Introduction

Aligning with the University’s Catholic, Jesuit values of serving those in need and caring for the whole person, the partners envisioned a program to address the anxiety and social isolation experienced by medical, graduate nursing, and graduate biomedical students of the Stritch School of Medicine, the Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing, and the Biomedical Graduate School. As students transition through rigorous and stressful professional programs, the partners imagined outreach designed to provide emotional and social support that also educated students about the role of service and/or therapy dogs in patient care.

The unique skill set of each partner has contributed to the success of a program that has evolved and continues to evolve over time. The partners consist of members from the Health Sciences Library, the Institute for Transformative Inter-professional Education, and the Loyola University Health System.

Objectives

As libraries navigate constantly changing landscapes of limited physical space and transition to all electronic collections, librarians look to their community to identify evolving needs to develop and implement user-centered services meant to transform visitors and libraries alike. Library as community to identify evolving needs to develop and implement user-space and transition to all electronic collections, librarians look to their role for the library.

Methods

The first phase of the program, Dogs@HSL, relied on outsourcing interventions to twice-monthly visits from Pawsitive Pet Therapy, a volunteer organization.

In the second phase of the program, library staff learned how to work with retired service dogs and in-training service puppies as an interventional tool with students.

Library staff learned to be a member of the interventional team consisting of dog-and-human in the third phase of the program. Julia Havey taught staff to issue commands, properly handle a leash, and safely work with dogs in a health care setting. The library director secured administrative and staff support for the program.

In the final phase, the partners worked together to launch the Dog in Residence program, which brings Miso to the library for scheduled shifts at the service desk each week.

Results

Challenges to this initiative include time commitment, certification cost, (turnover in staff and canine partners) and requests for additional canine consults. We succeeded in meeting all challenges with good humor and positive results. Collaborating with diverse professionals who share interests, values and goals enabled us to deepen our connections with each other, our students, and the animals who work with us to improve the health of our students and the future care of their patients.

References


