

HUMANE ED NEWS

Mutt-i-grees Curriculum



Pictured are Wendy Weiss and Waltzing Matilda, a King Charles Cavalier Spaniel.

Teachers, grades pre-k to 12, are invited to register for our Saturday, November 8th, 2014, to learn about the Muttigrees Curriculum. The Curriculum teaches social and emotional skills and was developed by the NSAL's Pet Savers Foundation in collaboration with Yale University School of the 21st Century, the goal of the Mutt-i-grees® Curriculum is to enable children to grow up to be calm, confident, and caring.

Check out our workshop flyer for registration information.

MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH MUTT-I-GREES: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE MEETS MICHAEL VICK

**Article by Marsha Rabe
for the Spring 2013 Online
Mutt-i-grees Curriculum**

Wendy Weiss, a member of Benjamin N. Cardozo High School's English department, can tell you a thing or two about shelter dogs. Along with several other women, Weiss operates a small, nonprofit rescue group called unwantedNYCpets.org that rescues dogs and cats from the New York City's high-kill Animal Care and Control. Her organization specializes in animals that few other rescue groups will consider—one-eyed dogs, blind cats, deaf dogs, and abused pit bulls. Her passion for finding these animals loving, permanent homes blended perfectly with the Curriculum, and like her Mutt-i-grees colleagues at Benjamin N. Cardozo High School, Weiss showed sophistication and creativity when it came to finding links between dogs and academic subjects, including even Shakespeare.

"My seniors have to write a thesis paper on the college level, so I assigned Shakespeare's *Othello* and asked them to write about the concept of reputation, and how a person's reputation might or might not be in direct correlation to his actions." The loss of reputation is a powerful theme in *Othello*, touching everyone from the title character to Casio and Desdemona, with villainous Iago acting as the wily manipulator of both

perception and reputation. What Weiss brought to the discussion, however, was yet another character, someone contemporary and notorious, someone the students could not have expected to meet in the midst of an Elizabethan drama: football quarterback Michael Vick, who spent 21 months in federal prison after being convicted of illegal interstate dog fighting. The dogs he tortured and killed were pit bulls.

"The kids all agreed that Vick ruined his own reputation," she says, "that his actions were at fault. But then I started talking about pit bulls. At first they all said, 'Oh, pit bulls are vicious and aggressive and they bite.' So I told them about this breed's history, how, in the 1920s, these dogs were known as 'nanny dogs' because of their gentleness and great behavior with babies and children. I told them about the Lil' Rascals dog, Petey, and that pits were once the most popular and beloved dogs in the country. I explained that due to circumstances and mishandling, the pit bull's reputation was tarnished, through no fault of their own. I showed them photos of Vick's abused dogs on the Smart Board, and they were aghast. I then handed out an article on Vick. They took all this information, processed it, and wrote about *Othello*, Casio, Michael Vick, and pit bulls. They made connections, and their essays also satisfied the [Common Core State Standards](#), like determining the meaning of the text, analyzing the text, and writing to support an argument. It all fell into place."

Thank you Wendy and Marsha for sharing this article.

TEACHER ORGANIZES FOOD DRIVE FOR CATS AND DOGS



Diane Solomon, a teacher at PS 209Q, read a UFT Humane Education Committee alert and decided to get involved. This is what Diane told us:

“After reading your announcement asking for donations for Pets for Life, I ran a quite successful donation program at our school several times. I made an (almost) professional sign (32"X40") and hung it in our lobby over a cardboard box decorated with animal pictures.

The pictures are from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) Animals' magazine so there is no copyright problem. I think it might help other teachers to run a successful campaign if they used a professional sign. Pets for Life is great!”

The newly renamed program, The Pet Help Partners (PHP), helps keep families and their pets together during difficult times.

Partnering with local professionals and businesses, PHP provides in-depth problem-solving advice,

advocacy, and other services to members of the community who face losing their beloved pets because of frustrations with pet behavior, problems with housing, financial difficulties, and other life crises.

Since 2009, their program has kept more than 12,000 pets with their families—averting heartbreak and preventing many cats and dogs from losing their homes and being put at risk.

Through their free phone helpline, they assist thousands of people each year. **You can reach them for additional information by calling 917-468-2938. A member of the team will COME TO YOUR SCHOOL SITE to pick up the cat & dog food that you collect from your class — or your entire school as a school-wide service project. Please try to get involved.**

WHY A DAY JUST FOR FARMED ANIMALS?

The Farm Animal Rights Movement (FARM) urges you to be a voice for farmed animals every day but especially on October 2nd.

Each year approximately 65 billion animals are killed to produce meat, eggs and dairy. More animals are killed for food than for any other reason combined.

Most of these animals are raised on factory farms, where they are confined, mutilated, and raised to grow so large, so quickly, that many of them literally suffer to death.

