

Come for a stress-relieving cuddle

Puppies and yoga two initiatives to help students through exam struggles

By Julia Karpiuk

It's that time of year again. While malls and children start to anticipate the holiday season, post-secondary students all over the country brace themselves for finals. Along with those exams come rising stress levels.

The initiatives for stress relief at Loyalist College are being fueled and organized by Loyalist's student services. What better way to relieve stress than to cuddle with puppies or take some big deep breaths with yoga.

"His name is Bandit...he's adorable, very sweet, very good natured, very cuddly," said Sarah Ogden, Loyalist College's mental health nurse, describing one of the puppies who will be coming in December.

Bandit will be joining the litter of dogs from Dec. 9 to 13. The furry creatures will be available to students for a few hours each day.

"They offer an opportunity for people to de-stress with a furry friend," said Ogden with a smile..

The dogs are provided through St. John Ambulance Therapy dog program. This is a program that allows puppies to come into an environment such as a retirement home or school and gives an opportunity for individuals to interact with them as a form of therapy.

Also being offered this semester is free yoga instruction for students living off and on campus. Offered twice a week, the yoga sessions have been wildly popular, resulting in waiting lists for students to sign up.

Another service offered at the school is stress management workshops. They try to cover topics like time management and ways to stay focused and motivated. These workshops are run by Ogden and other student success mentors in the Aboriginal Resource Centre. Students also have access to a mind and wellness practitioner and a counsellor.

Despite the growing initiative, there are students at Loyalist who don't use the school's services.

"I'm personally a student suffering from a lot of stress and I think it's a good start, but I don't think it's enough," said Maxin Nietes, a third-year general

arts and science student.

Nietes said she wasn't aware of the services offered for stress management or mental health until her third year. She also commented that students simply don't know about it despite the occasional poster around school.

Loyalist is trying to acknowledge the realities of stress and the status of student's mental health through these initiatives but it could be asked, is it enough? "Students are always welcome to check in and chat....the services we have here that will hopefully fit with the needs of students," Ogden said.



Photo by Justin Chin

Treacherous weather

Firefighters attend to a car skid into the ditch on Sidney Street between Maitland Drive and Sunningdale Drive in Belleville on Tuesday around 8:20 p.m. There were no injuries. Environment Canada issued the first snowstorm warning of the season in Belleville and eastern Ontario earlier in the day. Multiple motor vehicle accidents occurred across the region because of the adverse weather.

Whovians unite for 50th anniversary episode of Dr. Who

By Sonya Dronsfield

Doctor Who released its 50th anniversary episode to the world last Saturday, breaking a world record for being broadcast in 94 countries across six continents.

The episode was released a second time, in theatres on Monday for all "Whovians" (*Doctor Who* fans) to come together and enjoy this episode in 3D on the big screen.

Here in Belleville, Ont., many fans, new and old, and of all ages, gathered at the Galaxy Cinemas on Bell Boulevard and started lining up for the show as early as 5 p.m. Children and adults were all dressed as doctors and companions and villains from the show.

After waiting a couple hours, the theatre doors were opened and fans poured in, buzzing with excitement. After much anticipated waiting, fans squealed in excitement as the lights dimmed at 8 p.m. and the show began.

After the show and the special features at the end, fans were still buzzing with excitement, talking about their common love for *Doctor Who* with perfect strangers as if they'd known them all their lives.

Asked about the movie, a number of fans rated it 11 out of 10. Overall, the night was an amazing experience of Whovians coming together in costumes or as themselves and celebrating a very successful 50 years of *Doctor Who*.

Blues...

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According to the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario, or the MDAO, about two to six per cent of Canadians will experience SAD in their lifetimes. Another 15 per cent experience a milder form of SAD.

"I had nothing to be depressed about. I had a great job, two great kids and was financially stable," explained Watson.

"I found myself not being able to get up in the morning and when I did, I wanted nothing to do with my friends or family."

His physical health also suffered a great amount. He became seriously overweight and over time, developed diabetes.

"My whole attitude towards life in general was negative," he said.

