

# Readers' best friends



**Fifth-grade student Christopher Macias, 10, pets Blitz, a pit bull, as students read in class at Raymond Ellis School in Round Lake Beach.**

## Raymond Ellis fifth-graders read out loud to therapy dogs

**BY C.L. WALLER**  
*Daily Herald Correspondent*

Ruger knows what it's like being discriminated against. Descending from a pedigree that dates back to ancient Rome, his kind is often perceived as threatening, even menacing.

But for students in a fifth-grade class at Raymond Ellis Elementary School in Round Lake Beach, the 110 pounds of Rottweiler simply represents a pet willing to lie at their feet

while they read aloud to him. "He helps us. He helps us concentrate on our work," said fifth-grader Rosa Rangel, a student in Dana Wieland's classroom.

Student Esmeralda Gurrola added, "When you read to someone and they tell you it's wrong, you get angry. But Ruger doesn't say anything."

Joining Ruger about once a month in Wieland's classroom are Blitz, a bouncy year-old boxer-pit bull mix, and Kali, a golden retriever. All are



**Ruger, a Rottweiler, sits with fifth-grade students as dog handlers Karen Boeing and Traci McCarthy bring the dogs to Raymond Ellis School in Round Lake Beach. The therapy dogs help students build confidence in their reading skills.**

certified therapy dogs through Therapy Dog International and owned by Karen Boeing of Trevor, Wis., a longtime friend of Wieland.

Wieland said she remembers her friend asking about volunteering to bring Ruger into the classroom for the first time about four years ago. Her first response was it was a great idea, but she was not

sure how to incorporate a Rottweiler into her lesson plans. Since then, she has a yearly practice reading with the dog,

but they also learn about how to behave around a dog in case they do not have one of their own. "The dog immediately puts students at ease," she said. "I have had students who wouldn't read aloud; they had no confidence."

Student Christopher Macias said he likes how Ruger always stares at him while he's reading.

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## Out&About Weekend

**1 Northwest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends:** 8 p.m. the first Friday of the month, Cancer Wellness Center, 215 Revere Drive, Northbrook. National nonprofit organization for bereaved families following the death of a child offers families support. Call (847) 800-0707 or e-mail [tcfrnee@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tcfrnee@sbcglobal.net).

**2 Chess For All Ages:** 1:30-3:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 6, Indian Trails Public Library District, 355 S. Schoenbeck Road, Wheeling. Learn, play and share moves and strategies. Instruction will be given during the first 30 minutes. For all ages. Registration is required. Call (847) 459-4100 or visit [indiantrailslibrary.org](http://indiantrailslibrary.org).

**3 Antioch Woman's Club:** 1 p.m. the second Wednesday of the month, Faith Evangelical Church, 24300 W. Grass Lake Road, Antioch. Call Laura, (847) 356-2223.

**4 Genealogy Networking Group:** 7 p.m. Thursdays, Feb. 10 and March 3, Cook Park Library, 413 N. Milwaukee Ave., Libertyville. Share genealogy tips and resources. No registration required. Call (847) 362-2330.

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