



# If I had this press by Catherine Pfeifer

The way I'd add Reading and Art to STEM education - STREAM - with this press is to use it in our educational presentations to teach about service dogs. Almost four years ago, my boyfriend, Paul Chavez, was stung by a yellow jacket. He was already hard-of-hearing because, about a dozen years earlier, he was on an intercontinental flight while he had a sinus infection. That insect sting rendered Paul completely deaf with other neurological issues.

It was not an easy journey but we (kept calm and) carried on. We married, Paul retired because he could not be a manager without using a phone or holding meetings, and we became volunteer firefighters. We do not run into burning buildings. Instead, we help the fire department with creating Facebook posts, writing educational materials, and teaching classes.

About three years ago, Paul got a hearing-assist service dog. Her name is Nina, and she is from very reputable service dog organization, Can Do Canines, in Minnesota. She gives me peace-of-mind because she will alert Paul to smoke detectors or emergency alarms.

Everywhere we go, people stop Paul to ask about his service dog. We appreciate their curiosity but there are two problems. The first is that Paul is deaf. He has cochlear implants, but they do not help in, say, a noisy grocery store because they do not allow him to sift out background sounds (i.e., people talking, large fans, the humming of the large freezers) from the specific sounds. Second, Paul is an introvert, so he does not like to talk to strangers. I end up answering the questions and running a non-stop educational service dog seminar whenever we leave the house.

Paul and I are frustrated because most of the information that is floating around social media is not accurate. People have legitimate questions such as: What are the different types of service dogs? How is a service dog different from an emotional support animal or a therapy dog? What is a fake service dog? Why can't I pet your service dog? After I answer the questions in person, I then write down with a new reply to improve my information. Basically, I have been writing a book about service dogs since we got Nina.

Last month, our fire captain asked us to create a presentation on service dogs. We taught other classes at the fire station, mostly to the scouts, on fire

safety and related topics. What surprised us about the captain's request is that it for the firefighters and specifically about service dogs. We contacted our service dog network friends for current legal, medical, and other service dog information.

We presented it last week. It was a hit! The firefighters asked very engaging questions, loved Nina's demonstrations, and were delighted with the presentation. The captain asked if we would take the presentation on the road to other local fire and police stations. We eagerly agreed. One of the firefighters asked if we would present to his scout troop. Another asked us to present to local schools.

We were stumped by the last two requests. Adjusting the presentation to the appropriate age groups is no problem but teaching kids needs more than videos, PowerPoints and demonstrations. Kids learn best with a hands-on activity. Paul and I discussed how we could add an activity and decided to have the kids make some topic-related prints.

I already own two Halfwood presses. One is a Pram and the other is a Mariner. They are named Little Sister and Big Sister. If I win this contest, I will add the new press to the other two and use them to run activities to teach children about service dogs.

For the younger scouts, I will carve some service dog images on small shina blocks that I get in bulk from McClain's Printmaking Supplies. (Personal aside: Carving these little blocks is a passion of mine.) We would have the kids ink the plates then print postcard-sized (or smaller) cards. They then will then add information about service dogs on the back.

Paul, who is an Eagle Scout and was Scout Master (for both boys and girls), thought that it would work if we had 4 or 5 scouts with 1 adult per press (There are always firefighters willing to help). He thinks we could accommodate groups up to 15 kids with three presses. For older scouts, he suggested that they could do more of the printing process such as carving, placing the paper, and running the press.

We figured that when the school kids come to the fire station for a fire safety presentation (like they do every year) then also hear the service dog presentation. That way we could set up the presses beforehand with minimal equipment lugging and prep time. Afterwards, they will take home their art-based reminders. The fire captain hopes that we could add this activity to fire safety presentations as well.

This "Dog and Printing Show" will also travel to other places like the Milwaukee Maker's Fair. We went last year and, as usual, people were very curious about Nina. Paul felt like he and Nina unintentionally became an exhibit.

A friend of mine ran a steamroller printing exhibit. It was not interactive because people only watched safely from a distance. I hope to run the service dog printing activity this year so that the kids can have a hands-on service dog printing activity.

**- Catherine Pfeifer**

***What does this have to do with STEAM? It is the wonderful combination of art (printing), science (training and use of service dogs, maybe fire safety, also printing), social science (what to do if you see a service dog), communication (applied Roger's Diffusion of Innovation theory – my academic specialty), law (the history of service dogs and the ADA), medicine (disabilities and service dogs as medical equipment), and hands-on learning (using a printing press - an engineering marvel). Winning this press would allow me to educate larger groups to kids.***