Rosie reassures rookie readers

“Hi Rosie!”

People’s faces light up whenever Rosie the dog visits a school in River East Transcona. Both students and staff want to stop and say hello.

Today, Rosie has dropped by the library at Harold Hatcher Elementary School, not just for a visit, but to do a job.

Rosie is a certified St. John Ambulance therapy dog who will be helping out with the Reading Tutor Program for RETSD students in grades 2–8 starting this fall. The program provides a five-month period of intensive, direct instruction to students who need help to become more successful readers.

Divisional reading clinicians, who supervise the reading tutors, decide whether a student would benefit from working with Rosie. It’s done with parental approval and based on students’ individual needs.

When reading to a trained therapy dog, research has shown children demonstrate improvements in reading comprehension, attitudes about reading, willingness to read out loud, motivation to attempt challenging text and more.

There are emotional benefits, as well. Self-esteem increases, performance anxiety and stress decrease, and students feel comfort in not being judged. As a result, their confidence levels and sense of pride grow.

Rosie is well-known across the city. She’s also calmed people at flu shot clinics, the airport and the University of Manitoba during exam week.

Rosie’s handler, Jackie Martin, is a reading tutor for River East Transcona and always accompanies her dog on visits.

“Rosie not only puts kids at ease, she makes them excited to read!” says Ms. Martin with a broad smile.

She adds that kids don’t feel ashamed to be taken aside for help on their reading when Rosie is involved.

“Getting chosen to work with Rosie makes them feel special.”
Collaboration yields benefits, hugs

Students in Sharron Hoskins’ Grade 1 class at Radisson School each grab a small white board and marker, and cluster at two tables excitedly.

They work on printing the letters of the alphabet under the guidance of two students from Transcona Collegiate—Matthew Deklyver and Sherri Verbong.

“That’s a pretty tall ‘b’ there,” says Sherri. “It looks like a banana!” The students all giggle.

Matthew and Sherri are very familiar to this class. They’re taking part in one of several collaborations between Radisson and Transcona Collegiate.

The schools are in the unusual position of being side by side and they’ve developed programs that use that proximity to great benefit. The program that brings them into Ms. Hoskins’ classroom was developed by her and Transcona Collegiate principal Sandy Dzuba to assist grades 10–12 students who need some direction or are facing hurdles to their education.

Ms. Dzuba recommends students for the program and the students must take the initiative to meet with Ms. Hoskins, who makes her expectations clear. If they wish to take part, they’re expected to spend their spares in Ms. Hoskins class, assisting with the Grade 1 students. They’re expected to show up, be on time and show commitment.

Everyone involved in the program has benefitted. Ms. Hoskins has help in the classroom, her students have enthusiastic mentors and, most importantly, the Transcona Collegiate students have an opportunity to contribute, feel needed, experience volunteerism, earn a reference and build their confidence. And they’re able to transfer that success to other areas of their school experience or to job opportunities.

Ms. Dzuba shares that Sherri has now been hired by the Radisson before and after school program, and plans to study child care.

“This puts them on a pathway where they can help and support themselves, and head in the right direction,” she says.

And for now, the right direction for those students is across the lawn to Radisson School, straight to a classroom full of what Ms. Hoskins calls “little hugging machines.”

“They feel ten feet tall when they walk out of here,” she says. “The kids look up to them so much and rely on them. That exchange is so powerful. I tear up when I see it.”

Volunteer opportunities for students

Karina Walker set up a booth outside the office at River East Collegiate on September 14, arranged tidy stacks of brochures, and sprinkled in some lollipops to grab the attention of students.

As the division’s community programming co-ordinator for youth, Ms. Walker is in charge of signing up youth programming volunteers. So, she and her colleague Sydney Harder have been visiting RETSD high schools to spread the word about the opportunities available.

RETSD offers a series of grant-funded programs designed to keep our youth engaged outside of school hours, such as Lighthouses, Girls Clubs and Family Fun Nights. The division is looking to boost these programs by engaging older students as volunteers to provide peer support, positive role models, and just another friendly face in the community or at a student’s potential future school.

Volunteers can earn a community service student-initiated project (SIP) credit, build their resumé or scholarship application, give back to their community, feel a sense of pride, and connect with and meet new people.

Volunteering in a position may also open up doors for a paid position in RETSD in the future.
If you have a concern...

Your child’s school will always try to make the learning experience a positive, safe and happy one for its students. However, if you have a concern or an issue, please don’t hesitate to let the school know.

Open communication between home and school is very important. The RETSD Board of Trustees stresses the steps shown below must be followed if concerns are to be properly addressed.

The trustees’ role is to hear all sides of the concern before making a decision on any appeal, to be the link between parents and the division, and to help with divisional processes and policies (such as this concern protocol). They realize that there is no greater advocate for your child than you, the parent.

