

4-H Leader's Year-Round Canine Therapy Projects

Updated 11/09/2022/lsc

BEST FRIENDS CANINE THERAPY PROJECTS for leaders is not just volunteering for the 4-H'er's Summer Dog Project. Oh heavens no! B.F. has evolved into an enjoyable year-round community canine therapy and service program in which we

1. Share our canines with the community by visiting nursing homes, schools, libraries and hospitals, and senior centers thus earning our American Kennel Club Canine Therapy titles!
2. Continue our canine education by taking Canine Obedience, Agility, Jr. Showmanship, Rally and Scent Work lessons offered by the club
3. Try and meet once a month to keep ourselves and our dogs up to date and in practice for when we add a Non-Traditional 4-H'er to the team for the summer dog project.
4. Work on earning our American Kennel Club Canine Therapy Titles and Obedience titles through the club by offering a Canine Good Citizen Test as a goal for leaders and 4-H'ers.
5. 4-H and Club **REGISTERED** leaders may take continuing canine education lessons at Mutterly Love for FREE! Classes include Dog Obedience, Agility, Rally, Jr. Showmanship, Scent Work. (Please note: "**REGISTERED**" means you have completed your 4-H and Best Friends 4-H club's yearly membership applications and have paid your yearly club dues of \$10.00.)
6. 4-H leaders and his or her canine are covered under the 4-H liability insurance umbrella when completing an approved canine therapy visit.

BEST FRIENDS 4-H LEADER'S YEAR-ROUND CANINE THERAPY PROJECTS being offered are

- **4-H Leader's Continuing Canine Education - FREE** Continuing Canine Education through dog training classes at Mutterly Love.
- **4-H Team Instructor Class** - Team Instructor Class will be scheduled in May of each year to assist the new and renewed 4-H Team Instructor in updating and understanding the 4-H Summer Dog Class Projects training and goals for the 4-H'ers.
- **Andrews University Seminars** - Best Friends 4-H Club leaders and canines are invited into the Education Department and the Nursing Department once a year to educate and demonstrate the advantages of Canine Therapy to the future teachers and nurses. In bringing the canine into the classroom as a visual aid we are demonstrating the practicality of how the canine assists in the knowledge that alternative education and nursing does have their benefits.
- **Berrien County Youth Fair** - At the culmination of the Summer Dog Project training, the 4-H'er, leader and the canine, enter the Berrien County Youth Fair's Dog Events of Rally, Dog Costume, Dog Obedience, Jr. Showmanship and Dog Agility thus completing the 4-H'er's Dog Project for the year.
- **Blossomland Learning Center, Berrien Springs, Michigan** - During the months of September through April, Best Friends 4-H Club leaders bring their temperament tested canines into the gym and encourage the non-traditional (*life challenged, handicapped, etc.*) students to "Take the dog for a walk." By encouraging the NTR student to walk the dog, he or she is using his or her cognitive thinking process, communications and tactile skills in a positive manner. **PLEASE NOTE: Leaders will need two leashes on hand...** one for the leader and one for the student. If the leaders finds that the student is in control and one leash is

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required, the leader's leash can be worn around the neck and shoulders. **Canine's Harness/Vest:** If your dog has a harness or vest, please make sure the dog is wearing the vest before you enter the school.

- **Book Hounds** – By invitation, Best Friends 4-H Club leaders will bring his or her canine into the library and have a child read a book to their canine in fifteen-to-twenty-minute sessions. Many children feel more at ease when they read to a pet, who is simply there to listen – not to judge how well the child is reading. FYI ... Studies have shown that children who read to dogs achieve higher end-of-year reading scores. One of Best Friends top 4-H leaders, Colleen Melendy, along with her team canines, Blossom and Teddy, assisted in a video on the Canine Reading Programs for PBS Michiana. You can see this video on [EducationCounts Michiana - Read to a Therapy Dog \(wnit.org\)](http://www.wnit.org/educationcounts/michiana-read-to-a-therapy-dog)
- **Canine Education in Schools** – With the school's invitation, Best Friends 4-H Club leaders and his or her temperament tested canine will visit the classroom to assist in canine safety education and by using the canine as a therapy tool, help destress the students. Depending upon the need, the Best Friends 4-H Club leader and canine will assist in teaching a
 1. Work one-on-one with a student in the school's reading program
 2. Canine Safety Program (*Ask permission before petting a dog, what to do if a strange dog approach you, where to go if you see a dog you don't know.*)
 3. Canine Ownership and Responsibility Program (*Teaching how to care for a dog.*)
- **Canine Therapy in the Hospitals** – Best Friends 4-H Club works with Berrien County hospitals in bringing canine therapy to their patients and staff.
- **Canine Therapy Sessions in Schools** – Schools and Universities will invite B.F. leaders to bring in our canines so the students can "play" with the dogs, thus destressing the student from the day's stressful events. *Example: Final exams.*

BEST FRIENDS 4-H CLUB COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS – Leaders and 4-H'ers join in and contribute to these events

Berrien County, Michigan's 4-H "Thanks for Giving" Project - Every November, Berrien County 4-H clubs, along with MSU Extension Office and The Farm Bureau, purchase and collect groceries, and put together food baskets for a Thanksgiving dinner for families that are having financial difficulties.

Berrien County Animal Control Raffle – At Best Friends 4-H Club Christmas Dinner Meeting, leaders, parents and 4-H'ers purchase dog food and related items for the Berrien County Animal Control. These items can then be traded for raffle ticket on items to be raffled off at our Christmas Dinner Meeting held in December of each year.

Canine Good Citizen Testing – Each year B.F. Coordinators and members sponsor and participate in an American Kennel Canine Good Citizen Test giving the participants an opportunity to temperament test their dog and earn one of many AKC titles.