

Honors Program & Baytown Animal Shelter bringing dogs to campus

Pet therapy event Dec. 12-13 designed to help students relieve stress during finals

BAYTOWN, TX — Faced with end-of-semester essays and final exams as they enter the hectic holiday season, students in the Lee College Honors Program have partnered with the Baytown Animal Shelter to bring a little four-legged stress relief to campus during finals week.

The Student Honors Council will host a pet therapy event with dogs from the shelter from 12:30-2 p.m., Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 12-13, in an enclosed area between John Britt Hall and the Advanced Technology Center. In addition to students, faculty and staff, members of the community are also welcome to pet, walk and even play fetch with the animals during their stay.

"I thought it would be a good idea to reach out to the Baytown Animal Shelter to see if they would be willing to sponsor a pet therapy event at Lee College," said Student Honors Council President Brenna Sallee, who got the idea after seeing that other colleges and universities have helped students combat feelings of stress and anxiety by bringing dogs and puppies to campus.

"Their dogs would benefit from love and attention from the students at the college, and the students would benefit from getting outdoors to play with the animals," she said.

According to the American College Health Association, pet activity programs have provided students with a safe opportunity to perform diverse connections, provided a healthy outlet for positive touch and promoted relaxation. Of 400-600 students who participated in a pet program at the University of Chicago, 89-94 percent strongly agreed or agreed the event helped decrease their overall level of stress.

Kevin Cummings, manager of Animal Services for the city of Baytown, jumped at the opportunity to showcase shelter animals at Lee College and raise awareness of adoption as an option. The shelter will also collect donations at the pet therapy event; toys are especially needed, and participants will be able to make their own toys at a creation station set up on site.

"Human companionship keeps the dogs alert and responsive, which improves their chances of being adopted," Cummings said. "It also helps us advertise the wonderful dogs and cats looking to be part of a new family. Any exposure is good for our animals, especially during the holiday season."

Georgeann Ward, coordinator of the Honors Program, helped the students pull together campus and community resources, but praised their initiative in bringing the pet therapy event to their peers. "Creating student leaders is one of the goals of the Honors Program," she said.

For more information about the Lee College Honors Program or the pet therapy event during Finals Week, contact Ward at gward@lee.edu.