

DOG BY ELLEN BROWN treats

Meet a few of CWRU's four-legged ambassadors who accompany their "people" to work and make campus their home away from home.

As I amble into Peter Whiting's office with six Snausages concealed in my pocket, the professor of geological sciences rises from his seat in amazement. "I can't believe it," he says, gaping at his seven-year-old golden retriever as she rushes toward me in a blond flurry, her tail wagging wildly. Caper is never this outgoing with first-time visitors, Prof. Whiting insists. Still a puppy at heart, Caper prances about and nudges my palm until I finally give

in, hand-feeding her a single treat. Then another and another, until there are none.

Caper, who has been accompanying Prof. Whiting to work since she was about seven weeks old, is a quiet dog who's content to curl up near her master on the linoleum floor of his office in the A.W. Smith Building. Still, over the years, she's attracted her share of groupies—gaggles of faculty, staff, and students, who arrive bearing biscuits and other delicacies. "Most of the time, people walk right by without realizing there's a dog in my office, but sometimes when the door is open, people look in and smile, and sometimes there are even squeals of delight, especially from students who miss their family pets back home," says Prof. Whiting, scratching his dog's belly. "Occasionally, she'll walk down the hall for a free pet, and sometimes she'll let out a little yodel and do a dance to get someone's attention, but mostly she's quiet."

If you've spent any time on campus, perhaps you've met the menagerie of CWRU pups like Caper who, in the view of one University contingent, grace the place with their friendly presence and make life there more like home.

For many of us, companion animals are a salve for the soul. A number of studies have even shown that their gentle presence has a positive effect on our physical health and our psychological health, lowering blood pressure, quelling loneliness and despair, and providing us with a sense of comfort and purpose. Of course, there are those who suffer from allergies or other medical conditions who are unable to commune with companion animals, and others who would simply prefer not to keep company with them. But most pet owners on campus respect these differences, often corralling their dogs in their offices.



Caper



Charlie



Millie

FRIENDS, INDEED

Meet Millie and Charlie, for instance, the beloved companions of biology professor Marty Rosenberg. The mellow but friendly pair of dogs love to be loved, bestowing kisses on a never-before-seen caller. Both four-year-old Charlie, a buff-colored blend of Labrador retriever, shepherd, and chow, and Millie, a multicolored coon-basset hound mix, were adopted by Prof. Rosenberg, soon thereafter taking up "residence" on campus. Millie has an especially rich history at CWRU; Prof. Rosenberg found her outside Millis Science Center, naming her Millie after the building.

A self-proclaimed animal lover, Prof. Rosenberg says his pets have been keeping him company on campus since he was a graduate student at the University of Louisville. "Animals are such a calming influence," he says. "When I come back from a difficult meeting or a hard class, I have the dogs to welcome me back. It's nice to be able to pet them." And his fuzzy friends seem to appreciate the affection as well, he says.

The dogs also open the lines of communication between Prof. Rosenberg and the young men and women in his classes, and promote a friendly environment for faculty, staff, and students. The students, he explains, often become more comfortable when petting the dogs, making it easier for them to open up and discuss class-related concerns.

Sometimes, the dogs even fill a void in the lives of students who've become homesick for their family pets, Prof. Rosenberg contends. Upon spotting the professor with Millie and Charlie

in tow, it's not uncommon for them to shower the furry companions with kisses and hugs, telling Prof. Rosenberg how much they miss their dogs back home.

Though Prof. Rosenberg doesn't allow Millie and Charlie to accompany him to class, the professor indulges their love for people-watching by leaving the door to his office open (with the dogs behind a baby gate), so passersby can say hello to, and entertain, the friendly pair.

CAMPUS COMMUNION

Campus life rarely, if ever, turns lonely for Millie and Charlie, but, if it ever does, they always have their school-chum, Henry the golden retriever, to keep them company. The svelte auburn-toned dog, with a graying muzzle, comes to visit his "friends" every morning before retiring to his office upstairs in DeGrace Hall (formerly the Biology Building), with biology instructor Joanne Westin and her husband, Roy Ritzmann, a professor of biology. The two began chaperoning Henry to work a number of years ago when their home bathroom was being renovated, and they didn't want their pet to pester the work crew, Dr. Westin recalls. At the time, she and Prof. Ritzmann were located in the Morley building, where there were four other CWRU pets to pal around with. After the home project was completed, Henry continued to come to campus. "Now he's like a fixture in biology," Dr. Westin says. "People come by to pet him, and he really likes the attention." At the age of eleven, Henry sometimes has trouble rising from

“Everybody loves Fawny. There isn’t a day that goes by without someone stopping by to see her.” –Lori Rotar

a prone position because of arthritis. So on most days, he can be found lounging around his owners’ offices, gleefully accepting hugs from regular and chance visitors, Dr. Westin says.

