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Letter from the Director

Dr. John-Tyler Binfet

It brings me enormous joy to summarize our 10th year of B.A.R.K. and there are many highlights to share with you. Started in 2012, the B.A.R.K. program began when, during my daily trips across campus in search of coffee, my own dog Frances would be besieged by students longing for a connection with a dog and missing their own dogs back home. This was the impetus for UBC's Building Academic Retention through K9s or B.A.R.K. We're now firmly and well-established in the landscape of Human-Animal Interactions research and programs and our work has been recognized and celebrated on campus, within Canada, and internationally.

At the helm of much of what happens in B.A.R.K. is Freya Green and this past year saw Freya publish her master's research in the peer-reviewed journal Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin. Titled "Therapy dogs, stress-reduction, and well-being within the detachment: Interviews with law-enforcement personnel," Freya's research showcased her ongoing work with the Kelowna RCMP where Freya and a team of B.A.R.K. dogs and handlers support RCMP member and staff well-being on a weekly basis. Camille Rousseau, B.A.R.K.'s resident doctoral candidate was busy publishing in the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare and in Society & Animals in addition to winning several prestigious awards. These included the Okanagan School of Education's Outstanding Doctoral Publication for 2022 and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award from the International Society for Anthrozoology.

If there is to be a silver lining arising from Covid-19, it was that we explored new empirical and applied terrain by creating Virtual Canine Comfort Modules. This required handlers to follow a script and agree to be filmed to create opportunities for virtual canine interactions. In this regard, our work holds potential to reach geographically isolated individuals and those students on campuses where canine programs are not offered. This increase in our reach and mode of delivery was just celebrated in a recent publication in one of the top human-animal interaction journals ANTHROZOOS. Titled "Virtual Canine Comfort: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of a Canine-Assisted Intervention Supporting Undergraduate Wellbeing" this is a first for both B.A.R.K. and the broader field.

B.A.R.K. is never a program to gather dust and we're proud of our student volunteers and dog-handlers and dogs who pivoted back to offering in-person sessions (see the table summarizing attendance in this issue). Once back up and running, it wasn't long until we began hearing of the important role B.A.R.K. sessions play in reducing students' stress and connecting students to one another. In many ways, it's this feedback that keeps us offering programs and innovating the work we undertake.

B.A.R.K. is a costly program to run and it is thanks to the generosity of the volunteer time and the funding that we receive that we are able to continue. We appreciate the efforts of UBC Okanagan's Development Office and their advocacy on behalf of B.A.R.K. Arising from this advocacy is a long-running sponsorship from VEDA Exclusive Student Living, a housing community located adjacent to the UBC Okanagan campus. As always, we are grateful for the support we receive through UBC Okanagan's Associate Vice President – Students' office. We'll have an in-person opportunity (fingers crossed!) to thank donors, patrons, and fans of B.A.R.K. at our 10 Year Celebration on September 24th. Please check our website for updates on this event.

Respectfully submitted,
John-Tyler Binfet, Ph.D.
B.A.R.K. Founder & Director



Mission Statement

Now in its tenth year, Building Academic Retention through K9s (B.A.R.K.) is a research-driven program designed to support the emotional well-being of university students grappling with challenges around homesickness, social isolation, and integration into the university community. B.A.R.K. programming consists of both intervention studies and community drop-in services.



B.A.R.K. upholds the following core beliefs and values:

1. Community members play a key role in enhancing research initiatives on campus. B.A.R.K. volunteer dog handlers contribute enormously to both student enrichment and research studies carried out through the B.A.R.K. lab.
2. B.A.R.K. research and drop-in programs provide a framework for mentoring student scholars and volunteers.
3. B.A.R.K. is committed to supporting diversity and strives to create working climates where everyone is welcome, recognized, and invited to contribute.
4. B.A.R.K. is committed to community partnerships and supports the efforts of local animal-welfare groups (e.g., Paws it Forward, Kelowna SPCA).
5. B.A.R.K. is committed to upholding the highest standards of research. This includes adhering to both Human Behavioural Research Ethics Standards and to Animal Welfare Ethics Standards, using experimental designs that include the randomization of participants into treatment and control conditions, and including follow-up assessments of treatment effects as part of methodological designs.
6. B.A.R.K. is committed to giving back to the university community and pledges to have an active presence in student and university initiatives.



