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The Gifts That Keep on Giving

by Cynthia Clarke

To make merry in the classroom during the Christmas season is to demonstrate the proverbial concepts of peace, goodwill, and brotherly love. For children with special needs, as well as those considered normal, this is a time to allow for and encourage an active display of these emotions and values. Learning and demonstrating such sensitivity does not begin and end with a few stories about the jolly old man and his famous red suit, the reindeer with the General Electric nose, nor the variations of Joseph and Mary in the stable. Nor does it take place solely within the four walls of a schoolroom.

Making merry is expressing a reverence for all life, for doing to others as you would have them do to you, whether man or beast, December or July. An effective means of conveying these standards of humaneness and of generating joy is through the utilization of animals in the curriculum.

For the physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, and learning disabled, The Humane Society of the United States has coordinated a program which permits these sensory rich individuals to develop and share their compassion and sensitivity with horses. Through Self-Improvement through Riding Education (SIRE), humane attitudes toward these animals and their interdependence on all other life forms provide the basis for teaching kindness and understanding, the gifts that keep on giving. Once these values are firmly implanted in the minds and hearts of young children, they seem to be the standards for living in adulthood.

The horseback riding experience for the physically handicapped strengthens weak muscles and refines the rider's sense of balance. It promotes an integrated pattern of motor coordination and body awareness through exercises similar to those done as part of the rider's regular physical therapy program. Horses provide the motivation to try harder for physical rehabilitation as contrasted to less satisfying sessions with cold steel equipment in the therapy room of a hospital.

For the emotionally disturbed, horses provide companionship and contribute to a healthy self-concept as the child begins feeling needed by the large animal. The child-horse partnership is the basis of learning to express oneself without threat or fear of rejection. Acting out, hostility, and affection are constructively channeled in the labor and care of helping to maintain a friend.

The learning disabled is provided with an area in which he can excel and compensate for his sense of academic frustration. Eye-hand and eye-foot coordination are enhanced through riding which improves motor skills and helps in overcoming a sense of failure and ego loss.

Actual exposure to animals facilitates cognitive learning such as the acquisition of basic animal care techniques and communication skills. Immediate results are observed in the physical, psychological, and social realms. The sheer thrill of being with horses paves the way for fun-filled learning whether of facts or figures, or variables in the affective domain.

One of the best examples of the merits of SIRE is that it represents the achievement of this organization's basic goal of humaneness to fellowman as the volunteers who assist put kindness into motion not only to the animals but to the handicapped children as well. Through SIRE, the spirit of Christmas is alive year round because the volunteer-child, child-animal friendship is based on love-kindness, and understanding.

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Happy Holidays

from KIND
**Kindness Club**

**What Do You Want To Be?, Page 1**

**SKILLS:** Have the children study the photos and try to guess what the various workers are doing and what their jobs are. Make a list of the jobs on the chalkboard using the photo captions for guidance. Discuss local animal workers who have those jobs. Attempt to make a list of people the children know that work at those positions. List the names next to the jobs. Use the yellow pages of your local directory to find names that the children don’t know. Add the official job names to this week’s spelling list. Practice decoding the words before reading the story. Allow the children to try decoding all of the captions on their own.

**ATTITUDES:** Ask: Why would someone choose to have a job that helps animals? Aren’t most animal jobs dirty? What are the good points about working with animals? (Many animal jobs take the worker out of doors for most, or at least part, of the working day. Working with animals gives the worker a chance to be kind and helpful which is a very satisfying feeling. Many animals will respond to those who serve them, thus adding to the self satisfaction one feels.) Ask: Why is it important for young people to begin thinking about careers early in their school experience? (By making early inquiries and investigations into various careers, students will be able to screen out those careers that are not in keeping with personal philosophies, habits, and life styles. In addition, children who identify career areas that they find personally attractive will be able to find hobbies and extracurricular activities that improve their knowledge of certain career areas.)

