

Dogs on campus encourage community-building, heal homesickness

by Mandy Potts - Tuesday, September 27, 2011

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/14443/dogs-on-campus-encourage-community-building-heal-homesickness/>

A few weeks into the academic year, freshmen and other students who live in the on-campus residence halls are admittedly missing home.

Some are missing mom's best dish served hot from the kitchen, others their own bed and many others are missing man's best friend, their dog.

"My dog is definitely the person in my house I miss the most," said Nick Fischer, a freshman at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh this year who left his golden retriever at home. "We grew up together. He's 14, and I'm an only child."

httpv://youtu.be/SxK6V_IAYb0

Fisher, and many other freshman students at Evans, Stewart, Fletcher, Gruenhagen and South Scott residence halls, found their way to the dogs Monday night who were participating in the Pet Perk Me Up program put on by UW Oshkosh Residence Life, Counseling Center and the Fox Valley-based Compassionate Canines organization. The Pet Perk Me Up program was designed to build caring and compassionate communities on the UW Oshkosh campus.

"People tend to open up to dogs," said Jodie Frohne, who sits on the Compassionate Canine board of directors and led the pack of dogs to the University Monday night. "Dogs are comforting and calming for people."

Kim Charniak, clinical social worker at the UW Oshkosh Counseling Center, said the dogs were invited to welcome freshman to UW Oshkosh and help them feel at home.

"Homesickness is a pretty big thing for students," said Sarah Kuen, a community development specialist with UW Oshkosh Residence Life. "And (homesickness) isn't something students necessarily want to talk about...so the animals help with that."

Freshman Rachel Dehn said she is missing her family's yellow lab and was very excited to have the playful pooches on campus Monday night.

"It just reminds you of home...for a minute," Dehn said. "It's a taste of home away from home."

At Monday's event information about general wellness was also given to students and Charniak said the plan is to bring the pack of dogs in again this year during stressful peak periods, like during midterms.

"She just loves it here," said JoAnn Winnekens, who brought her beagle, Emma, to UW Oshkosh for Pet

Perk Me Up. “She just loves going to where the people are.”

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