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Study Break

Therapy dogs help law students relieve stress during exams

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Rebecca Randolph, L'04, credits her dog for helping her survive the stress of law school.

"I had a black Lab," she said. "I usually studied at home. His place was curled up, under my desk. Because of Jake, I made it through law school and the bar exam."

Randolph, who is now an assistant country attorney in Hanover County, Va., returned to the law school during exams with her new dog, Garth, a certified therapy dog with Caring Canines, a volunteer group. They joined three other therapy dogs and their owners to provide a few hours of stress relief for University of Richmond School of Law students.

Randolph contacted the law school after reading a New York Times article about therapy dogs at Yale Law School and after visiting University of Richmond undergrads for a stress relief session. "I knew from experience that the students could really use it here," she said. According to Caring Canines' website, "interaction with dogs is known to lower blood pressure, reduce loneliness and depression, and can improve the sense of self-esteem and well-being."

Adrienne Zelnick, L'12, had been studying for her exams at home but made a special trip to the law school to spend some time with the dogs. "I really needed a break," she said. "I have been studying all day and haven't left my house." Zelnick sat down on the floor, next to Molly, a 160-pound Newfoundland, and instantly looked more relaxed. "I'm feeling happy to be with the dogs," she said as she stroked Molly's fur.

Temple Roach, L'11, left her law books behind for a few minutes to spend some time with Garth, a Golden Retriever. "I'm a big dog person," she said. Did spending some time with the dogs help to relieve some of her stress? "Everybody I've seen walking by here has been smiling," she observed.

"Want to write my contract for me?" one student asked Zoe, a Welsh Corgi. Zoe declined the offer, but rolled over for a belly rub.

"We brought these dogs here to give you a little study break," Randolph said. "They just give unconditional love."

Law

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