



International Workshop

“A Dog Loving Society: Best Practices and Perspectives”

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DI TE MI FIDO – Italian Kid’s School Educational Project

M. Grazia Miglietta, Italy

Maria Grazia Miglietta delivered a presentation on Italian kids’ school educational project DI TE MI FIDO.

The Italian Kennel Club is a canine organization eager to take responsibility for raising adult dog lovers that will built the modern society where a dog is seen as a full-fledged member of it. Naturally, education makes an inherent part of its activities.

The project “Di te mi fido” (“I trust you”) aimed at primary school children of 6-11 years old - the age when they can effectively learn and take the messages to their families was started in 2010. Since then, as many as 20 000 children have already been involved in it. The goal of the project is to teach children safe interaction with dogs and general dog-friendly culture. The events are organized by local coordinators and consist of 5 lesson series. During the first meeting children are taught about different dog breeds including native Italian breeds and incorporation of dogs into social activities. Next meeting that is held by a professional trainer is dedicated to dogs’ body language whereas the third one done by a veterinarian is meant for taking proper care of dogs. The fourth lesson deals with service dogs, and the last one provides information on sporting dogs.

All the dogs visiting schools must complete a specialized training program and have a good citizen certificate. The dogs are great in creating an information exchange channel with children and during the lessons children learn more than just about dogs. For example, when children look at the dogs sorting the waste, they also get a message about importance of doing that themselves. Schools also use the project to deal with diversity and tolerance issues.

All the lessons and the volunteers with their dogs are evaluated by schools, and feedback helps to improve the future visits. The project is expanding. Volunteers with their dogs went to the juvenile detention center on Christmas, and in the nearest future the project with prisons is starting the idea of which is to aid the inmates’ integration in the society with the assistance of dogs. The project will be implemented by using shelter dogs.

