

Media Relations

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University of New Hampshire Frenzy-Free Finals Stress Busters Includes Dogs



Students at the University of New Hampshire take a break from studying to spend time with a 'study buddy,' brought in to help relieve stress during finals. Credit: UNH Library.

DURHAM, N.H. - Students at the University of New Hampshire took a break from studying for finals at the Dimond Library this week, relieving stress with the help of dogs, treats, and the traditional primal scream, which took place near midnight Dec. 10, 2012.

For the second year in a row, "study buddy" dogs were part of the Frenzy-Free Finals campaign. Accompanied by their trainers, the dogs were available for patting throughout the day, drawing large crowds of students away from their textbooks and notes for a brief reprieve. The dogs are from ElderPet, an organization launched at UNH's Thompson School of Applied Science in 1982 to connect pets with senior citizens and people with disabilities.

"I was just studying in the corner of the second floor of the library, slowly ripping out my hair when a little pug named Izzy came in. It instantly put my roommate and me in better moods since we had been at the library for close to five hours," says sophomore Emily Rae Smith. "There must be some scientific fact that puppies raise people's moods because that is a genius idea for stressful college students. It helped me get my mind off of my 10-page paper I had to write."

As many as six dogs were brought into the library throughout the day, settling in various spaces with students gathering around them on the floor. By 8:30 a.m., with the first dog due at 9 a.m., students were already asking librarians when they would arrive.

"All day long we heard, 'where are the puppies, where are the puppies?'" said Jean Putnam, library services supervisor, noting that, at one point when a little corgi and its trainer were trying to get downstairs to a group of people who'd been awaiting their arrival, so many students had gathered around the pair, the staff had to intervene.

Library associate Liz Fowler was in the periodical room with a dog and a group of students, witnessing first-hand how eager the students were.

"It was nice to see them so excited about this. Every place a dog could be, there were students," Fowler said. "It was really fun to be in the room with them. One girl left and called out, 'UNH library is the best.'"

Tracey Lauder, assistant dean of library administration, said they hope to bring the dogs every year, and possibly every semester. The problem, she said, is there aren't enough dogs to go around; they most often visit hospitals and nursing homes.

"You can see how people would respond to them. For the students, life gets into perspective when you have something drooling, wagging its tale. It makes them feel like they're in a normal environment, like, 'this could be my home.' They've got all this stress going on, and then there's this. It helps them relax," Lauder said.

Frenzy-Free Finals is sponsored by UNH Library, Healthy UNH, UNH Dining Services, the Parents Association, UNH Health Services, and ElderPet. Throughout the week, the library is open 24 hours a day, offering other stress busters such as chair massages, guided meditation, a cookie break and the primal scream, which brings students together for a collective one-minute scream to let off steam.

"They students seem to appreciate the attempts at helping ease the stress of finals," Lauder said.

"We're glad to be part of that."

Download photo here: <http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2012/dec/librarydogs.jpg>.

Caption: Students at the University of New Hampshire take a break from studying to spend time with a 'study buddy,' brought in to help relieve stress during finals.

Credit: UNH Library.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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