

# How Do You Teach Compassion?

You Show It

Working with HandicappedPets:  
A Manual for Teachers and Youth Leaders

*Designed by Kathy Barton and friends of HandicappedPets.com,  
a website offering support, services, and products for elderly,  
injured, and disabled pets and their caretakers.*

## **How Do You Teach Compassion? You Show It**

*Working with Handicapped Pets:*

*A Manual for Teachers and Youth Leaders*

This manual is an outgrowth of an initiative begun by Kathy Barton, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Velma, Oklahoma, who designed a two-week curriculum for her class in 2004 about handicapped pets. It was so successful that she has done it every year thereafter. Go to [www.HandicappedPets.com/school/index.htm](http://www.HandicappedPets.com/school/index.htm) for additional background information.

In a world that calls out for us to practice compassion instead of violence, it is our hope that this manual will serve to create and promote kindness, care, and understanding – for *all* those with differences.

As Gandhi said, *"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."*

These lesson ideas can be used as is for children around the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level or can be modified to best suit the needs of your classroom or youth group.

### **Objective:**

To understand and facilitate the importance and necessity to accept differences and to be willing to protect and provide for ones that cannot speak for themselves.

### **Skill:**

Students will gain an awareness and acceptance of animals with special needs and will be empowered to make a difference in their lives.

### **Materials:**

Domesticated animals with special needs that can visit the classroom/group will need to be identified through local shelters or volunteers.

### **Activities:**

Students will choose a way to help an animal(s) with special needs.

### **Helpful Resource Information:**

[www.HandicappedPets.com](http://www.HandicappedPets.com)

## Procedures:

**1. Demonstration:** Arrange for a special needs pet(s) to visit classroom or group. Discuss the disability, and let them interact with the animal. Explain the pet's circumstances and how it leads his/her daily life. This leads to discussion about other disabilities. If possible, let the pet spend several hours in the classroom. Students can take responsibility for giving the pet food and water, taking it out to relieve itself, introducing the pet to other classrooms, and brushing it. Point out the choices we make for our pets - choices that help and choices that hurt - what commitment means.

**2. Plan a fundraiser to help a handicapped pet:** Contact a local shelter, rescue organization, humane society, or Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) to identify a handicapped pet or pets that needs help. Or call HandicappedPets.com at (888) 811-PETS to locate animals in need. Money can be raised to buy pet wheelchairs or other types of assistance. Brainstorm ways the class or group can raise money.

**3. Do daily activity,** or several, from list below:

- Daily Journal: Color the cover and write each day – what we did that particular day, their favorite activity, how they felt about it, and something they learned.
- Compare & Contrast: List action verbs relating to both special needs pets and non-special needs pets (e.g., roll, pet, feed, etc.). Fold a paper into the appropriate number of boxes and after discussing possible uses of these words, have students label and demonstrate each.
- Write a letter to adults regarding proper treatment of special needs animals.
- Underline the subjects in Handicapped Pets poem (search online for a poem that related to handicapped pets).
- List some dangers for special pets and solutions.
- Make a poster displaying each child's favorite handicapped animal from the gallery on HandicappedPets.com with a brief description of their handicap. Hang these in all of school or facility, if possible.
- Write a letter to other children regarding the capabilities and care of special pets.
- Write a letter to our local government about our concerns and actions needed to prevent animal cruelty.
- Write thank you notes to businesses or individuals who may have donated to their fundraiser.

- Write a paragraph declaring fair rights for a special needs pet.
- Design a slogan to make a banner for a marquee.
- Design a device that could benefit a special needs animal. Draw up design or make a model or sample.
- Find words on HandicappedPets.com to describe handicaps and have kids look up definitions individually or together as a group and write down, (e.g., incontinence, tripod, paralysis).
- Research 5 companies on the Internet that offer products for special needs animals. List and illustrate a product from each.
- Write a paragraph about an imaginary special needs pet wanting to be adopted. Pretend you are the animal.
- Create a rap song about special needs pets. This can be done individually or as a group project and then performed later.
- Word Search: Find names of special needs animals on HandicappedPets.com website gallery. Then students can go to gallery and see what the pet looks like.
- Write a report on selected special pet on HandicappedPets.com website.
- Paint what they think the perfect dream home is for a handicapped pet.
- Design a t-shirt about special needs pets on paper “t-shirt” cutouts.
- Create a poem: S    P  
                   P    E  
                   E    T  
                   C    S  
                   I  
                   A  
                   L
- Write a letter to Mark Robinson about his [www.HandicappedPets.com](http://www.HandicappedPets.com) website.
- Make a personalized quilt square about a special needs pet. Have the class join all their squares together to make one quilt to give as a gift to a local shelter or organization to hang on their wall.

