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NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER

Business senior Brian Thomas has owned his golden retriever, Ellie, for 10 years. She usually lives with Thomas' parents but occasionally stays at his campus-area home.

The price of pets

Taking care of an animal is a big responsibility for college students with busy schedules and tight budgets, but pet owners say it's worth it

BY EMILY CHARRIER
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

Swimming in a bowl in Eugene are two well-traveled goldfish named "Oso" and "Pearl." They have traveled more than 4,200 miles from Eugene to Wisconsin, and back in a milk jug.

"They've been to more states than most people," said political science major Matthew Botts. Botts got the fish when he freshman year in the residence halls. When he went home to Wisconsin for the summer, the fish came with him. Many students, like Botts, are learning that having pets in college is a big responsibility.

There have been a number of psychological studies about the benefits of having pets for both physical and emotional health. The Delta Society, an organization that supports human health through animal therapy, says on its Web site, www.deltasociety.org, that the benefits of pet ownership can range from lowered blood pressure to combating loneliness. Scamps Petstore and Greenhill Humane Society said it is common for college-aged students to buy or adopt pets.

"Girls buy kittens. Guys buy dogs. Athletes buy fish," said Scamps employee Jessica Ketelsen.

Audrina De Moss, 20, received "Alfie," a 4-month-old calico kitten, from her roommates for Valentine's Day. The two became inseparable. "Everywhere I went, she'd have to go with me. I was that girl that showed up at people's houses with a cat," De Moss said.

De Moss said the multitude of costs is the worst pet owner responsibility. She estimates

spending \$50 per month for general expenses.

There are many financial responsibilities for pet owners. A regular vet visit, recommended once per year, costs around \$40. Spaying or neutering a pet at low-cost clinics ranges between \$35-\$160, depending on the type of animal.

A baby animal requires a number of vaccinations against diseases like rabies. Some of these vaccines need to be repeated annually at \$14-\$20 per shot. In addition to routine costs can be unexpected costs.

"People are never (financially) prepared for the accidental broken leg," said Liz Cooley of the Eugene Animal Hospital.

Finding a place to live with pets is another potential cost. Chase Village near Autzen Stadium is one of the few rental places that allows dogs in some apartments. Other rental companies usually have some apartments that allow cats. Most rentals require a pet deposit from \$50 to \$350, and in many cases the landlord can still charge tenants for any damages the pet causes.

Aside from financial responsibility, pets take time and require a good deal of personal attention. The Humane Society recommends that dogs get at least 30 minutes of exercise per day. Because many students have full schedules, pets run the risk of being neglected.

"It's like another life, being responsible for more than yourself," De Moss said. "Some crave it, others can't handle it."

Even with the additional costs, students with pets find it worthwhile.

"It's something to come home to other than homework," De Moss said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Greenhill Humane Society & SPCA Web site at www.green-hill.org or e-mail at information@green-hill.org.

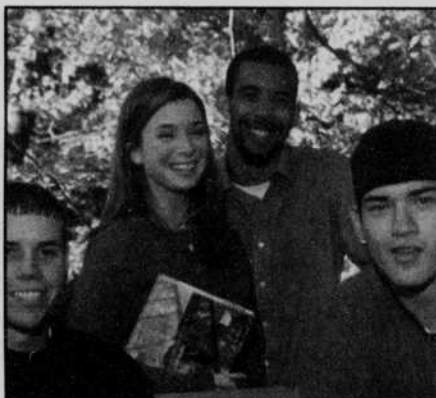
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