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Dog days

BY JULIE BROWN • OBSERVER STAFF WRITER • JULY 20, 2008

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Alyssa Hoeft, almost 10, got in some summer reading Thursday É and she wasn't alone.

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Alyssa, a fifth-grader at Jefferson-Barns Elementary in Westland, read to Elle Mae, a rescue dog whose specialty is reading, during an afternoon session at the Dorsey Center. The sessions are sponsored by the William P. Faust Public Library of Westland.

"She's a good listener," Alyssa said. "I thought she was going to bark."

Alyssa, whose favorite books are by Dr. Seuss, especially Green Eggs & Ham, said the library session at the center was different from school, "cause I would usually read to kids not dogs," she said.

Elle Mae was patient and gentle with the children.

"Elle is my dog," said Lynne Haggmann of Westland, with the Read Fur Fun organization, which provides Reading Education Assistance Dogs. "We are a registered pet therapy team."

Haggmann and Elle visit St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia. Haggmann's been involved about nine months.

"We do this during the school year, too," at schools, she said of the one-on-one reading in "a relaxed, nonjudgmental environment."

Cheryl Napsha, library director, and Library Board member Leslie Bell, both of Westland, were at the Dorsey Center Thursday. The library has began to offer children's programming this summer at the Norwayne neighborhood site, a city facility.



Perhaps Elle doe



Six-year-old Rich owner, Lynne Haggmann | staff

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Elle will be back at the Dorsey Center 1-3 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 14, for children's reading. The library is offering story times with crafts at the Dorsey Center, 1-3 p.m. Wednesday, July 30, Monday, Aug. 4, and Thursday, Aug. 14, although Elle won't be there July 30 or Aug. 4.

Light refreshments are served, and you don't need to register in advance. For details, call the Children's Reference Desk at (734) 326-6123.

The children usually pick the books, said Hagmann, although at schools a teacher or learning specialist often picks them.

"The idea is not to do textbook kind of things," she said.

Napsha was pleased to have colleague Lisa Hausman, head of children's services at the library, with her at the Dorsey Center on Dorsey, a side street off Venoy south of Palmer.

"She'll adapt her stories to the age group so everybody's welcome," Napsha said.

She and other library leaders are looking at having a permanent presence at the Dorsey Center. A committee's looking at finances and other issues related to that.

"We're grateful to the city" for Dorsey Center use, Napsha said. The library is on Central City Parkway, further north in the city, and leaders are exploring ways to reach the Norwayne area.

Across the colorful room complete with mural, Chyann Daly, 13, was reading Big Yellow Sunflower to younger kids.

"It was fun," Chyann said of Elle's visit. "I liked it a lot."

Chyann, an eighth-grader at Dr. Charles Drew Academy in Ecorse, likes the Harry Potter books. She's read all but one which she is tackling now.

"I like to see what happens next," she said of books.

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