**FOLLOW-UP:** Have each child select one of the pictured animal career areas or another animal career that is not included on the photos. Have the students study the photos and try to guess what the various workers are doing and what their jobs are. Make a list of the jobs on the chalkboard using the photo captions for guidance. Discuss local animal workers who have those jobs. Attempt to make a list of people the children know that work at those positions. List the names next to the jobs. Use the yellow pages of your local directory to find names that the children don’t know. Add the official job names to this week’s spelling list. Practice decoding the words before reading the story. Allow the children to try decoding all of the captions on their own.

**Defenders**

**What Are Your Plans For the Future?, Page 1**

**SKILLS:** Have the students study the photos of the different animal workers. List the names of the workers on the chalkboard using the captions for guidance. Identify local people who perform those jobs. Break the class up into groups to study specific animal careers. Have the groups give oral reports to the class. The following outline may be used to guide the groups in their study:

I. What kind of training or education is required?
II. What are the typical duties of the job?
III. What are the typical working hours of the job?
IV. What kinds of skills are required to do the job?
V. What kind of job opportunities exist in your area for such a job?

Have the students type up their reports and bind them together in a book to be placed in the school library as a ready reference for all of the students.

**ATTITUDES:** Ask the students to write essays based upon the following questions:
1. Why would someone want a career that required them to clean-up after an animal?
2. How could an animal career also help people?
3. Why should the person who chooses an animal career be a person who is kind and gentle?

Using the yellow pages, materials from the guidance counselor’s office, and such references as the HSUS book *Careers: Working With Animals*, have the students compile a list of your state’s educational institutions that prepare students for working with animals.

**Ecololkind**

**What Career For You?, Page 1**

**SKILLS:** Have the students identify the animal workers in the photos. They are: A Humane Educator, Shelter Workers, Pet Shop Worker, and a Zoo Keeper. Select some of the students to make telephone interviews with animal workers in your locale. Have them find out the following information: Salary, Working Hours, The Kind of Training Necessary, Information About the Working Environment, and the Typical Duties of the Jobs. If you have already embarked on a career inquiry with your class, attempt to identify animal workers within the U.S. Office of Education’s listing of 15 career clusters. If possible, have different students choose a career to report about. Invite some of the animal workers in your community to visit your class. Visit the local animal shelter, veterinarian’s office, and pet shop. Find out what animal careers need more workers than others.

**ATTITUDES:** Discuss why some people choose animal careers. Some of the following questions may aid your discussion. Why would some people choose animal careers that require that they clean up after the animals? Why do you think some people choose to work out of doors? Isn’t some animal work dangerous? Why then, would some people choose that line of work? Can some animal workers affect more than the small animal population that they serve on their job? (The latter question brings up the point that animal workers who are attempting to preserve animal habitats, or who are working to save some endangered species may, in fact, be helping animals as well as man.)
career area that is not pictured for further study.
Ask each child to conduct research on his
career and prepare an oral report to be
delivered to the class. The report should follow
the following outline:
I. What are the various duties of the job?
II. What is a typical day for the worker like?
III. What kind of special training or education
does the worker have?
IV. What are the advantages and disadvantages
of this job?
Some of the research for the job may have to be
conducted on the spot by visiting the worker at
his place of work or by telephoning.

KIND Awards Program, Page 2

If your class would like to nominate
someone for the KIND Awards Program,
please help them by submitting the name of the
nominees, what they have done or are doing,
your names, the names of the local
newspapers, and a photo or clipping of the
nominees in action. We'll send you a lovely
award that you can present to the people. Any­
one is eligible — local clubs, canine control
officials, a teacher, someone from a local hu­
mane society, or even your local elected of­
cials. Your nominees simply have to have per­
dormed an act of kindness toward people or ani­
imals, or both. Hopefully, the local publicity
created by the presentation of such awards will
encourage others to perform acts of kindness as
well as recognizing good deeds.

