

Take a Paws

[Queen's University Library](#)

Adults

Take a Paws

Mar 3, 2025

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Byline

Shelley Woods, Education Librarian, Queen's University Library, Ontario, Canada

The Library Wellness Committee coordinated onsite visits from St. John Ambulance Therapy Dogs Kingston to reduce stress and promote wellness.

Therapy dog visits are routinely arranged for students on campus to de-stress. We organized a similar event for staff to gather, socialize, relax and enjoy the company of therapy dogs.

Advanced Planning

The program was planned 2.5 months in advance and hosted by two team members. To prepare for the event, we:

- Identified a reputable organization to partner with ([St. John Ambulance](#)).
- Secured relevant organizational approvals.
- Notified administrators (staff were given the option to work elsewhere if the dogs being there posed an issue for them).
- Ensured the proper Certificate of Insurance was in place.
- Booked a suitable library space.
- Arranged for the space to be cleaned immediately following the event.

Marketing

We added a Save the Date invitation to everyone's calendars. In addition to the time, place and event description, the email included a photo of a dog to attract attention and a link to a short article about the benefits of pet therapy. We also hung a poster in the space and sent a reminder email to staff.

Budgeting

This can be a very low-cost activity.

St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program accepts optional/voluntary donations for their services. Our program was generously funded by a [Queen's University BeWell Grant](#), a Human Resources initiative that funds "small-scale workplace well-being activities and projects."

We donated to St. John Ambulance and purchased a couple of lint rollers for participants to use.

Day-of-event Activity

There were two handlers and two dogs who stayed for an hour and a half. To accommodate the dogs, we selected a room with tile flooring (in case of puppy accidents) and a space that was free of food and unnecessary distractions. A lot of staff attended the event, and based on the success of the first therapy dog visit, we are planning a second session.

Program Execution

It was helpful to have at least two hosts present on the day of the event, one to greet the handlers and dogs and one to be in the event space. Originally, we were expecting three handlers and their dogs, but due to unforeseen circumstances, we were reduced to two. For the next event, we're hoping to have three handlers and three or four dogs.

Advice

To reduce risk and ensure a smooth experience hosting a therapy dog event, partner with a reputable organization like St. John Ambulance, which has standards and assessments for handlers and their dogs.

Consider providing a lint roller for participants to use.

Our colleagues really appreciated the wellness event. Therapy dog sessions are beneficial for and valued by students and staff alike!

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Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

Slideshow Images



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