wholly dependent on us and in return for our care and love they are the most loyal of all companions. They eat what we serve, they don't complain about a soggy mushroom on their plate and never say the mattress is lumpy. My dog does not text at the dinner table and my cat doesn't hog the bathroom and leave toothpaste on the counter. Nobody complains about a bad hair day!

My cat torments my dog, constantly slapping his nose to get attention. My dog chases my cat till she jumps on her back and rides her like a pony with a paw to whip the dog. My chickens torment the fox that patrols the coup each morning at 6:30 am. After raising many kids my animals provide comfort, entertainment and make me feel whole. They listen to me fret, they rub against my feet, and when I walk in the door from getting the mail its like a New Years Day celebration every time.

