

## **Deaf cattle dog, Angelyne, teaches children about compassion and desire**

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Evans — When Angelyne started visiting schools a little more than four years ago, her goal was to teach children about patience, persistence, teamwork, focus, creative thinking and all those things that children should know for life skills.

Her goal was to make sure standard-hearing children understand their deaf classmates are no different. She'll jump through hoops to make sure she gets her point across.

On Thursday at Chappelow K-8 Magnet School, she succeeded, exciting about 600 kids with her amazing ability to take food out of other peoples' mouths, jumping through hula hoops, flying through the air to catch tennis balls in her mouth and finding food under cups on the floor — all with a simple hand signal from her best friend.

But Angelyne is no ordinary deaf and hard-of-hearing instructor. She's a nearly 6-year-old Australian Cattle Dog that was born bilaterally and profoundly deaf.

"I called the puppy kindergarten teacher and said two words I will never say again," said Eric Melvin, Angelyne The Amazing Deaf Cattle Dog's owner about the day he received the news about Angelyne being deaf. "I quit."

Melvin, however, had a change of heart and decided Angelyne was too beautiful and too important to give up on. Melvin, who in one year taught Angelyne 11 different hand signs to do simple commands such as sit, lie down and come, said after taking her to a veterinarian who specialized in special needs animals, he couldn't walk away.

"She has taught me that we are all people first," Melvin said. "We all have something special we can contribute."

Chappelow brought Melvin and Angelyne to the school because this week is national Deaf Education Week, and Chappelow houses 21 sign-dependent hearing-impaired students for Greeley-Evans School District 6 in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade.

Since 2007, Melvin and Angelyne have been traveling the state teaching others about what a little bit of compassion and a lot of hard work and persistence can go. Melvin started out the first year with 12 presentations. He is on track to perform at 60 schools this year.

"Even if you have a disability, you can still learn and become something great," said Rebecca Gerwig, 14, about what she learned from the presentation. "How she focused without even hearing him was awesome."

Angelyne now knows 22 different hand signals and non-verbal commands, including many tricks that include jumping through successive hula hoops, balancing a treat or a flashlight on her nose and then tossing it into the air and catching it in her mouth.

"It was pretty cool," said Nikole Wertz, 13. "It showed the deaf kids you can do more and prove people wrong that you cannot do things just because you're deaf."

Melvin said it was the best decision he ever made, and his life is much more satisfying because of it.

"Once I focused on the things she could do instead of the things she couldn't, everything got very easy," he said. "I forgot that she couldn't hear at all."



Angelyne the Amazing Deaf Cattle Dog jumps through rings held by, from left, her owner Eric Melvin, AJ Atencio, Serenity Morris and Eric Mpawenimana Thursday at Chappelow K-8 Magnet School in Evans. Melvin has trained the Australian Cattle Dog to recognize hand signals instead of voice commands.