

## Invite a Special Guest

A special visit from a four-legged friend is a great event for the community and for MARTHA SPEAKS Read-Aloud Book Club members! Several organizations have programs that include on-site visits with friendly, trained dogs, during which kids get a chance to meet and learn more about dogs. We suggest combining this event with a MARTHA SPEAKS viewing party (see *Host a MARTHA SPEAKS Viewing Party* for more information).

### Organizations to Contact

**Veterinarians, pet clinics, animal hospitals, and humane organizations.** National and local organizations and retailers offer community outreach that often includes site visits, educational programs about animals and their care, and other programs.

**Service and working dog organizations.** Several national and local organizations that train service and working dogs offer programs that introduce children to these animals. For example, the Intermountain Therapy Animals organization runs the Reading Education Assistance Dogs® (R.E.A.D.) program. Using this program, children become more confident readers by reading aloud to trained therapy dogs. For more information, visit [therapyanimals.org/read](http://therapyanimals.org/read).

**Local police and firefighters.** Several police and fire departments host on-site visits where dogs help teach important safety rules. Contact your local police or fire department to find out if these programs are available in your area.



### Plan a Visit

**Get information.** Research organizations and programs in your area that conduct dog visits.

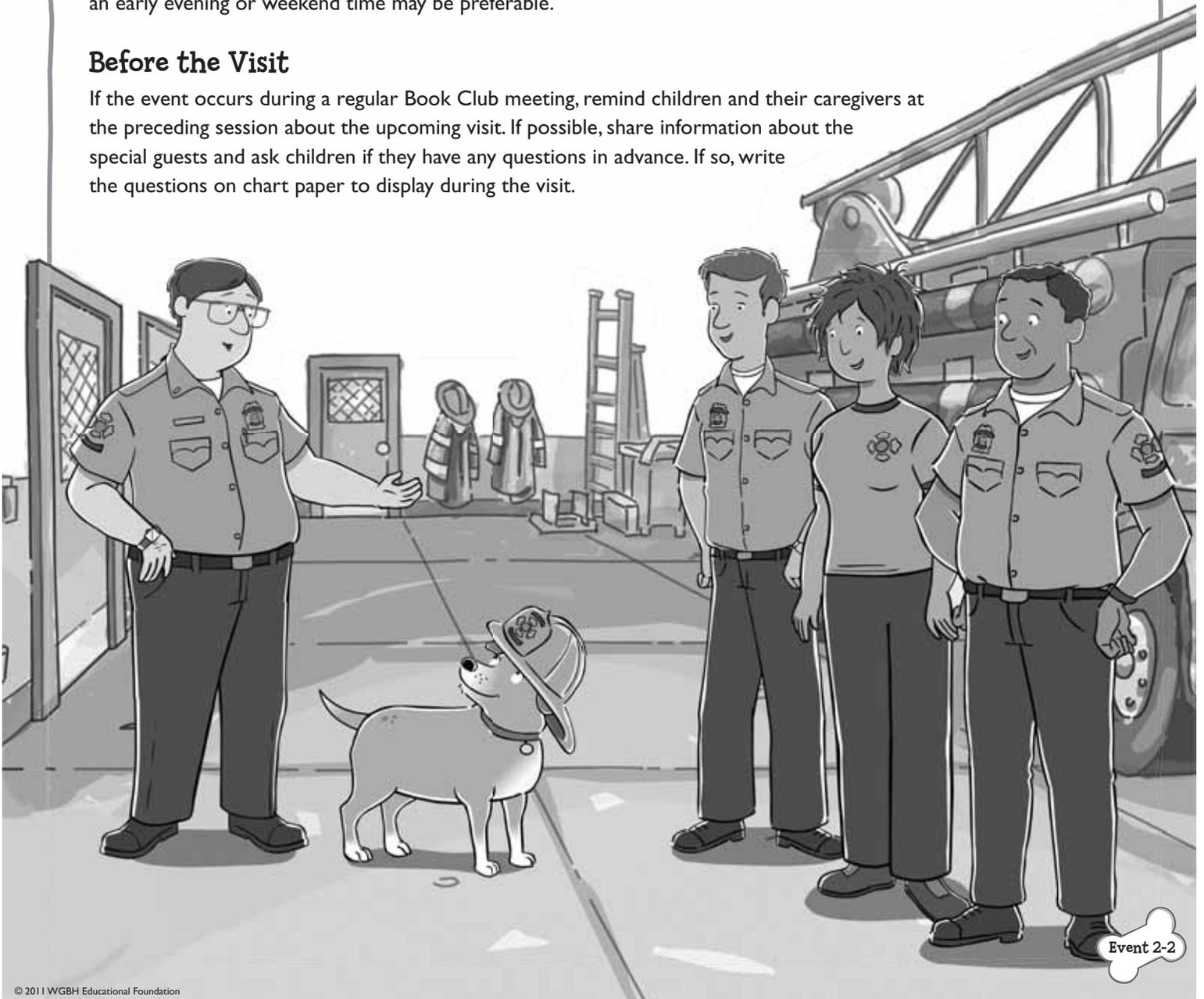
**Ask questions.** Before contacting a potential guest, prepare any questions you might have, such as: How long is the session? How many animals will be at the session? What is the maximum number of children who can attend? What will children learn? Will children be able to pet the dogs? Will children receive any take-home materials?

Check with the parents and caregivers of your Book Club members about pet allergies or fears of dogs. Let them know the date of the visit. You may also want to have caregivers sign a permission form allowing children to attend the session.

**Set a date.** If the special guest's visit is serving as your last official MARTHA SPEAKS Read-Aloud Book Club meeting, schedule it during the usual time slot. If the event is open to the community, an early evening or weekend time may be preferable.

### Before the Visit

If the event occurs during a regular Book Club meeting, remind children and their caregivers at the preceding session about the upcoming visit. If possible, share information about the special guests and ask children if they have any questions in advance. If so, write the questions on chart paper to display during the visit.



### Day of the Visit

**Create a book display.** Display books from the Read-Aloud Book Club sessions, as well as other dog-related titles (see the “Books About Dogs” Book List, in Supporting Materials). If children have created artwork or writing, include them in the display.

**Prepare the space.** Choose an area where your guest can set up his or her materials, and children can easily see and hear what is happening. Set up snacks in a location that will not be disruptive and can be cleaned easily.

**Gather children together.** Sing the opening *M-A-R-T-H-A* song to bring children together or another warm-up activity of your choice. Review rules for the visit, such as *Don't pet the dog until you are given permission, Speak gently so you do not scare or startle the dog, and so on.* With parents' and/or caregivers' permission, you may want to give each child a nametag to make it easier for the guest to respond to questions.

**Introduce your guest.** Briefly introduce your guest and explain what she or he will do during the visit. Be sure to introduce your animal guests as well!

**Provide support.** As your guest presents, be prepared to offer any support he or she may need in the moment, such as technical assistance, audience control, etc.

**Wrap up.** Allow time for children to ask questions or to talk about the session. Thank your guests for visiting and have children do the same. Distribute giveaway items or direct people to the area where they are available. (For ideas on giveaway items, see page 2 of *Host a MARTHA SPEAKS Viewing Party.*)

### After the Visit

Encourage children to make “Thank You” cards that you can later send to your guests. If this is the final meeting of the Read-Aloud Book Club, encourage children to reflect on their experiences. You may want to ask questions such as, *What was your favorite book? What was your favorite activity?*