

## **2006 'NATIONAL KIND TEACHER' SENDS DOGS TO HEAD OF CLASS TO HELP CHILDREN**

Rebekah Harp teams up with her Pugs and Chihuahua to address problems like bullying, drugs, and animal cruelty, leads students in plays about pet overpopulation and endangered species, and helps kids take action for animals through her school-based Jr. Humane Society Club.

A special education teacher for grades four and five at Enterprise Learning Academy in South Jacksonville, Fla., Harp has been selected as the 2006 National KIND Teacher by the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education (NAHEE), youth education affiliate of The Humane Society of the United States.

The 25th annual award recognizes a teacher who consistently incorporates humane education-the teaching of kindness and respect for people, animals, and the environment-into his or her curriculum. NAHEE received over 150 nominations.

"Ms. Harp stands out because of the ingenuity she brings to teaching about humane issues," says Bill DeRosa, NAHEE's executive director.

Harp's in-class and Jr. Humane Society Club projects include:

- \* Polite Pug Patrol, a program where children who model respect and kindness earn certificates, buttons, and a picture with Harp's dogs.
- \* School television shows that feature the dogs and encourage good behavior.
- \* An annual "endangered species safari," where students travel from classroom to classroom to watch skits about different endangered animals.
- \* A play about pet overpopulation, performed for the entire school.
- \* A pet food drive and donation drive for Hurricane Katrina relief.
- \* A letter-writing campaign against Canada's seal hunt.

"Activities such as these," says Harp, "plant seeds of compassion and global activism and awareness." She uses KIND News, NAHEE's classroom newspaper, to help reinforce lessons in kindness to people, animals, and natural habitats.

Harp is thrilled to observe students reaping rewards from her humane education initiatives. She credits her dogs for helping children to share and show compassion and for positive changes in students with the toughest behavior problems. Where academics are concerned, Harp points out that some of her most successful lessons are centered on animals or animal themes. And her dogs have helped reluctant readers build confidence: "Often embarrassed about reading in front of the class," she says, "these children have no problem reading to the dogs in a quiet corner. It builds their confidence enough so that eventually, they can read aloud to everyone."

As the winner of the National KIND Teacher Award, Harp received a plaque and a Teacher's Care & Carry Kit, NAHEE's collection of humane education materials for the classroom. An article on Harp will appear in the 2006-2007 edition of KIND Teacher, NAHEE's annual resource book for teachers. Other K-6 teachers can be nominated for the 2007 award at [www.nahee.org](http://www.nahee.org).

NAHEE's mission is to instill good character in children, with a strong emphasis on the humane treatment of animals and respect for natural habitats, by providing publications and programs to teachers, students, and animal sheltering professionals. KIND News and KIND Teacher are used by 35,000 teachers nationwide to supplement science, reading, writing, and character education curriculums. Learn more at [www.nahee.org](http://www.nahee.org).

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