



ECAD Goes to the Graham School



A brand new ECADemy grooming class is open for business at the Graham School on the campus of the Graham-Windham residential and treatment facility for children.

“Hey Pumpkin, doesn’t brushing feel good?!” Service Dog candidate Pumpkin gets groomed by a student trainer. At the same time, the student benefits because the brushing motion is effective occupational therapy for his weak left hand.

“Tug, Caramel, tug! That’s it, yes!” Service Dog candidate Caramel and his student trainer are both learning new skills at the Graham School on the campus of Graham-Windham, a residential facility for children in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY.

On February 1, 2010, ECAD began a pilot program at the Graham School. Seven students, ages 11 to 18 began working with five-month-old puppies Raskin, Lizzie, Pumpkin, Brandy, Crisco, Nutmeg, and Caramel. The students began by learning to groom the dogs and then continued with first week commands such as *sit, shake, stand, heel, let’s go, come, my lap, and snuggle.*

ECAD’s Executive Director, Dale Picard, taught the class with help from Trainer Wendy Weisberg and Kennel Manager Phil Bauer. Dale said the class was a “good group of kids who worked hard and got the training moving nicely.” We were all so proud when we learned the 2010

Graham School Valedictorian and Salutatorian were both students in the ECADemy class.

The Graham School staff and administrators noticed a change in the students who participated in this class; they appeared more mature and responsible. One staff member praised the program’s effect on a student saying, “his behavior has improved so much you wouldn’t have recognized the child he was a few months ago.”

With all this success, Gerry Leventhal, Vice President of the Graham School, was able to secure funding to hold both a morning and afternoon training class for the entire school year starting in September. Another win-win-win program! The student trainers develop patience, motivation, and confidence. The dogs learn skills they need to be of service, and people with disabilities gain a new friend who brings them independence.

The Graham School is a residential and treatment center on the campus of Graham-Windham. At the Greenburgh-Graham UFSD school district, research-based teaching cultivates student success and closes the achievement gap. It’s where all the stakeholders work together to put children first.