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Two-Thirds of Students Attend School Year Virtually, Turning Pets into Classmates

Pet Partners' We Are All Ears initiative with Elanco Animal Health encourages reading to pets, fostering youth literacy amid challenging learning landscape



Bellevue, Wash., (September 29, 2020) - According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), of the world's 1.5 billion pre-primary to secondary students, only one in three will attend school in classrooms this fall. One billion students, two-thirds of the global student population, face either school closures or uncertainty. As many parents continue to work from home, they are also helping their children learn virtually. Pet Partners, the nation's leading organization registering therapy animals for animal-assisted interventions, along with one of the world's leading animal health companies, [Elanco](#), know that one member of the family can help ease this burden: the pet.

Through a new initiative, [We Are All Ears](#), a Worldwide Read with Pets Project, Pet Partners and Elanco are encouraging families and children to read to their pets, as reading to an animal can significantly impact student reading rates. [Research](#) shows that when reading to pets,

children achieve higher end-of-year reading scores, and improve reading rates, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. They also are better able to stay on task when a furry, feathered, or scaled companion is involved.

“Reading to pets is an amazing way to get children excited about reading and engaged with the content,” said C. Annie Peters, President and CEO of Pet Partners. “Children who are learning to read are often hesitant about their reading abilities. Many kids feel more at ease reading to pets, who are simply there to listen – not to judge how well they are reading.”

With communities across the country experiencing educational disruptions, and more and more parents educating their children at home, this new initiative is designed to bring the power of the human-animal bond to youth literacy. With most Pet Partners’ registered volunteer therapy animal teams across the country unable to conduct their regular therapy animal visits due to COVID-related restrictions, the organization is leading this already-proven animal-assisted activity, which is based on their Read With Me™ initiative involving children reading to therapy animals.

Tips on successfully reading to your pet

- Set up a comfortable spot for the reader and pet to sit.
- Make sure the reader will be able to show the pet pictures from the book.
- Pets can get distracted, so have a favorite pet toy on hand to keep the pet engaged if needed.
- Encourage your child to pause and pet your animal to keep them settled down and comfortable during the reading session.
- Reward your pet for their good listening behavior with a treat at the end of the reading session!
- Share photos and videos online using #WeAreAllEars and #PetPartners

“As many of us at Elanco are working from home while stepping in to help teach our children, we saw the incredible opportunity for the Elanco Foundation to support Pet Partners’ We Are All Ears Initiative and the valuable role pets can play in virtual learning,” said Julie Lawless, Senior Vice President, Corporate Affairs and Administration at Elanco and Pet Partners Board Chair. “It’s also an opportunity for us to bring the program to a larger audience of parents during National Book Month, when we’ll host Elanco’s Read to Your Pet Day on October 5, encouraging everyone – including our employees and customers – to read with their children to their furry friends.”

When a family [takes the pledge](#) to read at home to their pets, they can determine a reading goal that is right for them, whether it is to read a certain number of books, pages, chapters, or minutes. From there, families can also access some great resources to support families as they participate in We Are All Ears including a reading log, bookmark templates, a special BINGO card and a pet bandana, all to help encourage regular reading. A Certificate of Completion is also available for parents to present to their child and pets upon reaching their goals. There is also an official We Are All Ears T-shirt for sale, with proceeds benefiting [Pet Partners](#).

Learn more on this initiative by listening to interviews with both organizations in a recent episode of Elanco's Rediscovering the Power of Healthy Animals podcast titled, ["We Are All Ears: The Benefits of Reading to Pets."](#)

*** Interviews welcome ***

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***Pet Partners** is the national leader in demonstrating and promoting the health and wellness benefits of animal-assisted therapy, activities, and education. Since the organization's inception in 1977, the science proving these benefits has become indisputable. With more than 13,000 registered teams making more than 3 million visits annually, Pet Partners serves as the nation's most prestigious nonprofit registering handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams. Pet Partners teams visit with patients in recovery, people with intellectual disabilities, seniors living with Alzheimer's, students, veterans with PTSD, and those approaching end of life, improving human health and well-being through the human-animal bond. With the recent release of its Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Interventions and international expansion, Pet Partners is globally recognized as the industry gold standard. For more information on Pet Partners, visit petpartners.org.*

***Elanco Animal Health (NYSE: ELAN)** is a global leader in animal health dedicated to innovating and delivering products and services to prevent and treat disease in farm animals and pets, creating value for farmers, pet owners, veterinarians, stakeholders, and society as a whole. With nearly 70 years of animal health heritage, we are committed to helping our customers improve the health of animals in their care, while also making a meaningful impact on our local and global communities. At Elanco, we're driven by our vision of Food and Companionship Enriching life and our Elanco Healthy Purpose™ CSR framework – all to advance the health of animals, people and the planet. Learn more at www.elanco.com.*

Pet Partners Social Media Channels

- Facebook: [@PetsForHealth](#)
- Twitter: [@Pet_Partners](#)
- Instagram: [@PetPartners](#)

Elanco Animal Health U.S. Social Media Channels

- Facebook: [@ElancoUS](#)
- Twitter: [@Elanco4Pets](#)
- Instagram: [@Elanco4Pets](#)