

Cat joins children's reading therapy program

For more than seven years kids have been gaining confidence in their reading with the help of some local dogs. RUFF (Reading Up For Fun), a Humane Society of Truckee Tahoe program, has been partnering with schools and libraries to pair young readers with certified therapy dogs, but recently expanded the program to include Elvis, RUFF's first listening cat.

Elvis, who was adopted by his owner Cherri Gilmore from the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe as a kitten, is now 10, a gray tabby Manx and is the first feline to become part of the shelter's pet assisted therapy program.

RUFF builds self-esteem in young readers by giving the child a comforting audience to read out loud. Elvis, along with owner/handler Gilmore, spent the summer at Glenshire Elementary helping students with their reading.

According to Erin Ellis, volunteer and humane education programs manager for HSTT, children that read to animals don't feel the same pressure of judgment that they might feel in a classroom or peer setting.

RUFF teams (dog/cat and handler) meet once a week one-on-one with each of their students for 20 minutes.