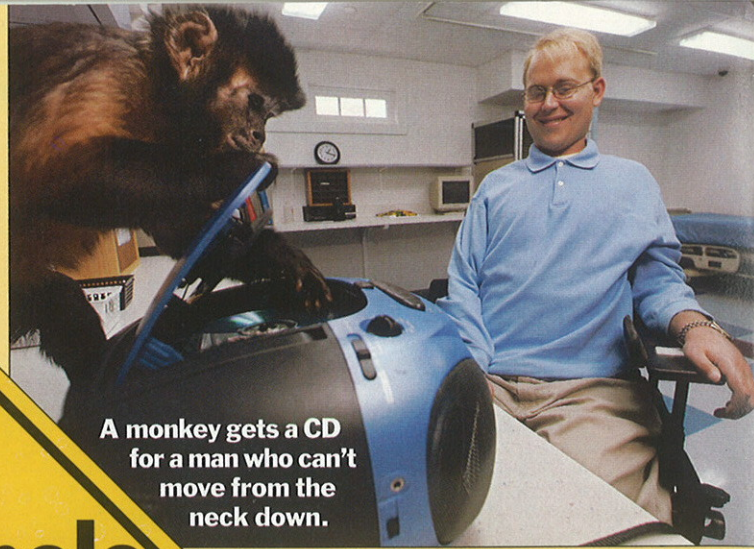




Bradley Kookin, 6, improves his skills by reading to a pup.



A monkey gets a CD for a man who can't move from the neck down.

Animals at Work

COVER STORY

A special visitor trotted into Michael Foote's room last week at the Akron Children's Hospital in Ohio. Petie, a pony, spent several minutes with the 11-year-old.

"When Petie came in, I wasn't feeling great," Michael says. "But I got to pet him, and when he left, I felt a lot better."

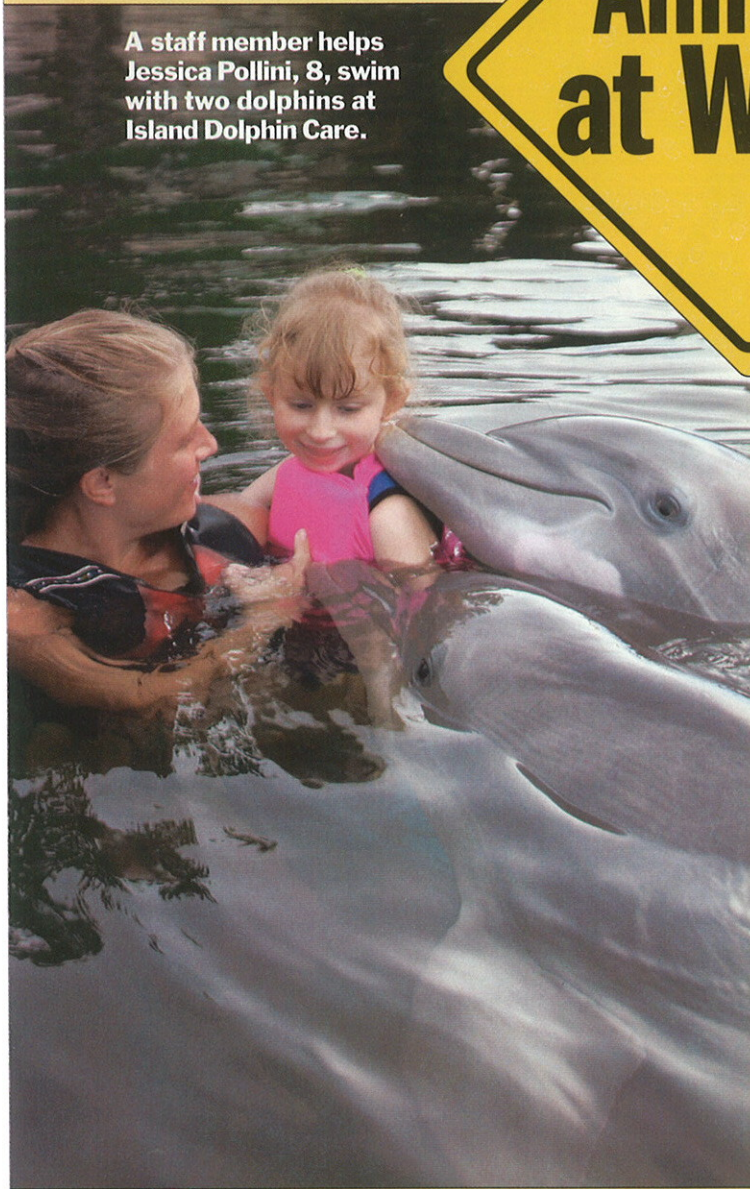
Horses and other animals are trained to help people who are sick feel better. Animals also assist people who have disabilities. Kristina Adams gathered facts for the U.S. government about animal helpers. "Animals have been used [to heal] people for hundreds of years," she says.

Animals Have Special Jobs

Animals help in many ways. Petie brings a smile to a patient's face. Some dogs are trained to guide blind people. Monkey helpers can carry things for people in wheelchairs.

At Island Dolphin Care in Florida, one way dolphins help is to reward kids for finishing their work in the center's classroom. Randy Kersh, 9, was born with Down syndrome, which affects the way his brain works. He takes a long time to do things. But Randy knows that if he finishes his work at the center, he can swim with the dolphins.

Animals can't help everyone in need. But they can be trained to make some struggles a little bit easier. For Randy and others, being with animals makes them happy. Trainers say that animals enjoy the friendship too!



A staff member helps Jessica Pollini, 8, swim with two dolphins at Island Dolphin Care.



What are some of the ways that animals help people with special needs? Name two.