



03/10/2013

Fla. K-9 unit sends books to Sandy Hook Elementary

Following the massacre, they sent copies of two children's books about K-9 units to be added to the library

By Scott Lockwood
Englewood Sun

SARASOTA COUNTY, Fla. — As Sarasota K-9 Search and Rescue team leader Patricia Abrams watched the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., unfold with the rest of the nation Dec. 14, she felt compelled to swing into action.

'When we heard about the events that day, I think the whole nation was in shock,' Abrams said of the shootings, in which 20-year-old gunman Adam Lanza killed 26 students, teachers and faculty, then killed himself as police arrived. He also killed his mother prior to the school assault.

'We deal with violence a lot in what we do, and I really felt that I needed to do something to reach out to the children and to the teachers,' she said.

For the past three years, the K-9 Search and Rescue Team has visited Englewood Elementary School. EES principal Mark Grossenbacher said there is a nonfiction story in the school's third-grade reading books about search-and-rescue dogs, and when the students get to that story each fall, the K-9 team comes to the school for a demonstration and a question-and-answer session with the students.

This year, students got to hear stories about how the canines have made a difference in the community, and they met Sadie, one of the group's search dogs. Each child was given a copy of Sadie's baseball card.

'It's a perfect match,' Grossenbacher said. 'The kids read about it, they discuss it and they're tested on the context of the story — then they get to follow up with the real-life thing. Just having the officers here has been fantastic, and it's been very memorable.'

Two days after the Sandy Hook shootings, Abrams sent a letter to city and school officials on behalf of members of the local K-9 Search and Rescue organization to express their sympathy and outline what the group does — responding to reports of people and loved ones who are missing, and using rescue dogs to find them. Along with the letter, Abrams sent copies of the first two children's books she has written in her 'Noah and the Search Dogs' series to be placed in the school's library.

'Each book I have written teaches children the amazing courage the search dogs have,' Abrams wrote in her letter. 'Each search canine has a special 'true' story of what their life stood for.'

In addition to the books, which include 'The Story of Boo,' Abrams also sent baseball cards that feature different K-9s from the rescue team, bookmarks and more. Abrams said she began writing the books when she noticed violence issues increasing around the world.

'I'm so into children, and our team's passion is to keep them safe and teach them how to self-rescue, so we don't ever have to search for them,' Abrams said. 'I've been meeting with kids in schools, so Sandy Hook was very close to my heart.'

Abrams said she's already written several more books and has plans to eventually publish them all. Her next book is the story of Tracker and deals with bullying. In the book, Tracker conquers the bully in a forest that's based on the Carlton Reserve in South County. The bully, 'Uncle Hammy,' is modeled after a wild boar that Abrams said they actually encountered.

'It's all positive and it's not scary,' Abrams said. 'When I've been to the schools after they've read the books, the kids could recite to me all the different safety messages they found.'

The Sandy Hook tragedy also has inspired Abrams to write a book on gun safety. She said she has a list of different social pressures going on in schools, and will be working off it for future books.

'I'm just wanting to give the children, along with parents, guardians, teachers and others, messages of hope,' Abrams said.

Calls and emails to the Newtown school district and Sandy Hook Elementary officials seeking comment were not returned.

Copyright 2013 Englewood Sun



LexisNexis*

Copyright © 2013 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
[Terms and Conditions](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

[Back to previous page](#)