



Our Lady of Consolation

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

4865 11 Mile Rd NE Rockford, MI 49341

Our Lady of Consolation School is excited to announce a therapy dog will join our family this Fall - Beau

What is a School Therapy Dog?

School therapy dogs are specifically trained canines that work alongside educators and students to create a positive and supportive learning environment. It is their job to help alleviate stress, offer emotional comfort, and promote a sense of security among students.



What are some benefits of therapy dogs in schools?

Research has found that therapy dogs can benefit students of all ages- from preschool to college. They can be a great motivator, increase school attendance, improve motivation to learn, improve test-taking and listening skills, and help calm anxious students. In addition, they promote self-confidence, impulse control, respect for others, and teach empathy and compassion.



Who is Beau, the OLC Therapy Dog?

Beau is a Miniature Bernedoodle and is hypoallergenic. He has been raised around children in a family. Since April, Beau has been going through therapy dog training with his handler, Abby Petersen. As his handler, Abby has been learning alongside Beau.

What is a dog handler?

A dog handler is taught commands right with the dog and works to ensure the dog knows who they are accountable to and why. Handlers need to demonstrate consistency in their approach; mixed messages can cause confusion and could result in the dog behaving unpredictably. The dog needs to trust that their handler will provide a safe environment and in return the dogs are responsive to the commands given by the handler. The dog handler is also responsible for the day-to-day care of the animal, feeding, sheltering, walking etc. The handler leads the dog through their tasks each day at the school as well. Beau will never be at the OLC working without his handler, Abby. They have trained together, and they are a team. This ensures his safety and the safety of the students.

Beau and Abby will continue training through the summer and Beau will be ready for a gradual introduction into the school this fall. Beau has been a star student with praise from the therapy dog

trainers. Beau recently graduated to group class training where he will learn to stay calm in a highly stimulating environment.

As the school year approaches, we will consult with parents and staff so we are aware of people who have allergies or aversions to dogs, allowing us to know of any specific classrooms or situations where people may be uncomfortable. Beau will never roam the halls of the school freely but will be assigned jobs to do throughout the school day. We will be working with the students so that they learn rules for interacting with Beau-like how to greet him and how to respect boundaries.

We are still developing all of Beau's jobs at the school, but here are a few examples:

Beau will greet students and staff in the morning

Beau will be an excellent listener while students read to him

Beau will help students regulate their emotions by providing comfort when they are upset

Beau will assist our school counselor

Beau will attend certain school events

Beau will visit classes throughout the day

Beau will be there to help students who need a friend or a hug

We are excited to have Beau join us sometime this fall. We feel strongly that having a therapy dog will be an asset for our students and school. We are planning to set up some meet and greets for students and/or parents who may be uncomfortable with dogs. If you still have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to us.

Kevin Varner



Abby Petersen



Beau Petersen

