

# The Sit Stay Reader

Literacy programs for kids and dogs

Volume 4 Number 1

## Fall into Reading

It's 8:00am and Chicago is noisy with the sounds of September. The school bus engine purrs, still groggy from its summer slumber. The brakes squeak to a halt as second grader, Samon, patters hurriedly down the bus stairs.

Entering her class at Manierre Elementary in the Cabrini-Green area, Samon is excited to meet her new classmates and teacher. Then she takes a look at the chalk board and sees the **Sit Stay Read** poster that says, "Monday is **Sit Stay Read** Day". Seeing the photos of Rocky, Mickey and Lulu, Samon grins from ear to ear. Just think of all the reading she'll get to do with her favorite dogs! She knows **Sit Stay Read** doesn't start until October—and it can't come soon enough.

This promises to be the busiest school year yet for **Sit Stay Read** volunteers, as we'll be helping kids learn to read in an increased total of seven schools and 15 classrooms. That's more than 500 children and an impressive total of 18,200 minutes of individual one-on-one reading!



Samon is all smiles when she's reading with Mickey!

The reading fun starts in October and although Samon may be sad to see her doggy pals leave after their fall session is over, she'll be looking forward to Reading Rewards and Guest Readers throughout the rest of the year.

In addition to an eventful school schedule, **Sit Stay Read** will be busy with the continuation of community programs. Our volunteers have a lot of work ahead, but we're enthusiastic about making this year top dog!

## Five Years of Reading Fun

**Sit Stay Read's** five year anniversary is a time to look back and acknowledge how far we've come. From one small library program in 2003 to a comprehensive school and community curriculum today, our organization has grown by leaps and bounds.

While five years is a noteworthy milestone, what's more worthy of a celebration is the number of children that have learned to read with **Sit Stay Read**!

Our volunteers and dogs have made an impact in the lives of 1,633 children. As we begin the 2008-09 programs we feel privileged to work with more than 500 children this year alone. Children like 7-year-old Chadonya who wrote to us to say, "Thank you for helping us get an education to go to college and find a job!"

Our dedicated volunteers, generous donors, and partners are the lifeblood of **Sit Stay Read**. Thank you for five years of reading fun!

## Come Party With Us!

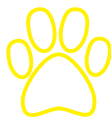
We'd love to celebrate this important occasion with you (and your pup!)

Mark your calendar for  
**Nov. 16th from 1-3:30pm**

We'll have good food, good drinks, and as always, good cheer!

**\$10 per person • \$5 per dog**  
Free for **Sit Stay Read** Volunteers and Dog Teams!

More details to come—check your email or visit [www.sitstayread.org](http://www.sitstayread.org) for updates.



# Donor Recognition



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## Thank You!

Sit Stay Read is committed to helping children learn to read and we couldn't do it without our wonderful donors who contributed to date in 2008.

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by Sarah and Tim Murphy  
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*Rosy* by Kristin Evans  
*Gail & Joel Schwab* by Edie Goodman

## Support the Magic of Reading

A donation to Sit Stay Read is a wonderful way to show you care.

### Whatever the occasion—

- in memory of a beloved pet, friend or family member
- to honor a loved one
- to mark a special event

Your gift will make a difference in the lives of children in need. To acknowledge your generosity, we'll personalize a bookplate and send a lovely card to your gift recipient.



Visit [www.sitstayread.org](http://www.sitstayread.org) to learn more about the perfect gift.

# Test Scores Are In

She's embarrassed, a bit panicked, and completely disappointed in her second grade self. She can't read. She just can't. She doesn't know how. She's not a reader and she never will be.

But what if Alice was there? What if Alice, the soft-coated Wheaten Terrier, was right there by her side, gazing up at her with those puppy-dog eyes that make even the cold-hearted smile?

Alice doesn't know good reading from bad reading. She doesn't care if you stumble on a word or two, or if the words come out a little slower than you'd like, or even if you forget that there was a question mark at the end of that sentence. She'll love you just the same.

Alice will make a reader out of that uneasy second grader; the test scores are on her side.

The DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) oral reading frequency assessment is an evaluation tool for reading development mandated by Chicago Public Schools and used to assess the 2007-08 Sit Stay Read second grade school programs.

