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The Following speech was written by Ryan Conde, the 2007-2008 1st place winner of 4-H/Miami-Dade Tropicana public speaking competition, 5th Grade category. If you are interested in participating in next year's competition, please contact our 4-H Extension office or visit: <http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/4h/tropicana.shtml>

The Perfect Pet
Ryan Conde

I never imagined that finding the perfect pet would be so difficult. I tried what most people consider normal pets, like cats and dogs. But that didn't work out so well. For some reason my cat, Sniffles, didn't like swimming in the pool. I tried teaching her how to swim, but she ran away the next day.

I got a dog, a golden retriever, because they were supposed to be smart and reliable. But my dog, Rover, kept chasing the neighbor's cats into the pool. One by one, all the cats in the neighborhood ran away. As usual, my dog tried to follow them, but this time he never returned.

Fish, on the other hand, can't run away. Perfect, I thought. They are colorful and I can have many to a tank. The only problem I soon encountered was that they didn't like to travel. I tried to take them with me to the fair. It didn't work out so well. I rather not say anything about that. Poor fish!

Well, parrots are portable. And, as a bonus, they talk, so I thought that would be perfect. Except when I got home the only thing she would say was, "take out the trash!" "cut the grass" and "clean the garage".

Obviously, my dad wasn't too happy with a bird that nagged him to do his chores. One day, I woke up and the parrot was gone. I didn't even have time to name her. Oh, well, I guess I have to try something else.

Chameleons don't talk, so no nagging was involved. Since they change colors, I thought they would be a cool pet. I got him home and put him on the sofa. Wow, he turned green. I put him on the floor, and he became totally wood grain. I know this is going to be the most amazing pet ever. Except finding him was impossible. I guess his camouflage was too good. By the way, we're still looking.

I wasn't doing too well finding a pet.

I went to the park to think about other possible pets. While I was there, I picked up this smooth, shiny river rock. It was aerodynamic and great for throwing, so I put it in my pocket.

Later on that day, after I came back from the hot air balloon races, I realized I still had the rock in my pocket. Then it struck me. He had been through all my adventures. This is exactly what I wanted from my pets.

It didn't run away. It didn't nag my dad. It didn't hide. It didn't mind being in the water. It didn't mind leaving the house. And it didn't chase the neighbor's cats.

I had found my perfect pet. My pet rock, Cob!