

PROVIDING A LITTLE HU-MANATEE

By Jeff Dunne

© 2020 by Jeffrey A. Dunne
jeff@bearcreations.org

CHARACTERS

PERSON

A school board designee heading a subcommittee on policies for Emotional Support Animals.

SETTING

A small conference room.

PERSON

Yes, fine, thank you. If you can all settle in... Excellent.

Now, as Henry VIII said to Anne Bolyn, I won't keep you long. We've convened this ad hoc meeting of the board to report on our investigation into Mr. Praline's suggestion that each student be issued an Emotional Support Animal from the school to provide a more uniform and equitable experience for everyone.

As you all recommended, we did indeed convene a focus group consisting of parents and past graduates, and we would like to summarize those discussions for you now.

The initial recommendation by several parents were: dogs. This was well-received until Mr. Pinnelcost noted that one of his children was allergic. This was followed by a quick succession of other animals in this order: cats, rats, bats... we think they were just on a roll at this point... wildebeest, orangutans, chipmunks, and then rabbits, guinea pigs, and penultimately, actual, full-sized pigs. This last option resulted in a long list of potential benefits, with the most popular being, and I quote, "it would be nice for our children to know that a tasty treat is never more than an arms' reach away."

Our final suggestion, however, by Mr. Robert Thurston, received unanimous support within the entire focus group, namely that we provide each student with his or her own personal manatee. Mr. Howard and I thought the initial laughter was a form of derision, but essentially every member of group was quick to come up with supporting reasons. Mr. Avery Hotchkins pointed out that they don't run around very fast, and Mrs. Abigail Smyth noted that they can be rather cozy at nap time. Anyway, suffice it to say that even our observations regarding cost, and that sea mammals were notorious for possessing a rather indelicate aroma, were insufficient to sway the parents away from this option.

Not wishing to dismiss their heartfelt enthusiasm for the idea, we have placed a requisition with Sea World London for five hundred and seventy-three manatees, which coincidentally, was also chosen as the new name of our first-year choir ensemble. In the interim, the London Zoo was kind enough to furnish us with six loaner manatees so that each of you, our illustrious school board, can, for the next four weeks, appreciate first-hand the creative power of the focus groups you so strongly endorsed. We're having them shipped to your home address, and they should be arriving any day now. You might want to stock up on sea clover and cabbage.

We'll now take any questions you might... oh look, it appears that we're completely out of time.

(Lights out.)