

Dog visits offer alternative therapy

Tami Shepherd

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Some fluffy friends came to Las Positas College on August 20, 2015 to show off their talents. They are working therapy dogs, and it is their job to provide comfort, love and support.

The dogs were on the quad as part of Chill with Pet Therapy, an event sponsored by the LPC Student Health and Wellness Center.

Kelly Peters, Wellness Coordinator, of the LPC Health Department said that she got the idea from Todd Steffan, Veterans First coordinator in the LPC Veterans office.

“Therapy dogs were so well received with the veterans who had used the dogs in their program, we thought the rest of the campus would benefit, especially from the stress of the first week of school,” she said.

People could not pass by the quad without stopping to say hi to them. The dogs appeared to enjoy all of the attention that was coming their way, and if those who stopped by are any indication, they were a hit.

The humans would usually get down to the dog’s level, as they would say hello. Some would receive some slobbery licks and others would take a selfie with the canines. Some just wanted to pet the dogs.

Five dogs, Stella, Ronnie, Saddle, Maddie and Charlie, were featured at the event. All were a smash, becoming immediate celebrities. Most of the time people would have to wait their turn to say hi.

Student Aileen Sullivan decided to catch up on some reading while she took a seat next to Stella, a black lab. She had one hand on the dog as her other hand turned pages.

Maria Harral stopped to take a couple of selfies with Ronnie, a white lab.

Sadie, a big fluffy longhaired black dog, appeared to be too hot even in the shade, but she sat and stayed still while the eager students and faculty greeted her.

Then there was Charlie, a Golden Retriever who seemed to smile for the camera as new business instructor Patricia Stokke went in for a hug. Charlie has more than one job; he also works for the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program in Pleasanton.

Maddie, a black lab, also had a way with the students and faculty. She was always eager to say hello.

While the dogs seemed to enjoy their jobs, many of the human visitors cheered up as they petted the dogs and just being with them seem to brighten someone’s day.

That effect is not surprising, according to the website ‘Angel on a Leash,’ which featured a study that was done by Rebecca Johnson, Ph.D., at the University of Missouri-Columbia Center for the Study of Animal Wellness.

Johnson found that within minutes of touching a dog, a human gets a “massive release of the beneficial hormones such as endorphin, prolactin, dopamine, oxytocin” to name a few.

Canine therapy has been around since at least the 1970s. According Camp Recovery Center, therapy dogs can be used to promote overall health and healing. Canine therapy can be used for a variety of issues, including “autism, learning disabilities, behavioral problems and substance abuse.”

It is also used for people with PTSD, emotional and behavioral problems, and for people with Alzheimer’s.

Dogs that become therapy dogs must have special qualifications. Therapy dogs must listen to their handlers, be on a lease for at least one year without pulling, allow strangers to touch them all over, and to be clean and well groomed too, according to the Alliance of Therapy Dogs.

The interaction between humans and therapy dogs seemed to bring a calm to the quad area.

Therapy dogs may become one of the staples here at LPC judging by the success of their recent visits to campus, and can bring a calmer vibe to support student and faculty.



PHOTOS BY TAMI SHEPHERD/THE EXPRESS

(From top to bottom) 1. Julia Bent poses for a selfie with Sadie in the courtyard outside of the cafeteria on March 20, 2015.
2. Golden Retriever Charlie has smiles for everyone who came to greet him.
3. Maria Harral gets a kiss from Ronnie.



Transfer Tuesdays have returned

A counselor will be in the Transfer Center every Tues from Sept. 1 to November, during the hours of 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Students with transfer questions or those who need help with their TAG applications are welcome to stop by.

Transfer Day is around the corner

Transfer Day will be Monday, September 28 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the quad. Students are encouraged to attend as there will be more than 40 colleges with tables at the event. The complete list of schools attending can be found on the LPC transfer center web page.

International students seek housing

International students new to Las Positas are currently seeking housing for the fall semester. Any students that have an available room in their home to offer or rent out should contact Sean Day to receive and fill out a housing form.

Counselors available by email

Online Counseling is available to Las Positas students. The service is for who live too far to meet with a counselor in person, or are taking online courses. Online Counseling is available Monday through Thursday during fall and spring semesters only.