Here are the steps to follow if you have a concern:

1. Talk to the person most directly involved—your child’s teacher. If you must leave a message, please be sure to provide a day and evening phone number where you can be reached.
2. If talking to the teacher doesn’t resolve the issue, talk to the principal.
3. If you’ve talked to the principal and, over a period of time, the issue still has not been resolved, call the superintendents department.
4. If your concern is not resolved by the superintendents department, you can make an appeal in writing to the board of trustees.
5. The board of trustees will hear your appeal either in person or in writing, whichever you prefer.

For more information, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca > Your RETSD > Policies > Policy KE—Concern Protocol; Policy KE-R—Concerns and Complaints Procedures

FREE preschool programs this fall

**Guess Who Helps You**
Together we will learn about special community helpers who live, work and positively contribute to our neighbourhoods. Through songs, books and educational games, we will discover the everyday heroes and helpers, like police officers, doctors, dentists, librarians and others, who make our streets safer and our lives richer.

Sundays, Oct. 29–Dec. 3
10–11:30 a.m.
Joseph Teres School
131 Sanford Fleming Rd.

**Preschool Play Projects**
During these “make and take” sessions, parents/caregivers will have the opportunity to create easy literacy and numeracy activities to keep their child entertained at home, in the car and on outings. Participants will make file-folder games, board games, memory games and more. All supplies will be provided to participants. While parents/caregivers are being artistic, children will enjoy playing with toys and games, and will make a craft. A healthy snack will be enjoyed by all.

Tuesdays, Nov. 7–Dec. 12
1–2:30 p.m.
Salisbury Morse Place School
795 Prince Rupert Ave.

**The Great Gratitude Art Workshop**
Through stories, songs and lots of creative art experiences, participants will learn about gratitude and how to express appreciation to the people in their lives. In this art workshop, children will make a variety of beautiful projects including gratitude trees and wreathes, thankfulness jars, homemade cards and more!

Parents and children will also have the opportunity to write thank you notes that will be mailed out to their family and friends.

**Oodles of Doodles—Art Extravaganza**
Art lovers of all ages will enjoy “painting the town red!” With finger-painting, chalk drawings, collage activities and more, participants are sure to have a great time! Families will make a deliciously artistic snack and enjoy an interactive story experience and sing-along. Participants are reminded to dress to get messy!

Thursdays, Nov. 30
6:15–7:30 p.m.
Joseph Teres School
131 Sanford Fleming Rd.

For more information or to register, call 204.669.4043 or email kinderlinks@retds.mb.ca.
Volunteer spotlight

School volunteer Theresa Panidisz has been an important part of the Dr. F.W.L. Hamilton School community for several years and has a son attending Grade 5 at the school. Ms. Panidisz serves as chair for the school’s parent advisory council, is the volunteer organizer for the school, and goes above and beyond to help support staff and students. Dr. Hamilton is fortunate to have her!

For more about volunteering in RETSD, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca > Community > Volunteer

Two schools unveiled exciting changes to their playgrounds recently—a greening initiative at Wayoata Elementary School and new playground equipment at École Centrale. Cutting the ribbon of natural grasses at Wayoata were (top, left to right) the greening committee’s Cat Pearson, trustee Colleen Carswell, Elder Carolyn Moar, principal Kerry Cressall, the greening committee’s Christine Frank, and Wayoata students. Visiting the new playground equipment at École Centrale were (bottom, left to right): the playground committee’s Erin Shay, trustee Colleen Carswell, vice-principal Monique Bailey, principal Roswitha Dudar, and city councillor Russ Wyatt.

Board elections for 2017–18

Chairs were also elected for each of the three standing committees that meet regularly to deliberate on matters within their area of responsibility and bring their recommendations to the whole board for consideration.

Trustee Rod Giesbrecht is chair of the finance, facilities and transportation committee, which oversees budgetary concerns, use and maintenance of school grounds and facilities, and transportation concerns.

Trustee Eva Prysizney is chair of the program, policy review and personnel committee, which oversees personnel matters, and reviews board policies, and educational programs and services.

Trustee John Toews is chair of the negotiations committee, which negotiates salaries and working conditions with union and non-union personnel.

The board as a whole meets the first and third Tuesday of every month, September through June, at the Administration Offices, 589 Roch St. Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. and are open to the public.

Trustees Colleen Carswell (board chair) and Michael West (board vice-chair)

Congratulations to Ward 1 trustee Colleen Carswell, who was re-elected chair of the RETSD Board of Trustees for the 2017–18 school year, and to Ward 5 trustee Michael West, who was re-elected vice-chair. The election took place at the board’s first meeting of the year on September 5.

Do you know these two former trustees?

The RETSD Board of Trustees is looking for any information you might have regarding former trustees Louis Hunter and Thomas Barnes. They’re assembling the histories of trustees who have served in the many districts that have made up River East Transcona School Division over the years and are hoping family members or friends may recognize these two men’s names and get in touch.


If you have any information, please contact trustee Eva Prysizney at 204.668.3501 or at eprysizney@retsd.mb.ca.