Supervising National Louis University professors Dr. Jan Perney and Dr. Robert Clark report that the DIBELS results show a statistically significant difference between schools with a Sit Stay Read program and those without.



Alice listens patiently to a young reader.

**Average for Sit Stay Read Classes:**  
increase of 38 words per minute

**Average for Comparison Classes:**  
increase of 27 words per minute

These results complement the 2004-05 DIBELS evaluation conducted by **Sit Stay Read**. Students in that comparison group increased their reading fluency by 9 words per minute while students participating in the **Sit Stay Read** program showed an increase of 24 words per minute.

We're enthusiastic about the coming year,

knowing we have a blueprint for reading success. Thanks to these new DIBELS results, we know for certain that our dedicated volunteers (two- and four-legged) are making a difference in the lives of children. Evaluations will expand and continue throughout the school year to ensure kids are getting maximum impact from the program.

And, of course, Alice and her friends will be back in school, sitting contentedly atop their fleece blankets in the corner of the classroom, watching students transform into fluent readers, one tail wag at a time.

## What Works? NBC News Says, "Sit Stay Read"

From California to Pennsylvania, Texas to Michigan and everywhere in between—folks coast to coast want to help kids learn to read!

The NBC Nightly News "What Works" piece touched people all across the nation (if you missed it, you can find a link on our website). We've been flooded with messages from individuals who want Sit Stay Read in their city.

We know there are kids in need of reading help all across the country. Our dream is to bring Sit Stay Read programs to each and every one of them, helping more kids become lifelong readers. Right now we're gathering resources—information, people, money, skills—to make this



NBC filming volunteers outside National Teachers Academy

dream a reality.

It is our priority to maintain program quality and impact while bringing Sit Stay Read to kids who need it most. If you can help, please give us a call! 773-545-6629

## Surf Our Updated Site

What is Charlie the Chihuahua's favorite treat? Cucumbers, of course. Find out all the Sit Stay Read dogs' favorite treats and more by checking out the *Dog Bios* at [www.sitstayread.org](http://www.sitstayread.org).



Isn't Andrea Marino's Charlie adorable?

You can also browse for fun merchandise in the *Sit Stay Read Shop* or download "Reading Tips with Pets," and print coloring pages in our new *Fun Stuff* section!

# Be Our Guest

Opera singers, poets, and Bears players, oh my! Sit Stay Read students are in for a treat this year as our Guest Readers return to the classrooms.

Each month the kids can't wait for the surprise visit from a professional who reads a book to their class. It could be an opera singer reading *The Dog Who Sang at the Opera*, or a fireman reading *Dot the Fire Dog*. Kids love talking with the Guest Readers, finding out about their professions, and learning why reading is important in their jobs.

Many students have never heard of the opera, orchestra, or ballet. But, once they've heard our guests read and perform, we're sure they'll never forget the experience.

Guest Reader and author, Beth Finke, made a big impression on our young readers when she brought her seeing-eye dog, Hanni, to classrooms last year and confessed to the kids that she's not a very good reader.

"The kids looked at her, puzzled," recalls MK Czerwiec, Beth's Sit Stay Read volunteer escort, "They know what it means to be their age and a poor reader, but Beth is an adult, and an author!"

Beth explained that she's a poor reader because she is still learning to read Braille, and progress is very slow. After handing out Braille bookmarks, she demonstrated Braille reading to the class. She sounded out the words

by reading each letter, just like the kids have been taught to do.

"Seeing an adult learn to read had an encouraging effect on the students," reports MK, "They seemed to feel that if Beth could do it, so could they."

Thanks to Sit Stay Read, the students have dogs to help them learn, just like Beth has Hanni.



Maestro Allen Tinkham, of the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra, shows students how to be a conductor



Chicago Bear's left guard, Josh Beekman, visited thrilled students at Lowell Elementary



Poet Keith Kelly had the whole class smiling and laughing with his dog poems



Beth Finke with her seeing-eye dog, Hanni



## Sit Stay Read! Inc.

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[www.sitstayread.org](http://www.sitstayread.org)

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