Program Report: On Campus Sessions

By hosting two regular on-campus programs and attending numerous events, B.A.R.K. tracked over 4,222 in-person, on-campus interactions between students and handler-therapy dog teams. We were also able to resume our new B.A.R.K. Team assessments and have welcomed twelve new therapy dogs and handlers to the team this year.

BARK2Go expanded this year, adding a new location for students to interact with therapy dogs in UBC's UNC Building. In addition to regular BARK2Go sessions on Wednesdays and Drop-in Sessions on Fridays, B.A.R.K. participated in numerous campus events and initiatives. These included collaborative events with the Okanagan School of Engineering, English as an additional Language program, and UBC's Giving Day.



Campus Drop-Ins

B.A.R.K. offers regular drop-in sessions on Friday afternoons from 4:30-6:00pm in EME 1123, the Faculty of Education's Innovative Learning Centre. There are typically 10 to 13 dogs and handlers involved in each session, along with 15 student volunteers. On average 103 UBC students visit the lab each Friday and interact with therapy dogs and handlers for approximately 30 to 45 minutes per visit.

- Total sessions offered **11**
- Average number of participants per session **103**
- Total number of visits to the drop-in **970**

BARK2GO

B.A.R.K. also offers regular BARK2GO sessions, which sees therapy dog-handler teams, and a student facilitator situated in high traffic locations on campus. Held on Wednesdays in Fipke foyer, the Library's flex space, and now the UNC Building, BARK2GO sees 81 UBC students, on average per session. Students typically spend between 5 and 30 minutes per visit.

- Total sessions offered **14**
- Average number of participants per session **218**
- Total number of visits to BARK2GO **3058**



ON-CAMPUS PROGRAM VISITS = 4222



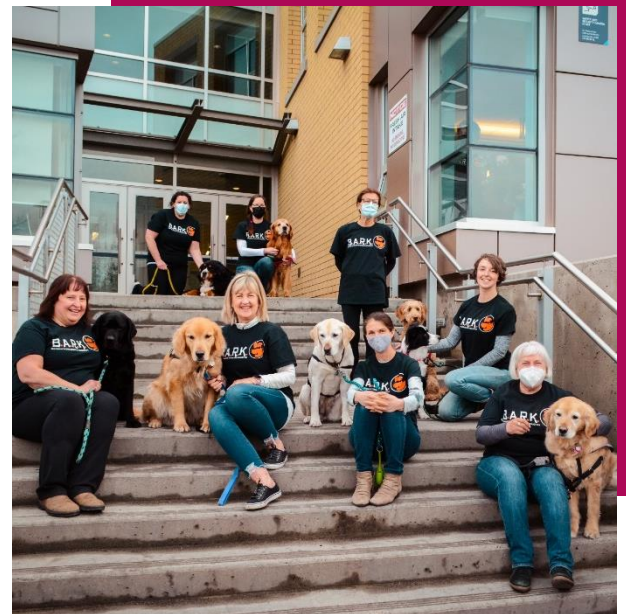
Program Report: New Innovations

The B.A.R.K. program continually seeks to develop new and innovative programs to provide more support for students on campus. This year, we expanded our virtual canine program and developed new mini B.A.R.K. sessions.

B.A.R.K. Mini Sessions

In addition to our regular drop-in and BARK2GO sessions, B.A.R.K. offered smaller sessions for students seeking an opportunity to spend time with peers and therapy dogs in a more intimate setting.

These sessions, which took place weekly for 6 weeks, saw 99 students spending their Tuesday evenings with B.A.R.K. therapy dogs and their handlers. This program is set to continue in the fall and we look forward to welcoming new and returning students!



Virtual Canine Program

This year, B.A.R.K. extended the virtual canine program developed in 2020 by providing 24/7 access to virtual canine modules to the UBC Okanagan campus and greater Community. To date, we have seen almost 500 people make use of this program and have expanded our reach to 40 countries across the world! This program will continue into the fall and we invite students, staff, faculty, parents, and alumni to get involved! More information about this program can be found on our website and social media pages.



