

Book Encourages Children to Read to Dogs

“Banjo Gets a B-A-T-H” is written and designed for children to read aloud to their pets.

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Whereas some may advise nervous public speakers to imagine their audience in their underwear, Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF), partnered with Nestle Purina PetCare and Target, encourage children who don't like to read aloud to gather a tail-wagging, face-licking audience instead.

“Banjo Gets a B-A-T-H,” is a book specifically written and designed for children to read aloud to their pets. By providing a chance for dog-child bonding, young children will embrace reading, build confidence, and become life-long readers.

The book, which comes with a blanket for the child and pet to sit on, as well as a Purina coupon, was inspired by Tony La Russa, a pet lover whose daughters were home schooled and found success in reading to their pets. La Russa and ARF developed the “Reading with Animals” program which helps improve the reading skills and self-confidence of preschool and grade-school children.

“Pets are such an important part of our families, and they can help children build confidence, as well as responsibility, social skills and even reading skills,” says Linda Hennen, director in the Market Development Organization of Purina. “This book helps us reinforce the important role pets play in people's lives, especially children's.”

Purina and Target donated 50,000 copies of “Banjo Gets a B-A-T-H” to the Kids In Need Foundation, which provides free school supplies to students and teachers through the Kids In Need National Network of Resource Centers.

“Banjo Gets a B-A-T-H” costs \$14.99 at select Target stores.