

Anna-Belle the bull of the ball

Positive vibes.
U of S students find stress relief via therapy dog during finals



MORGAN MODJESKI
morgan.modjeski@meownews.ca

University of Saskatchewan students feeling the pressure of final exams now have a new and furry way to fight stress.

A two-and-half-year-old English bulldog named Anna-Belle is a certified therapy dog and with the help of her handler, Colleen Dell, she's raising spirits at the U of S.

"Students here, a lot of them are away from home and they don't have their pets, so they love to interact with her," said Dell, who is a U of S research chair in substance abuse.

"They spend a bit of time together and she gives them her complete focus, which I think is validating too, because you're interacting with another being and university can be isolating."

Part of Dell's research

is examining how the bond between animals and people impacts those going through recovery and addiction. Dell said she hopes the interactions with students will provide her with insight into how stress is affected by a K9 companion.

While Anna-Belle has been visiting campus since October, this is the first time she's been on campus during finals and some students said the pup impacted them positively, even after a short interaction.

"You kind of forget about everything when you're looking at something that's super happy ... so it's nice in that way," said third-year biochemistry student Hannah Jones.

Second-year education student Feather Pewapisconias added: "Being around animals, it just helps relieve stress in general. They're just super calm and it gets your mind off of everything else."

Dell said while Anna-Belle is currently on campus every Thursday as part of her research, she's working with the U of S in hopes of expanding the program in the future.



Anna-Belle, an English bulldog, helps students, from left, Annika Kolar, Riley Briere and Hannah Jones relieve some stress during finals at the U of S Aboriginal Students' Centre on Thursday afternoon. MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO