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Library not just for book worms anymore

• Exotic animals: Alligator, lynx and a parrot stop by to visit kids

By Joan Carreon
LW SUN CORRESPONDENT

NEW LENOX — STOPPING BY THE LIBRARY RECENTLY WAS A NINE-WEEK-OLD CANADIAN LYNX NAMED DENALI; SHREK, THE CUSIMANSE MONGOOSE; DIMITRI, THE GREEK TORTOISE; AND BOOTS, AN AMERICAN ALLIGATOR.

REPRESENTATIVES OF ANIMALS FOR AWARENESS, A NON-PROFIT EDUCATIONAL FACILITY IN PALOS PARK, BROUGHT SOME OF THEIR MENAGERIE SATURDAY TO THE NEW LENOX LIBRARY FOR THE LIBRARY'S SUMMER READING PROGRAM FINALE.

FROM THE CHATTY DOUBLE YELLOW-HEADED AMAZON PARROT AND THE ADORABLE LYNX TO THE SLITHERING COLUMBIAN RED TAILED BOA CONSTRICTOR AND THE BIG-EARED FENNEC FOX, PARENTS AND CHILDREN OF ALL AGES WERE WOWED BY THE VARIETY OF EXOTIC AND WILD ANIMALS.

DURING THE DAY'S TWO PRESENTATIONS, AUDIENCE MEMBERS WERE ABLE TO TOUCH EACH OF THE VARIOUS ANIMALS HANDLED BY AFA DIRECTOR/PRESIDENT KIMBERLY SCHILLING OF PALOS PARK AND VOLUNTEER MELLISSA FLOYHAR OF TINLEY PARK.

SCHILLING TOOK TIME TO EDUCATE THE AUDIENCE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION AND THE ANIMALS. MANY OF THE ANIMALS FEATURED ARE ILLEGAL TO KEEP AS PETS AND DON'T MAKE GOOD PETS, SHE NOTED.

ANIMALS FOR AWARENESS IS LICENSED TO KEEP SUCH ANIMALS AND ACQUIRED MANY THROUGH POLICE CONFISCATIONS, ZOO REFERRALS, OTHER SHELTERS OR FROM OWNERS WHO NO LONGER WANT THEM, ACCORDING TO SCHILLING.

THE ORGANIZATION'S MISSION IS TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT WILD AND



JOAN CARREON / LW SUN CORRESPONDENT
Kimberly Schilling with Denali, a nine-week-old Canadian Lynx.



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Animals for Awareness Director/President Kimberly Schilling brought an American alligator named Boots Saturday to the New Lenox Public Library. The visit of exotic animals marked the end to the library's summer reading program.

MONDAY
AUGUST 28, 2006

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EXOTIC ANIMALS IN ORDER TO PROTECT BOTH PEOPLE AND THE ANIMALS FROM HARM, SHE SAID AFTER HER PRESENTATION.

AS EACH ANIMAL WAS BROUGHT OUT, SCHILLING SPOKE OF ITS PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES, NATIVE ENVIRONMENT AND BEHAVIOR TENDENCIES.

NAOMI, THE BOA CONSTRICTOR, AUDIENCE MEMBERS LEARNED, WAS COOL AND SMOOTH TO THE TOUCH.

BOOTS, THE ALLIGATOR, ENJOYS A DIET OF RATS, MICE AND RAW CHICKEN.

BABY, THE PARROT, KNOWS ABOUT 70 WORDS. SHE CHARMED THE GATHERING WITH HER VOCALIZATION OF SUCH PHRASES AS "GOOD MORNING," "SEE YA LATER," AND "BAD BIRD."

"SHE NOT ONLY KNOWS HOW TO TALK," SCHILLING SAID, "SHE ALSO KNOWS WHEN TO TALK."

SCHILLING STUMPED HER MORNING AUDIENCE WHEN SHE ASKED THEM TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TORTOISES AND TURTLES. IT IS NOT THEIR SIZE, SHE SAID, BUT WHERE THEY LIVE.

TORTOISES LIVE ONLY ON LAND WHILE TURTLES LIVE ON LAND AND IN WATER.

SHE WARNED POTENTIAL PET OWNERS TO STEER CLEAR OF THE SULCATA TORTOISE AS A PET. IT CAN GROW TO WEIGH 150 POUNDS AND LIVE 150 YEARS.

AS SHE INTRODUCED THE AUDIENCE TO HIDEY, THE AFRICAN PYGMY HEDGEHOG, SCHILLING SAID HEDGEHOGS CAN MAKE GOOD PETS. BUT THEIR OWNERS NEED TO SPEND A LOT OF TIME WITH THEM, SHE SAID.

08/02/06

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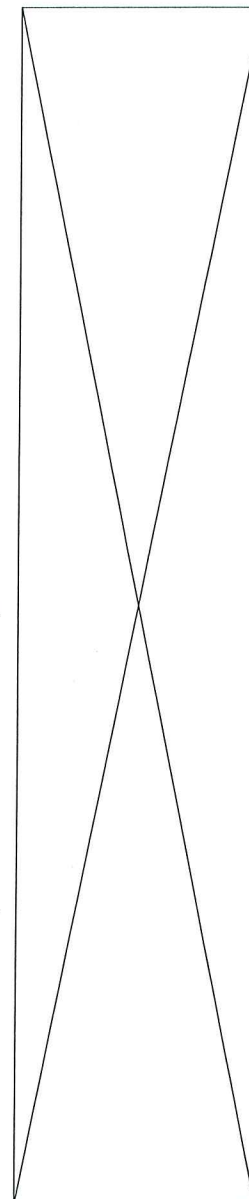
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