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Employer and employees agree: dogs in the workplace a good thing



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DENVER - Walk up to the front door of the yellow brick structure housing a law practice and you'll see a telling clue about what's inside.

A plaque next to the entrance identifies this renovated home near downtown Denver as the offices of attorney **David Littman**. And below his name is the golden image of a dog.

The dog it represents is a golden retriever named Lily, who is part of the staff inside. Along with office workers, Lily is there during most business hours to greet visitors and clients.

"We have clients who come in because of our less formal atmosphere," Littman said. "People like her."

Lily is part of what is believed to be a growing trend of dog-friendly employers, according to an article in the **Detroit Free Press**.

The trend is fueled by the growing research into the health benefits of pets, said Patricia Olson, chief veterinary adviser for the American Humane Association.

"The research is pretty compelling," Olson said. Pets, she said, provide social capital.

"Social capital brings us pleasure and a feeling of wellness," Olson said. "And that's animals. Even if I don't have one, I may get social capital from having animals in a community."

At Littman's office, Lily, who is between 7 and 8 years old, does more than greet people to earn her keep.

"Lily is very intuitive," Littman said. "I do a lot of mediation. She usually picks out the most stressed person and sits there and calms him."

The dog is also good for Littman's health. He walks her twice a day.

Lily wasn't even expected to be alive today, he added. She had major surgery for cancer and wasn't expected to live more than 6 months.

"That was 2-1/2 years ago," Littman said. He and his wife regularly whip up exotic meals for her that are high in anti-oxidants and it seems to be working.

So Lily soldiers on, dispensing her charms to all who meet her.

"It works for us," Littman said. "It's good for business."

And it's good for employees, too, according to the Free Press article.

A Virginia Commonwealth University study published March 30 tested employees at Replacements.com in Greensboro, N.C., to see the effect of dogs on workers. The company has allowed dogs at work for 15 years.

The employees with dogs said their stress decreased as the workday progressed, said management professor Randolph Barker, who headed the study. Those without dogs said their stress increased.

A Dogster.com and Simplyhired.com online survey found that 66 per cent of dog owners would work longer hours and 32 percent said they would take a pay cut if they could take their pet to work.

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