

# COLE MANOR

# HEALTHY COMET

Volume 16, Number 2

Winter 2022

## Pet friends can make us feel better

Dogs have a knack for making people feel comfortable and even joyful. They can help people forget about their troubles.

“Dogs love us unconditionally,” said Alicia Harantschuk, a certified professional trainer specializing in therapy dogs. “We don’t have to worry about what we say around them.”

Mrs. Harantschuk trains dogs so they can visit people who are dealing with physical or emotional problems and need love and support. When

trained therapy dogs visit hospitals, nursing homes, and schools, they can give patients a “mental break” and help them feel better. “When we feel happy, some things are easier to accept,” such as taking medicine, she said. “We are in a better state of mind.”

Dogs can visit people in hospitals, homes, and schools. Their interactions with people can be quite simple but powerful, Mrs. Harantschuk said. A patient can read



Alicia Harantschuk and some of her dogs.

(Please see **Dogs** on Page 2)

### Strategies for coping when times get hard

*Healthy Comet* reporters have been exploring what you can do when feeling frustrated, anxious, angry, or out of sorts. Here is their list.

1. Relax by lying down
2. Read
3. Go to sleep
4. Watch TV or videos
5. Do yoga
6. Play some type of sport
7. Play a board or card game
8. Go for a walk
9. Boxing
10. Play with your pet
11. Jog outside
12. Listen to music
13. Go shopping
14. Take time for yourself
15. Hang out with friends and family
16. Go outside and get some air

(Please see **Strategies** on Page 2)

## There are many ways to enjoy water

Nature Heals: Connecting with Water in Nature

By Abby Colich

Water can be found in many places in nature, and there are a lot of ways to enjoy water. You can go swimming, go fishing, rowing, or even just have a picnic by a lake. This book is about how water is calming. Reporters in Ms. Kim’s third-grade class had mixed reviews of the book. Some reporters like water activities, while some other reporters don’t feel safe around water.

In this book, students learned that there are several water activities that are good exercise. Swimming and rowing are both good exercises. Water is good for your mind, too. Listening to water sounds is a good way to help you relax.

We think the photographs help to tell the story, because you can see

water and water activities.

Reporters had some things to share about the book.

“I liked it because it had interesting facts,” one said. “I liked the book because it teaches us about water,” another shared.

“I liked this book because we need water,” a third student said. “Water is healthy and water is calming.”

However, “I did not like the book because I am scared of water,” one student said.

We recommend this book for people of all ages. One reporter said that their parent would like this book because it would give them a way to deal with their stress. Others recommend the book for those who enjoy nature and water.



## Dogs can be good listeners

*(Continued from Page 1)*

a book aloud to a therapy dog or can practice using their hands by brushing a dog. A dog can be a good listener for someone who needs to express feelings, Mrs. Harantschuk said.

“Anybody can benefit from pet therapy as long as [the animal] is something they enjoy,” she said.

She recalled how one of her dogs brought joy to a patient who was hospitalized. The dog sat on the patient’s bed while it was wheeled around the hospital. The staff took pictures of them. “It made her so happy she forgot about everything else,” Mrs. Harantschuk said.

Mrs. Harantschuk has been training dogs since 2014. She now works for Philly Unleashed, where she specializes in training therapy dogs. She has made more than 1,000 therapy visits with her own dogs.

She said she became a certified professional dog trainer because she wanted to honor her father after his death. They both loved dogs. She soon realized that through pet therapy, “I could help people feel better ... and I could make a bigger impact in my community.”

Not all dogs can be therapy dogs, Mrs. Harantschuk said. The dogs need to have the right temperament and must be able to respond readily to specific commands such as Sit and Leave it. They must also pay attention to the dog handler and ignore everything else, even when something as tempting as food is nearby on the ground.

Mrs. Harantschuk said being a dog trainer has allowed her to meet new people and to have the pleasure of helping them as they recover from an illness or deal with an emotional problem.

As for challenges she faces, Mrs. Harantschuk mentioned only one: She wishes she could spend even more time doing her job. — *By Healthy Comet staff*

**Editor’s note:** This article will be published in the book *How We Heal: Leading Healthy Change in Our Communities 2022*. The book is written and illustrated by *Healthy Comet* reporters and other student health journalists in the Healthy NewsWorks program.



Illustration by Naomi Williams

**Spending time outside** is one way to cope when times get tough.

## *Something that makes us grateful, and a game we like to play*

What I have learned living through a pandemic is that you should be grateful for what you have. The only way we are going to get through this is by working together. I learned to be grateful for my family, clothes, food, and friends. — *Joslynn Bonamico*

My favorite outdoor activity is tag. It is my favorite because you can chase people around, and you can hide from them so they can’t tag you. I like to play this game after school with my friends. — *Bryson Perry*

## Strategies for coping in tough times

*(Continued from Page 1)*

17. Work out
18. Play with your toys
19. Practice breathing exercises
20. Go to the park and have a picnic
21. Write about how you are feeling to calm down
22. Draw a picture

*Cole Manor Healthy Comet*

The *Healthy Comet* is a publication of Cole Manor Elementary School in the Norristown Area School District. Fourth-grade student staff members include Jesus Vasquez Balanzar, Joslynn Bonamico, London Massey, David Calderon Mendoza, Bryson Perry, Brayan Lopez Rodriguez, Nathaniel Thompson, and Naomi Williams. The *Healthy Comet*’s faculty advisor is Ms. Rathgeb. Dr. Poncheri is Cole Manor’s school principal.

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