Even animals raised on small family farms endure many of these abuses, and all animals raised for food face a gruesome slaughter.

Get involved and get your students involved. High school students can watch and discuss the 10 Billion Lives video at <http://10billionlives.com/>. Teachers of pre-k to 12 can e-mail us at with the words “Humane Ed Unit on Farmed Animals” in the Subject Line and a brief note indicating that you want the a unit suitable for pre-k to 5, and/or grades 6 - 8 and/or grades 9 - 12 in the message area and we will send you a unit on farmed animals to use with your class.

Check out the rest of the Farm Animal Rights Movement website at <http://www.farmusa.org/> for other ways you can become involved. You may also want to log on to the Citizens for Healthy Options In Children's Education site at <http://choiceusa.net/parents-resources.html> for lesson plans and a variety of information about plant-based eating. The New York Coalition for Healthy School food is another excellent resource at <http://www.healthyschoolfood.org/>.



LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN FOR HUMANE EDUCATION

The UFT Humane Education Committee is asking teachers to write letters to the **New York State Commissioner of Education, Dr. John B. King, Jr asking for ACTIVE NYC and NYS Department of Education** implementation of the 1947 New York State mandate for humane education in schools under state control.

An example of one of the letters written, but addressed to the NYC School Chancellor, is highlighted here.

Dear Chancellor Farina,

I am writing a letter in support of humane education. I was fortunate enough to attend a UFT Humane Education Committee workshop in November 2013, and it was truly life-changing. I consider myself a compassionate person, and I certainly try to bring that into my classroom either as part of discussions and as a way to create the Classroom Environment. However, going to this particular workshop opened my eyes even further. We discussed what it means to be "humane" both to other humans and animals, how this can be achieved, and why it is important for us as teachers as well as our students. The discussion and activities centered around these topics was eye-opening.

This workshop motivated me to teach *War Horse* to my 9th Grade Ramp Up Class. I was motivated to teach it in a further attempt to bring up their reading levels, but I chose this book because of its focus on friendships and empathy. The discussions that came out of teaching

this book, which were centered around the text, were incredibly moving. We discussed the Essential Questions, such as "Why is friendship important?" and "Why is it important to treat humans and animals with kindness and empathy?" throughout. This work was inspired by the wonderful workshop in November.

I have shared the notes from this workshop with my colleagues and Assistant Principal. They were intrigued by it, but I think they would gain more from it if they were to experience these workshops themselves. I am writing to you because I strongly believe teachers and students would benefit from humane education workshops. A workshop on Humane Education would be a wonderful activity to have as part of a Professional Development Day. Thinking about how to make ourselves and our students more empathetic, and then being given strategies and resources to do so as part of our curriculum would be extremely powerful.

Thank you for your time.

Zach Rothman-Hicks, Teacher
High School for Health Professions
and Human Services, Manhattan

The primary goal of our letter writing campaign is to have the Department of Education hire and pay teachers to conduct humane ed programs. Another goal is humane education workshops at district and school-wide levels.

To help with this effort by writing your own letter e-mail the UFT office at uftprofessionalcommittees@uft.org with the words "Humane Ed Letter Writing Campaign" in the subject line. We will get additional information to you about this important effort. Your help is vital to our success.

UFT HUMANE EDUCATION COMMITTEE WEBSITE

The UFT Humane Education Committee's website contains information that can help you develop a viable program for your students. The site contains:

- *Humane Education Resource Guide* with lessons for grades pre-k to 6
- *Humane Science Curricula* for teachers of elementary and secondary school
- The *Humane Trip Advisory* with information about trips we endorse as well as those teachers have found objectionable
- Previous humane education newsletters
- A membership enrollment form

The *Humane Education Resource Guide* contains a copy of New York State Education Law Section 809, which mandates "instruction in the humane treatment, and protection of animals" in every elementary school under state control.

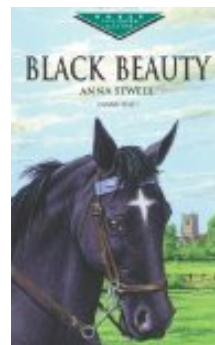
Please continue to visit our website as we will be adding information about valuable bibliographies of books you might want to consider purchasing for your class – perhaps with your Teachers' Choice funding. We strongly recommend the books endorsed by:

Institute for Humane Education

<http://humaneeducation.org/blog/category/resources/types/books/children-books/>

Red Rover

<http://www.redrover.org/recommended-childrens-books-humane-themes>



Log on to the UFT/HEC website at www.uft.org/committees/humane-education-committee for lesson plans, curriculum units, a summary of award winning humane science projects, workshop listings, P-course information, photographs, our Humane Trip Advisory, Humane Education Resource Guide, Humane Science Units and a MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT form.