Empowering Your Library Users and Staff for a Healthier Tomorrow

Texas Library Association Conference
Spring 2014

Presenter: Kay Hetherly
Texas State University, Alkek Library

Get Your Woof On: Therapy Dogs in the Library

Today’s talk
• Background
• Benefits of therapy dogs in the library
• Steps for starting a therapy dog program
Therapy dogs everywhere!!

Including Texas

“Therapy Dogs’ Presence Steadily Grows in Libraries” Library Journal eNews (2/6/12)
Popular library therapy dog programs

- **Academic libraries:** relieve finals stress
- **Public & School libraries:** read to a dog, such as Divine Canines Barking Book Buddies

UT Austin pilots therapy dog program, December 2012

Texas State University Alkek Library

Sarah Naper, Director of Research & Learning Services

Joan Heath, Associate Vice President and University Librarian
Texas State pilots therapy dog program, May 2013

Benefits of library therapy dog programs
- Stress relief
- Networking
- Collaboration
- Research
- Promotion

Student stress
Stress for library staff

“Researchers and practitioners interested in librarianship have long recognized the inherent stress in the librarian profession…”

“Role ambiguity” occurs often in “organizations involving frequent changes in technology or organizational structure.”

Shupe and Pung (2011) Journal of Academic Librarianship

The faces say it all

Staff take a break with dogs
Survey comments

- You know when you feel all hope is lost and feel you're alone, I was reminded to keep on going by the warmth of an animal. Enjoyed so much!
- Not having my dog here is tough. Especially when the stress of school increases due to finals. Being around these therapy dogs has been so relaxing. It’s just what I needed today. Thank you for all that y'all do and for sharing your dogs! 😊
- “The dogs are so kind and we really are stressed students. Please bring the dogs back we love them. Thank you!”
- “very helpful—i haven’t smiled so big this week! Thank you! (Staff member)

Physiological changes with 15 minute (average) therapy dog visit

Promotion

- “I love dogs! PLEASE do this again, y’all are so awesome!” (Alkek survey)

TWITTER COMMENTS

- omg alkek is seriously having puppies you can pet to help relieve the stress of finals..... I LOVE MY SCHOOL
- Alkek will have puppies in it during finals for students to take a break and de-stress with! Awesome idea! Only at #TXST
Student research

Ashley Asel

- Graduate student, Developmental Education program (learning support concentration)
- Designed our survey
- Wrote a paper on our program: "The Effects of Therapy Dog Interactions on College Students' Final Exam-Related Stress"
- Working on masters thesis on animal assisted therapy
Faculty research

Dr. Elizabeth Kjellstrand Hartwig, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S CLAS Department, Professional Counseling Program

• Received funding for study in the fall for canine-assisted play therapy

• “My hope is to create an animal-assisted therapy training program or class here at Texas State in which I will train counseling students to do canine-assisted therapy with children in counseling” (Dr. Hartwig)

Dr. Hartwig and Ruggles

Collaboration: Partnering with the Student Learning Assistance Center (tutoring center)
Staff comment

“The dogs were the highlight of my year. They really made a difference.”

Steps we followed

1) Buy-in of staff/administration
2) Form Therapy dog team (4 people)
3) Visit to UT campus for their pilot. Support of UT librarian Meghan Sitar.
4) Written proposal & letter to Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management office for exception to UPPS 04.05.10—no dogs on campus
   Therapy dogs vs service dogs

5) Find therapy dog group to partner with
   • They make sure dogs/owners are trained, certified, and insured.
   • They do the scheduling.
   • Their services are offered by volunteers at no cost
   • Google: therapy dog non-profit san antonio (ex: Pet Partners, Therapy Dogs International)

Pet Partners

Therapy Dogs International
6) Promotions (flyers, posters, digital signs, website banner, social media, radio, local paper)
7) Assessment strategies (survey, whiteboards)
8) Coordinate volunteers
9) Crowd control measures
10) Clean up

But how much did it cost?
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Thanks for Listening!

References