Over the years, Henry has developed quite a fan club, especially with students, she notes. Though many have never met his dog owners, they know and call Henry by name, Dr. Westin says, smiling.

Across campus, in Mather Memorial, a fluffy, cream-colored dog named Chester is also a hit with students, says dog owner Eleanor Stoller, a CWRU professor of sociology. Though Chester is a natural athlete and a former Frisbee master, at the age of fourteen, he mostly enjoys snoozing the hours away under Prof. Stoller’s desk. But the pooch is hardly invisible, and people notice when he’s absent from school. A while ago, when Chester wasn’t accompanying Prof. Stoller to work regularly, one student asked, in a serious tone, if Chester “is OK.” “I guess she was worried that maybe Chester had gone to doggie heaven,” she says with a smile. Though touched by the student’s concern, Prof. Stoller assured the woman that Chester was staying home with her husband and was doing just fine.

Prof. Stoller turns sheepish as she remembers the time another student pointed to an arrangement of family photographs in her office, finding humor in the fact that a photo of Chester (getting ready to dive into their swimming



Henry

pool) was flanked by pictures of her two adult children, as though the dog were their favorite child. Though her family pet leads quite a cushy life and has become the center of attention since both adult children left home, Prof. Stoller laughs as she recalls quickly rearranging the framed photos, “because that certainly wasn’t the sort of impression I wanted to make.”

THE AMBASSADORS

Taking up residence across the Mather quad from Chester is Thug, a vertically challenged Welsh Corgi, who loves to meet and greet visitors in the lobby of Guilford House. The five-year-old dog, who has grown into his name over the years, belongs to Gary Stonum, professor of English and chair of the department, whose office is on the first floor. A social animal, Thug has been known to steal gloves and sandwiches and anything he can scam from unsuspecting visitors. Prof. Stonum admits that he sometimes has to apologize and pay for Thug’s transgressions, especially when the dog grabs a sandwich out of a student’s hands. But Thug is an affable companion, and the professor delights in his company. So do many of the students and faculty members Thug encounters, he says, though, since October, all dogs that visit Guilford House have been placed on



Thug

a “shorter leash,” out of respect for everyone in the building. Still, Prof. Stonum insists, “Dogs on campus are a natural. Where I went to school, there were dogs everywhere, so I thought it would be great to bring in Thug.”

The furry ambassador has quite a following, including a small treat brigade in Guilford House that arrives bearing delectable edibles. But being a shrewd moocher, Thug goes straight to the source, refusing to wait for his benefactors to approach him. Never a defender of taking the stairs because of his diminutive stature, Thug has been known to mystify visitors by taking the first-floor elevator upstairs to get the goods, and trotting out of the conveyor all on his own, much to the amazement and amusement of Guilford guests, says Prof. Stonum.

Another four-legged ambassador who has made CWRU her home away from home is Fawn, a collie-shepherd mix, so named for her resemblance to a deer, according to dog owner Lori Rotar, the secretary to the chairman in the Department of Physics. Well-mannered and eager to please, the silky white dog makes her bed, for the most part, under Ms. Rotar’s desk in the Rockefeller Building. Fawn, sitting faithfully by her owner’s side, her head raised proudly, often attracts passersby, like the stranger who pauses to tell Ms. Rotar how beautiful and intelligent her dog looks, as she is being interviewed

outside the Rockefeller Building. “Everybody loves Fawny,” Ms. Rotar says when the woman walks away. “There isn’t a day that goes by without someone stopping by to see her.”

The dog, who has been accompanying Ms. Rotar to campus since she began working in the physics department in 1994, is like a virtual Welcome Wagon for international speakers who are invited to the University on behalf of the Department of Physics. When guests are scheduled to arrive on campus, Ms. Rotar and Fawn sit on a bench on Adelbert Road, waiting to welcome visitors. The driver (of the car transporting the guests) tells them to be on the lookout for a fluffy white dog, because when they spot her “they’ll know they have arrived,” Ms. Rotar says. Fawn has been known to make quite an impression on international guests. On one occasion, a visitor from Russia was so taken by the dog that, when he returned to his homeland, he requested that Ms. Rotar send him a photo of her pet, so Fawn and his dog could “meet,” she recalls. Ms. Rotar smiles as she remembers receiving the letter he wrote, which is posted on her office wall. “I thought it was really nice that he’d written to me,” she says. “And I sent him the best picture I had of Fawn.”

It is with great regret that associate editor Ellen Brown leaves her twelve-year-old dog, Shelby, at home, because the golden retriever cannot climb the three flights of stairs to her Bellflower Hall office.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BETSY MOLNAR



Chester



Fawn