- Make a bulletin board entitled Pet Tales (or Tails) with pictures of disabled animals and their stories.
- Design a pet disabled flag to attach to a pet wheelchair.
- Have everyone use only one arm for two hours. After, discuss difficulties and adjustments needed to lead a normal lifestyle.
- Write a short story about the way a disabled animal lives verses the way a "normal" animal lives. What specific challenges do disabled animals face and what are some positive solutions to those challenges? Or write from the perspective of a handicapped animal. What would the animal want us to know? How does the animal feel about his/her disability? What is the most important thing the animal could tell us?
- Make a "goody" bag for favorite handicapped animal, to be delivered or sent.
- Draw the ecosystem for a handicapped animal. (Science)
- Watch *Miracle Dogs* movie.
- Put following words on board and have them illustrate each, using their imaginations on what they mean. After completion, discuss meaning of each.
 

|                 |                          |               |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1. osteosarcoma | 2. cerebellar hypoplasia | 3. tripod     |
| 4. prosthesis   | 5. neurological damage   | 6. paraplegic |
- Read a book together about a disabled pet.

**Books about Handicapped Pets:**

*Frankie, the Walk 'N Roll Dog* by Barbara Gail Techel (HandicappedPets.com)

*How Willy Got His Wings: The Continuing Adventures of Wheely Willy* by Deborah Turner (amazon.com)

*Marvelous Marvin* by E. J. Finocchio, DVM (marvinfund.org)

## **Resources:**

To find local special needs animals that you may be able to visit or arrange to visit you, try your local Humane Society or SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). There are also many wonderful private animal shelters and organizations across the country that your local veterinarian may know about. Or go to [www.HandicappedPets.net](http://www.HandicappedPets.net) and ask for volunteers.

The following people and their pets are happy to come visit your classroom/group if you live in their area:

### California: (Sonora area)

Lee & 2 dogs, Chili Bean & Bella (blind & paralyzed): [rileybuggsmom@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rileybuggsmom@sbcglobal.net)

### Canada: (Durham Region and the Toronto, Ontario area)

Margaret & dog, Heidi Ho Ho (in a wheelchair): [Margaret\\_blackman@hotmail.com](mailto:Margaret_blackman@hotmail.com)  
Cell: 905-441-6614

### Colorado: (Denver area)

Diana & cat, Simon (paralyzed): [dianarichett@msn.com](mailto:dianarichett@msn.com) Tel: 303-989-6295

### New Hampshire:

Courtney & dog, Lucy (in a wheelchair): [courtneydunning@hotmail.com](mailto:courtneydunning@hotmail.com)

### Oklahoma: (Tulsa area)

Betsy or Tim & dog, Barrett (in a wheelchair): [tbendicott@aol.com](mailto:tbendicott@aol.com)  
Tel: 918-344-4582 (Betsy), 918-366-2443 (Tim)

### Virginia: (northern)

Lee & cat, Ari (cerebral palsy): [specialcritters@hotmail.com](mailto:specialcritters@hotmail.com)

### Wisconsin:

Cris & Labrador therapy dog (epileptic): [swimlewis@sbcglobal.net](mailto:swimlewis@sbcglobal.net) Tel: 920-470-2145

Barbara & dog, Frankie (in a wheelchair): [joyfulpaws@yahoo.com](mailto:joyfulpaws@yahoo.com) Tel: 920-377-1749.  
(Barbara is the author of *Frankie, the Walk 'N Roll Dog* and charges a fee: contact her for more info.)