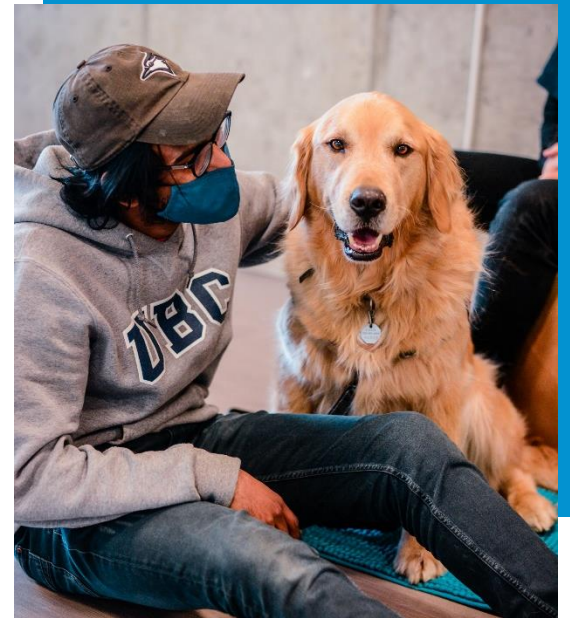
Program Report: Sessions at VEDA & RCMP

Thanks to continued partnerships, B.A.R.K. continued to visit students at VEDA Exclusive Living and employees at the Kelowna RCMP Detachment. We entered year 6 at VEDA and added celebratory sessions on the last day of classes to help provide a stress-reduction and community-building opportunity for students prior to the exam season. Visitation to the Kelowna RCMP Detachment entered into Year 4, and we continued to provide opportunities for RCMP members and City of Kelowna employees to boost their wellbeing.

VEDA Exclusive Living

B.A.R.K. is grateful for the continued sponsorship from VEDA exclusive living. This year we held sessions monthly, on Mondays from 6:00-7:00pm. Therapy dogs and their handlers in their Apex or Lakeview club rooms to support resident wellbeing and build community. Open to everyone, these sessions see approximately 30-50 students per visit.

- Total sessions offered **7**
- Average number of participants per session **25**
- Total number of visits **178**



RCMP Drop-In Sessions

B.A.R.K. offers regular drop-in sessions on Thursday mornings at the Kelowna detachment. Each session sees 3-4 handlers and 3-5 dogs stationed within the detachment. On average 17 employees attend each drop-in and interact with therapy dogs and handlers for 15 minutes, on average, per visit.

- Total sessions offered **13**
- Average number of participants per session **17**
- Total number of visits **225**

THE B.A.R.K. TEAM

"Thank you to all the handlers, dogs, and volunteers!" – UBC Student, Oct. 2021



Running all of the varied B.A.R.K. programs would not be possible without the hardworking, dedicated team of student and community volunteers. The B.A.R.K. Team in 2021/22 consisted of the following members:

