

# American Humane Association™

The nation's voice for the protection of children & animals™



## Animal-Assisted Therapy Team of the Month - September 2011

### *Patrick Smith & Paisley*

Working in the veterinary field, seeing firsthand the healing power and love that animals have for their human companion, I often wondered how this unconditional love animals have for us could support those individuals who could benefit from that healing love.

I began my search and found Delta Society had the resources I was looking for about the healing relationships developed through the human-animal bond of Animal Assisted Therapy. I was excited to find documented research on AAT and a local organization, American Humane Association, providing training for AAT.

In June, 2009, I became a Pet Partners® Team with Paisley, my Labrador retriever. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of both adults and children, especially anyone needing help in reading.

As a volunteer who works with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders, I noticed some children needed a little extra love and encouragement. We can all recall times when we were little and someone was made fun of because they had trouble reading or struggled when reading aloud. The fear and the loss of interest this can cause to the child can be devastating.

Because of the training of the “Reading Education Assistance Dogs” program (R.E.A.D.), I was able to start a reading program at Timberline Elementary School. Every Friday, Paisley and I go to the school to spend time with struggling readers.

We are currently working with four students who are eager to read to their furry friend Paisley. Being a patient and willing companion is a natural fit for



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Paisley. She loves to lie around and snuggle, she is calm and peaceful, and she loves to be touched and stroked. The children enjoy the experience so much that they want to read not just one but two or more books to her. They all know that Paisley accepts them for who they are.

The human-animal bond forged between these children and Paisley has helped them to gain confidence and transition into enthusiastic readers who want to continue to read. Paisley is an accomplished canine citizen and a blessing to all her reading pals.