Additional Ways to Use This Issue

If your class has begun an inquiry into ca­
treers following the Office of Education Careers
Clusters, you may want to compile lists of ani­
mal workers that fall within the various clusters.
There are animal workers in all 15 clusters. Per­
haps there are local animal workers that can
visit your class and report about their work. If
you are fortunate enough to have a zoo or ani­
mal refuge in your area, you may want to visit

Additional Ways To Use This Issue

Have the students examine their homes for other
pet hazards during the holiday.

FOLLOW-UP: Have your students make a survey
of pets in your area. Design and send “Mystery”
holiday cards to the pets. Their owners will
be pleasantly surprised. It's a good oppor­
tunity to develop poetry and use various art
media and skills.

Additional Ways To Use This Issue

Note — This reprint from the August, 1974
issue of the Reader’s Digest has been serialized.
Two more installments will appear in future
issues of ECOLOKIND.

SKILLS: The author's basic argument against
killing wild creatures is the “network of
interdependent life,” that resembles a tight­
ly knit fabric. Have your students con­
struct a mural illustrating the interrela­
tionships of all life in your area. First, have
them illustrate all of the animal, plant
and insect life that they are familiar with.
Then begin to “knit” your local fabric by
drawing arrows from the consumers to the
prey and vice versa. The students will
soon see a network that is extremely inter­
dependent.

ATTITUDES: While viewing the mural de­
scribed above, discuss what could happen if
certain creatures were removed from the
scene. Naturally, this discussion could go on
forever.

How Your Club Began, Page 3

ATTITUDES: Discuss why students such as
Oto and Eric would want to start KINDNESS
CLUBS. Discuss the inference that one
can read into the name ECOLOKIND. Choose
a name for your class club if the students desire
to form a club.
Introducing
A New Teaching Aid -
Careers: Working With Animals

This new 60 page manual has been designed to be used by teachers, guidance counselors and pupils in junior high through college. Careers: Working With Animals discusses the history of the humane and conservation movements, looks at the job market, provides lists of source material, lists hundreds of colleges and universities that have animal career programs, and takes an in-depth look at sixteen careers in both support and executive work. Teachers and guidance counselors will enjoy using the dry copy masters provided in a special pocket in the rear of the manual. These masters have been designed to allow them to be copied so that copies may be distributed to interested students.

The manuals cost $3.95. They can be ordered from: KIND, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

-TALK IT OVER-

Post and enjoy your Happy Holidays poster. Have the students identify the various animals on the poster. They are: Insects, Giraffes, Sea Gulls, Butterflies, Camels, Turtles, Seals, Pandas, Snails, Shoebills (also known as Whale-Headed storks), Hedgehogs, Mice, Geese, Lizards, Tapirs, Mongooses, Caterpillars, Fairy Armadillos, Lady Bugs, and Star Fish.

If some of the animals shown going up to the ark are unknown to your students, you may wish to have them look them up and report back to the class. The Shoebill, for example, comes from the White Nile area. The Fairy Armadillo comes from Argentina. You may wish to obtain a Bible and reread the story of the ark to your students. The story value of Noah and his ark can be enjoyed by all. However, as a precaution, we would suggest that the reading not be followed by any comment or discussion. It is a story that both Christians and Jews believe in.

However, atheists in your locale could complain about reading it if you treat it as more than a story. Naturally, church school groups should apply their beliefs and practices to any discussion of the story of Noah and his ark. For such groups, the poster could serve as a good stimulant for discussion.

For younger groups, you may want to copy the poster so that it could be used for coloring. Ask: Do you think that Noah would have as many passengers today as he originally did? Why or why not? (Many species have become extinct over the years. Noah would have less passengers today.) DEFENDERS and ECOLOKIND students could use the poster as a stimulus for poetry writing. Here’s a starter:

Noah’s ark stood on a mountain top,
Animals came by creep, crawl, and hop.