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PHOTOS BY GILBERT R. BOUCHER II/gboucher@dailyherald.com

Esmeralda Gurrola, 10, in blue, reads aloud as Bitz, a pit bull, sits with fifth-grade students. Dog handlers Karen Boeing, left, and Traci McCarthy, holding Bitz, bring the dogs to Raymond Ellis School in Round Lake Beach as part of a program to help fifth-graders improve their reading skills.

Read: Dogs don't judge students

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"He's really, really cute," Christopher said.

Karen Boeing, who stays with each dog while students are interacting with them, got Ruger eight years ago when he was just 6 weeks old.

She said she answered a newspaper ad about puppies after her golden retriever and Rottweiler died within weeks of one another.

Her plan was to train Ruger in agility, but he had a major ligament injury followed by surgery in three of four legs, so agility training was out, Boeing said. To keep him active, she enrolled him in training as a therapy dog.

Unfortunately, she said attempts to have him use his training as a therapy dog were limited as he was discriminated against because



Ruger, a Rottweiler, sits with fifth-grade students during reading exercises at Raymond Ellis School in Round Lake Beach.

of his breed.

She said Ruger is fortunate Ellis Principal Bill Pritchard had confidence in the

breed and the therapy dog training.

"He loves the kids," she said.

Health and fitness Send items to

Deadline is two weeks before event date.

Nutrition Class: 1-3 p.m. the first Thursday of each month, North Shore Health Center, 1840 Green Bay Road, Highland Park. The Lake County Health Department offers free educational diabetes and nutrition classes. Topics include the basics of diabetes, diabetes and nutrition, heart health and other nutrition topics. Call (847) 984-5341.

CareCoach: Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital's CareCoach mobile health unit offers Lake County residents health screenings, including blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol and asthma. All services are provided free to Lake County residents; no appointment is necessary. For details, call (847) 535-6709 or visit lfh.org. Upcoming visits include:

- 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. today at St. Anastasia Food Pantry, 624 Douglas Ave., Waukegan.

- 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday, Feb. 7, Park Place, 414 Lewis Ave., Waukegan.

- 2:30-4:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 7, YWCA, 2133 Belvidere Road, Waukegan.

- 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 8, Mt. Moriah Christian Center, 523 10th St., North Chicago.

- 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, St. Anastasia Food Pantry, 624 Douglas Ave., Waukegan.

- 2-4:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, Independence Center, 2025 Washington St., Waukegan.

Drop-in Grief Support Group: 10:30 a.m. to noon the first and third Friday of each month, Midwest Palliative & Hospice CareCenter, 2050 Claire Court, Glenview. Grief support group. Call (847) 467-7423.

Blood Pressure Testing: The Lake County Health Department and Community Health

Center will sure testing for adults at County res lowing time
 • 9-11 a.m.
 Lake County Administrat County St., V
 • 11:45
 Wednesday, District, 17 North Chica

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