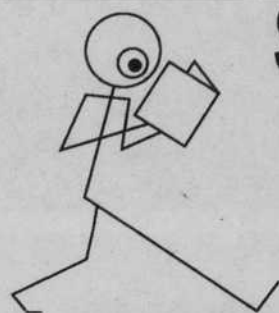


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Cindy Ehlers, Ina Dunlap and Riley the pug are presented with a check for \$10,000 Monday evening in the Lillis Business Complex.

Philanthropy class donates grant to local non-profit

People and Animals Who Serve, a local organization that uses animals to aid in health care, received \$10,000

BY NICHOLAS WILBUR
 NEWS REPORTER

Graduate students in professor Renee Irvin's philanthropy seminar were given a rare opportunity this term: The chance to decide which local non-profit organization is most worthy of receiving the Faye and Lucille Stewart Foundation's \$10,000 award.

To help them arrive at a decision, they spent eight weeks researching organizations' history, goals and services.

The class awarded the money to People and Animals Who Serve, also known as PAAWS, a group that uses teams of dogs and their owners to "provide the health benefits of the animal-human bond in educational, residential, medical and other community settings," according to the PAAWS Web site.

University graduate student April Snell said giving this amount of money to an organization was a rare and memorable opportunity.

"This particular group is really an awesome group and they will do great things with (the money)," she said. "This gift is going to rock their world."

PAAWS' programs serve almost every need in the community, PAAWS President Cindy Ehlers said.

The organization was started by five Eugene women in 2003, including Ehlers, and survives because of volunteer work, non-profit tax status and community donations.

PAAWS' budget started out at \$300. The all-volunteer staff members often pay for their own books in the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (READ) program, their own embroidered vests and other often-expensive supplies. The award will also go toward scholarships for people who can't afford training, Ehlers said.

"It's pretty surreal," PAAWS board member Anne Kraft said at the gift announcement on Monday. "It opens doors for us that we haven't been able to think about because we've been so hindered by money."

Five dogs and their handlers mingled with the students in the Lillis Business Complex, eating cookies and talking about their projects after the award announcement.

Students were asked at the beginning of the term to prepare a mini-lecture based on research of

personal areas of interests in law, social policy, arts and more. The class voted for the five best mini-lectures, and students were split into equal groups to further research the five organizations. At the end of the term, a consensus vote landed \$10,000 into the PAAWS organization.

Ehlers just returned from the Gulf Coast where she and her Keeshond dog named Tikva provided emotional support to survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

"There's never enough of us to go around," Ehlers said.

PAAWS teams have also been dispatched to local crises such as the Thurston High School shooting and to provide reading assistance to elementary students.

In the READ program, children read to dogs rather than adults or other children.

"Kids improve their reading skills when they read to dogs because they are an objective listener," and it's less stressful for children, Kraft said.

PAAWS also provides a "No one dies alone" program where treasurer Ina Dunlap's poodle, Pepper, stays with people who are dying.

Contact the campus and federal politics reporter at nwilbur@dailyemerald.com

IN BRIEF

Specialist reacts to rape, killings, slavery in Sudan

Jok Madut Jok, who was born and raised in Sudan, will deliver a lecture today on the Sudanese government's counter-insurgency tactics used in Sudan's conflicts since 1983. Jok's extensive research on Sudanese refugee camps shows that

these tactics include slavery, civilian killings and rape, according to a press release from the University's African Studies Committee.

Jok will give his speech today in the Alumni Lounge in Gerlinger Hall at 4 p.m. A tea and coffee reception will precede the lecture at 3:30 p.m.

Currently an associate professor of history at Loyola Marymount University, Jok has a doctorate in anthropology from UCLA. He wrote

"War and Slavery in Sudan," published in 2001, a book that "exposes the enslavement of black peoples in Sudan," according to the press release. As a black southerner and member of the Dinka, a group of African tribes targeted by Arab slave traders, Jok has an insider's perspective on the various methods of capture, the experience of captivity and efforts of slaves to escape.

—Shadra Beesley

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