According to the MDAO, if you experience symptoms like oversleeping, low energy level, intense craving for carbohydrates, withdrawal from social contacts, combined with a depressed mood that occurs over at least two consecutive winters, alternating with non-depressed periods in the spring and summer, then perhaps you should discuss your symptoms with your doctor.

Watson said he felt at ease with the diagnosis.

"I was actually relieved because it confirmed I was not going nuts."



Photo by Guillaume Nolet

Tom Watson at his office in Kingston wearing a light therapy visor to help alleviate his symptoms associated with his seasonal affective disorder.

A variety of factors, either psychological, social and or biological, may contribute to SAD. Common causes are stress-related, or biological factors unique to

each individual and/or light and sleep deprivation.

There was a time in his life when Watson juggled his time between being a

training sergeant with the OPP auxiliary unit, a captain in the Air Force, and a cadet instructor.

During his 18 years with the OPP,

Watson mostly worked night shifts and special details, which required him to be awake for long periods of time.

Retired from the OPP and working full-time in the insurance business at his office in Kingston, Watson said his lifestyle is a little more regular.

Also, for the past three years, Watson has been using light therapy to help him alleviate his symptoms.

According to the MDOA, light therapy has been found to have an anti-depressant effect in 70 per cent of people with SAD and most people find relief within two weeks of beginning light therapy.

Light therapy involves exposure to bright light under specific conditions. The light can be delivered through special lights or a light visor.

Watson mainly uses a light visor during his morning routine.

"I bought the visor last June and I wear it for about 45 minutes to an hour each morning. I have also used it evenings if I know I am going out and won't be in until quite late."

Asked how his life is compared to before his diagnosis and undergoing light therapy treatment, Watson said, "I have a lot more energy now than I did before."

"I have lost 36 pounds, my diabetes is under control through diet and I do not require insulin."

"I am also aware of the fact I am prone to SAD and adjust my daily routine accordingly when I can. I have my 'head-light' with me all the time and have worn it at work, while I drive and even when I fly."

Depression gets worse during the dark winter months

(Justin Chin is a second-year photojournalism student who has been battling depression for eight years.)

By Justin Chin

The number of hours and minutes we see the light every day is getting shorter and shorter during the winter months. The time we are outside doing activities is less and less. The pain I go through is getting worse and worse.

As someone who suffers from depression, this is not good news.

It is bad news.

It is also very hard. It's always been hard. Especially when you don't see sun-

light as much and you don't see light at the end of the tunnel.

Sometimes it's too hard to bear and I've come eye-to-eye with death as an escape route several times in my life.

The last close call was two years ago. I was sent to the hospital. Any delays and I would not be writing this to you right now.

I suffer from depression and it's always been worse during the winter months.

Depression is not being sad when things are going wrong, like when you break up with someone or you had a failure in life. But it is also when everything in life is going right. It's all the time.

I still battle through depression. It is

not something you can simply fix or make better, or beat it once and it goes away.

It is something you deal with and you live with. You find a way to manage, and sometimes it's just too much.

A doctor introduced me to Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, two years ago when the pattern of a relapse in the November months is common.

The sun and light are things that can lift our spirits, while rainy days make us feel a bit gloomy. These shifts in mood normally don't affect our ability to live a normal daily life. However, to people who are more vulnerable to this type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern, it's easier for them to get more de-

pressed.

Depression is one of the most common illnesses in the world, and yet it is the least talked about.

There are about 2.7 million Canadians that suffer from depression during their lifetime, according to the Mood Disorders Society of Canada.

It's not talked about enough in newspapers or social media. But without talking about it, we don't see the severity of it. People take their own lives every day because of depression everywhere in the world.

They could be someone you know or someone close to you.

People often run up to sign your cast if

you have a broken bone, but they might run the other way if they knew you have depression.

Why don't people understand depression or problems with mental health? Why do we not talk about it and put the spotlight on it when it is so common in the world? Why are we so afraid of it?

If you have depression or know someone with depression, speak up. If you don't know about it, try and understand it. Don't run away from it. How can we try and find an answer when we are afraid of the question, when we can't even face it? It may happen to someone you know. It's time to do something about it.