SERVICE DOG 3/22/16 N. HOWELL

A new program has come to UW-River Falls that offers hands-on experiences for students and the opportunity to train a rescue dog into a service animal.

DOGAUDIO MP3 RUNS: 1:30 O/C: STD

NATALIE HOWELL: THE UWRF SERVICE DOG TRAINING PROGRAM STARTED IN FEBRUARY AND IS A STAND-ALONE PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCE. IN THIS PROGRAM, STUDENTS IN ANIMAL SCIENCE WITH A COMPANION ANIMAL EMPHASIS ARE ABLE TO GET HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE BY TRAINING A RESCUE DOG TO HAVE THE QUALITIES OF A SERVICE DOG. THIS PROGRAM SERVES AS A BRIDGE FOR DOGS THAT HAVE BEEN OVERLOOKED IN RESCUE OR THAT ARE POTENTIALLY FACING EUTHANASIA IN AN OVERCROWDED SHELTER WHILE PROVIDING THEM WITH FOUNDATIONAL TRAINING FOR POTENTIAL ADVANCED PLACEMENT, ACCORDING TO BETH RAUSCH, FACULTY ADVISOR FOR THE UWRF SERVICE DOG TRAINING PROGRAM. THE TRAINING OF THE RESCUE DOG, MEL, IS SURROUNDED BY THE IDEA OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT. THE STUDENT HANDLERS DON’T USE SHOCK OR PRONG COLLARS AND WORK TO MAKE SURE THAT MEL ISN’T STRESSED, IS HAVING FUN, AND IS WILLING TO DO THE TRAINING REQUIRED.

BETH RAUSCH: “THAT’S THE WHOLE UNDERLYING FOUNDATION, IS THAT THE ANIMAL WANTS TO AND LOOKS FORWARD TO TRAINING. WITHOUT THAT, THE LEARNING WON’T BE EFFECTIVE AND THE WELFARE WON’T BE THERE.”

NATALIE HOWELL: BAILEY POST IS ONE OF THE STUDENT HANDLERS FOR THIS PROGRAM. A SENIOR, SHE HOPES TO GET INTO MEAT AND COMPANION ANIMAL SALES AFTER GRADUATION. SHE SAID THAT THE UNIQUE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE OF THE PROGRAM HAS ALLOWED HER TO PUT INTO EFFECT WHAT SHE HAS LEARNED IN HER FOUR YEARS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

BAILEY POST: “AND YOU KNOW, YOU HAVE YOUR LECTURES, YOU HAVE YOUR BOOKS, YOU CAN READ THOSE AND LEARN, BUT YOU JUST DON’T LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU WOULD WITH THAT HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE.”

NATALIE HOWELL: THE PROGRAM IS SET UP TO TRAIN ONE DOG PER SEMESTER, BUT RAUSCH SAID THAT THE TRANSITIONING BETWEEN DOGS WILL DEPEND ON HOW LONG IT TAKES TO TRAIN THE INDIVIDUAL DOG. FOR THE FALCON NEWS SERVICE, I’M NATALIE HOWELL.

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