

Do you know Henry? He could be considered one of Nebraska Wesleyan's most recognized "Campus Dogs." This is most likely because he can be seen all over campus throughout the year--trotting behind his mom, Theatre Professor Joan Korte, as she travels from building to building each day, playing in the grass outside Old Main or the Student Center, taking walks with Theatre students, or napping in the hallway of the Elder Theatre building. He was even on the cover of a 2016 student-made calendar, "The Prairie Woofs." But did you know that there are at least 14 other professors who frequently bring their four-legged friends to campus? It's hard to say when or why this trend started, but one professor has been doing it for almost 30 years.

Dr. Mary Beth Ahlum, a dedicated Chihuahua owner (and accomplished Psychology professor), recalled that the first time she brought a dog to Wesleyan it was a matter of convenience. Bringing her dog to campus not only made her life as a pet-owner easier, she found that it had an effect on her interactions with students.

"Having a little furry running around really breaks the ice," she said, smiling.

Many other professors agree that teaching long hours or a mix of day and night classes makes it hard to leave a pet at home, but like Dr. Ahlum they have all learned that bringing their dogs to Wesleyan is more than just convenient. "Bringing joy to students" was a common answer between all of the professors when asked, "Why do you bring your dog to campus?"

Dr. Sandra Mathews Benham, History Professor, explained that her dog acts as a therapy dog to students who have left dogs behind. Her 12½ year-old Border Collie-Whippet mix is known to calm students who are anxious or stressed, and serves as a common interest to get students engaged at the beginning of each semester.

Dulcinea, or "Dulce" for short, is popular in Old Main, Mathews says. "There are students who will come to my office just to see if she's here."

This is a common experience for many dog-friendly professors, including Biology Professor Dr. Adrienne Prokupek-Pickett. She says that students will come to her office near the end of the semester or during finals just to pet her 10-year-old Lab-Shepard mix, Sierra.

And Professor Joan Korte believes that Henry's presence on campus is not only therapeutic for her students, but for herself as well.

"He gets me outside walking and talking to people."

She believes that without him, she would not leave her office as much. Luckily for Korte, and the students on this campus, the eight-year-old Bichon mix has an affinity for the outdoors—rain or shine, hot or cold. Henry can even be found frolicking in the snow during his winter bathroom breaks.

Coming to campus is great for the other dogs too. They get to expel energy, meet new people, go on walks, and nap in class while their owners teach and lecture.

But the frequent walks and the excitement of spending time with students in class can be exhausting—in a good way.

Biology professor Cindy Marolf has noticed that for her 9½ year old Siberian Husky, Mishka, coming to campus "helps her sleep at night." The same could be said for Dulcinea. According to Dr. Mathews, she was a high energy puppy that needed to be kept busy. As it turns out, bringing Dulce to Wesleyan was a solution that brought—and still brings—a smile to both her face and the faces of many students. Mathews even calls their daily walk a "Goodwill Tour" because they bring joy to the people they meet along the way.

NWU is unique for allowing dogs in faculty offices and classes, but it is no mystery as to why it works. These dog-friendly professors work hard to ensure that they maintain a safe environment for their dogs and for everyone on campus.

"I try to be a responsible dog owner," explained David Gracie, a professor of art and owner of an Australian Shepard mix named Sami. Like all of the other professors, he makes sure to check with students about allergies, fears, or other reasons that would prohibit his dog from coming to class. He also puts up a gate to keep Sami from wandering out of his office when she shouldn't. And of course, there is no need to worry before stepping off the sidewalks—these professors always make sure to clean up after their dogs on walks.

It is easy to see that their hard work pays off. Because of Wesleyan's dog-loving professors, everyone on campus has the opportunity to experience the joy that their dogs bring.