Therapy Dog Pilot Proposal

Texas State University Alkek Library

1/18/13

Team Members

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Charge: The Therapy Dog Team was charged with writing a proposal for having therapy dogs at Alkek Library during finals.
**PROPOSAL:** We propose to bring registered and insured therapy dogs, provided by Pet Partners of San Marcos and accompanied by trained owners, into Alkek Library for two hour sessions on the three days leading up to Spring 2013 Final Exams.

**GOAL:** To help students relax and relieve stress while studying for finals, and to provide a meaningful user experience at Alkek Library.

**BACKGROUND-OTHER UNIVERSITIES**

Therapy dog programs are becoming more and more popular in libraries and on college campuses across the U.S. as research also increasingly shows the health benefits of animal therapy. While some universities bring dogs in at particularly stressful times for students, such as finals or freshman orientation, others provide animal therapy as a regular part of their service.

The University of Texas launched their therapy dog program in the Perry-Castaneda Library during their Fall 2012 finals, and they also began offering outdoor petting zoos and other animal therapy opportunities in other areas of the campus the same year.

Other universities that have successfully implemented therapy dog programs in their libraries include Yale Law School, Harvard Medical School, Kent State, Emory University, University of Connecticut and Michigan, Rice University, and UT Arlington.

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**Description of Proposed Therapy Dog Pilot**

**WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW**

*When: May 1 (10am-12pm), May 2 (12pm-2pm), and May 3 (1pm-3pm)*

As finals begin on Thursday, May 2, 2013, we would like to start our pilot on the previous Wednesday, May 1st, which is “Reading Day” and a very popular day for studying in the library. In order to gauge the popularity of a therapy dog program, we would like to continue the pilot for 3 consecutive days, 2 hours each day.

*Where: Alkek Library, 2nd floor, Leisure Reading area*

The Leisure Reading area offers a comfortable and convenient location for our program with plenty of furniture and carpeted space on the floor for people to sit with the dogs if they are so inclined. At the same time it is a secluded area, which is important. People coming into the front doors of the library or going up the stairs will
not come into contact with or even be able to see the dogs, though signage will make it easy to find the area for those who choose to participate.

How:

For each two hour time slot, two dogs and their two owners from Pet Partners of San Marcos will sit in the Leisure Reading area as students join freely to pet and interact with them. Please read the next section for details on Pet Partners of San Marcos.

Comment cards will be available so that participants can provide feedback.

ABOUT PET PARTNERS OF SAN MARCOS

Pawsitive Energy is our local organization of Pet Partners, an established national organization of registered and insured therapy animals trained to improve lives through animal assisted activities and therapy. The organization is a 501(c)(3) public charity.

Faculty connection: The San Marcos organization is headed by Julie and Kevin Romig, who both teach in the Geography Department at Texas State University and are especially enthusiastic about launching this pilot. Another of the group’s “pet partners” (meaning one dog and one human) is a law professor at McCoy School of Business. The therapy dog team at Alkek Library feels that this collaboration between faculty members and university library staff to support student health and success will be beneficial to the university community.

Insurance and Registration: Pet Partners carries a primary commercial general liability insurance policy (“CGLI”) for its qualified volunteers (which includes all those involved with Pawsitive Energy) for accidents that occur during the policy period. A therapy animal team registered with Pet Partners is covered by this insurance upon receipt of the team's acceptance letter and ends at the expiration of the team’s registration. Pet Partners' CGLI insurance has limits in the amount of $2,000,000 per occurrence. See more insurance coverage information from Pet Partner's website.

Pet Partners require dogs and handlers to undergo rigorous training in order to register and participate in the program. Re-evaluation is required every two years.

PROMOTION

We will employ several methods for promoting our therapy dog event, including the following.

1) Email blast to the university community (sent by the promotions team through VPIT)
2) Story in the University Star’s Library Beat for the week of April 22

3) Story in the April library eNewsletter

4) Signage in Alkek Library, including digital signs and posters

5) Contact San Marcos Daily Record and Austin American Statesman to see if they are interested in covering the event (we have a contact number for the photographer at Austin American Statesman who covered UTs inaugural therapy dog event)

REQUEST TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, SAFETY, AND RISK MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Mr.
Director
Environmental Health, Safety, & Risk Management
Texas State University

January 22, 2013

Re: Request for Therapy Dog Exception

Dear Director ______,

I am writing to you to request an exemption from UPPS 04.05.10 Animals on University Property. The Alkek Library would like to begin a dog therapy program starting with the spring semester examination period. The purpose of the program is to help students with the stress and anxiety that often accompanies exam time as well as to promote the library and its programs. Numerous universities, including the University of Texas, have begun such programs and they have been very popular with students. The library would be partnering with Pawsitive Energy of San Marcos, a group that has background and experience working with therapy dogs in a variety of settings and groups from young children to senior citizens. The dogs in question are fully insured for liability purposes.

The proposed program would take place on the main floor of the library in the reading room area (NE area of library) – an area that is sequestered from the main traffic of the library and would provide a quiet and sheltered area where students would get to enjoy some time with a friendly furry pal. There would be 2 different dogs each accompanied by a handler and the dogs would play with students for no longer than 2 hour periods. We would expect the program to be put on for the first few days of the examination period.
Please let us know if an exemption is possible and what information and other documentation you might need before we go forward with the program. I have provided some links to news stories on dog therapy programs at other campuses for your review so you will have a better idea of how the programs work. Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Take care.

Very truly yours

Sources


Dogs on Campus (Kent State University): http://dogsoncampus.org/