



## Sault College News Release

For immediate release

### Sault College Students Paws for a Break!



(Sault Ste. Marie, ON December 3, 2013) Sault College's Mental Health initiative is unleashing the hounds this month and offering students a unique way to de-stress. The Paws to Relax program has partnered with St. John's Ambulance Therapy Dog Program to bring dogs to the campus to visit with students.

"It is generally acknowledged by the health care community that contact with pets has a calming effect, lowering blood pressure and relieving tension," notes Lisa Carricato, Mental Health Educator at the College. "The end of a semester can be a difficult time with students feeling the crunch of big assignments and cramming for exams. Add to it the lack of sleep, eating badly, and it's pretty easy to get stressed out."

The Paws to Relax initiative is run through the College's Mental Health Hub, a program the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities funds. The Mental Health Hub is a service model whereby students presenting mental health or addictions issues can receive the necessary services in a timely fashion. The Hub is the central access of resources for mental health and addictions through the Student Services Counsellors and their support and networking with

community partners. A comprehensive approach with the mental health initiative also incorporates traditional Aboriginal approaches to healing with an Elder-in-Residence Program that includes traditional guidance, ceremonies, sharing circles and resources for students and staff. Partnering with the Canadian Mental Health Association, the initiative has a part-time Mental Health Educator to plan events like the Paws to Relax as well as provides education on stress reduction and Mental Health.

The dog room is located in the A-Wing lobby from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. until Friday December 6<sup>th</sup>. Sault College would like to extend its thanks to the St. John's Ambulance volunteer team who is on site with approximately two to three dogs at all times. Due to the overwhelming response to this initiative, the program will be offered again during the spring exam time.

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### **About Sault College**

The vision of Sault College is to provide a transformative life experience through empowering those who study with us to think and learn in progressive, innovative ways, including those we have not yet imagined. Sault College grants Ontario College certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, graduate certificates, and degrees to its graduates. The College is the largest deliverer of apprenticeship training in all of Northern Ontario. Sault College has ranked 83.8% in Student Satisfaction, the highest score for a Northern College and second highest score overall in the province. Educating over 3,900 students each year, Sault College has a significant economic impact on the community, with spin-offs in excess of \$158 million. Over \$2 million dollars in scholarships, bursaries and awards are distributed annually to students at the College. Located on the border to the United States and situated in the middle of three of the largest great lakes on the planet, Sault College is one of 24 publicly-funded colleges in the province of Ontario. Visit our website at [www.saultcollege.ca](http://www.saultcollege.ca) to learn more.

**In photo:** Mike Russon, Digital Film Production student pets Sully

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