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Saint Leo University's Paws of Love Organization Donates 135 Leashes to Pasco County Animal Services Shelter

ST. LEO, FL – Saint Leo University helps all creatures, great and small, and its Paws of Love organization was founded to help rescued and sheltered animals while protecting the environment.

On February 26, Paws of Love organizers and volunteers celebrated the completion of one of its missions by presenting Pasco County Animal Services with 135 lasso leashes to be used at the county's Land O' Lakes, FL, shelter. Assistant Director Spencer Conover and members of the Animal Services staff, along with office dog Olivia, accepted the leashes.

The Office of Student Affairs started the project in the summer and during New Student Orientation on August 20, freshmen, transfer students, and others made healthy no-bake dog treats; assembled first aid kits for pets; and created braided dog toys from recycled T-shirts. The Lions tennis teams donated tennis balls to be used for pet toys.

The treats and toys were donated to the Humane Society of Pasco (County), Pasco County (FL) Animal Services, DC Dogos; and Destiny for Dogs to sell and some items will be sold by Paws of Love to those in the community. In addition, Paws of Love collected monetary donations.

"We raised more than \$700 for the leashes for Pasco County Animal Services, and we were able to buy a microchip reader for another rescue group," said Heidi D'Ambrosio, executive assistant to the vice president of Student Affairs.

The goal was to purchase enough of the leashes so that each kennel at Pasco County Animal Services will have its own leash. Prior to receiving the donation from Saint Leo and Paws of Love, kennel volunteers would have to wait to take dogs for a walk if others were using the

leashes that were available. “If 10 volunteers are there, they have to wait until someone is done,” D’Ambrosio said.

Now, the leashes will allow more dogs to be exercised at the same time, enabling each dog to receive time outdoors, she added.

Paws of Love benefited from the work of many. Students (and faculty and staff) helped create “cat trees” and other items during National Make a Difference Day in October, while students in the Fall 1 Semester’s Interdisciplinary Approaches: Service & Therapy Animals (IDS 300) course helped make dog treats and toys. Saint Leo University’s Counseling Services offers “Puppies and Pizza” twice a semester—once just before midterms and again just before finals week—and students not only had the opportunity to cuddle with a dog, but they also could create items for Paws of Love.

True to the university’s core values, Paws of Love not only helps other creatures and the community, but also “upcycles” items that would go in landfills. By using old T-shirts and tennis balls to make the pet toys, Paws of Love is helping the environment.

“It really shows that we can make a difference together,” D’Ambrosio said.

More than 150 students have participated in Paws of Love. Volunteers, fraternity and sorority members, the Student Government Union, and others are doing community service and creating items or volunteering at shelters. They will be finishing cat trees that will be donated to Pasco County Animal Services. In addition, Paws of Love will be at Dogs’ Day in Dade City on Saturday, March 16, to sell items. The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Agnes Lamb Park, 14200 Ninth St., Dade City, FL 33523 (off of Meridian Avenue). Money raised will go to Pasco Animal Services and other rescues to help more animals.

Photo captions/cutlines

Photos by Benjamin Watters, Saint Leo University

Olivia, the “office dog” at Pasco County Animal Services, visited Saint Leo University on February 26 to receive a donation of leashes from Paws of Love.

Saint Leo University’s Paws of Love volunteers celebrated the donation of 135 lasso leashes to Pasco County Animal Services (along with Animal Services’ “office dog,” Olivia).

About Saint Leo University

Saint Leo University (www.saintleo.edu) is a modern Catholic teaching university that is firmly grounded in the liberal arts tradition and the timeless Benedictine wisdom that seeks balanced growth of mind, body, and spirit. The Saint Leo University of today is a private, nonprofit institution that creates hospitable learning communities wherever students want to be or need to be, whether that is a campus classroom, a web-based environment, an employer's worksite, a military base, or an office park. Saint Leo welcomes people of all faiths and of no religious affiliation, and encourages learners of all generations. The university is committed to providing educational opportunities to the nation's armed forces, veterans, and their families. Saint Leo is regionally accredited to award degrees ranging from the associate to the doctorate, and the faculty and staff guide all students to develop their capacities for critical thinking, moral reflection, and lifelong learning and leadership.

The university remains the faithful steward of the beautiful lakeside University Campus in the Tampa Bay region of Florida, where its founding monks created the first Catholic college in the state in 1889. Serving nearly 12,000 students, Saint Leo has expanded to downtown Tampa, to other sites in Florida and beyond, and maintains a physical presence in seven states. The university provides highly respected online learning programs to students nationally and internationally. More than 93,000 alumni reside in all 50 states, in Washington, DC, in three U.S. territories, and in 76 countries.

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