52

Therapy dogs

51

Volunteer Handlers

20

Student Volunteers

Total in-kind volunteer hours = 1455

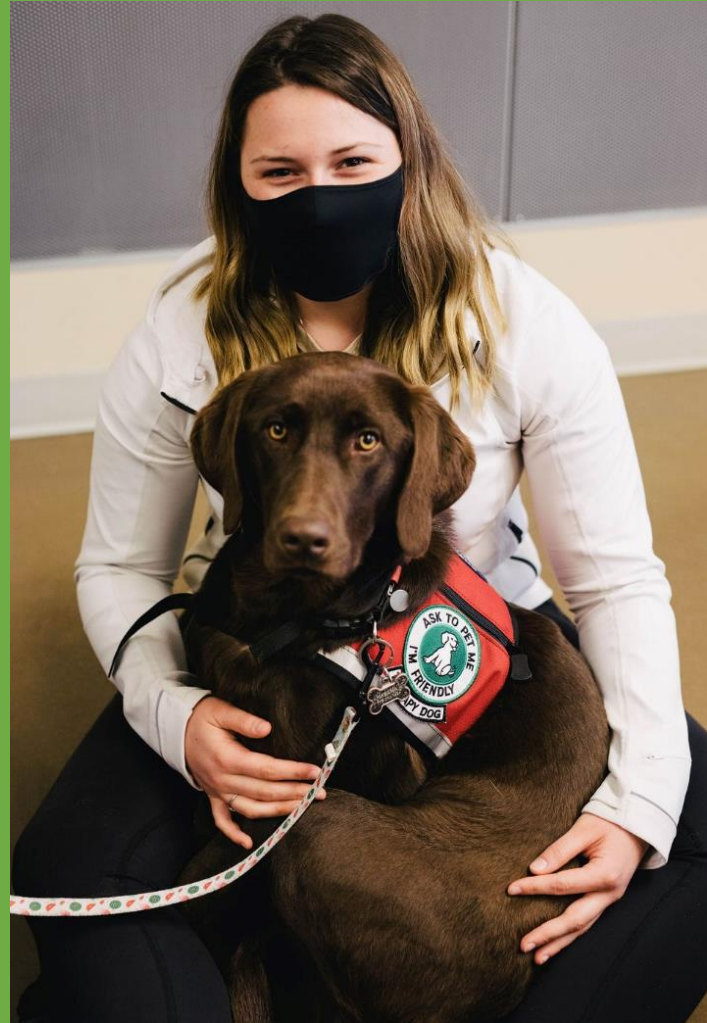


Financial Report

FINANCIAL REPORT 2021/22

Revenue	
Carry forward from 2020/21	28,870.31
Funding from VEDA Exclusive Living	10,000.00
Funding from AVPS	10,426.24
Donations	6,302.00
Green Ribbon Crewneck Fundraiser (2020)	10,529.22
Refunded Travel (2020)	1036.21
Total Revenue	67,163.98
Expenses	
Student Salaries & Benefits	6,910.06
Conferences & Workshops	1,414.65
Professional Development	378.8
Gifts/Tokens of Appreciation	1242.56
Telecommunication Charges	588.08
Books/Subscriptions/Memberships	551.97
Food/Beverage Supplies	948.61
Printing and Copying	1078.44
Postage and Courier	23.36
Office & Operational Supplies	2,852.65
Commitments	
Photography, Videography, and Media	3,885.00
Technology	2,650.20
Sponsorships	1,334.35
Total Expenses	23,858.73
Carry forward next fiscal	43,305.25
Total	67,163.98

**Some expenses were delayed and will be processed in the next fiscal year*



Sources of Support

The B.A.R.K. program is supported on UBC's Okanagan campus by the AVP Students Office and the Okanagan School of Education's Innovative Learning Centre. We are also grateful for the continued sponsorship from VEDA Exclusive Student Living (<http://www.vedaliving.ca>), and the many individual donors who participated in our fundraising campaign this year.

Donations to B.A.R.K. can be made at www.bark.ok.ubc.ca.



News and Media

Each year, B.A.R.K. generates a variety of media which helps to expand the reach of the program. A full list is included on the website but below is a sample of the media from the 2021/22 academic year.



Print

Castanet (2022, Feb. 22). *B.A.R.K. goes virtual to help students morale during reading break.*

Study International (2021, Nov. 6). *How therapy dogs help distressed students.*

The Conversation (2021, Nov. 4). *Are you a distressed student? Here's how therapy dogs can help.*

Headtopics Singapore (2021, Aug. 25). *'Make time for a canine cuddle!': Touching a dog boosts our wellbeing.*

Actu Santé (France; 2021, Aug. 23). *Faire des caresses à son chien permet de combattre le stress et améliorer son bien-être* (French).

Tin Mới Giờ (2021, Aug. 23). *Nghiên cứu cho thấy những sinh viên được nuôi, cưng nựng những chú chó đã được cải thiện sức khỏe và ít bị căng thẳng hơn* (Vietnamese).

Martha Stewart (2021, Aug. 20). *Study Uses Science to Confirm That Cuddling a Dog Is Good for Your Health.*

Earth.com (2021, Aug. 20). *Cuddling with dogs can improve your well-being.*

Mate News Argentina (2021, Aug. 20). *Abrazar a un perro ayuda a mejorar el bienestar mental* (Spanish).

Daily Mail UK (2021, Aug. 18). *Teacher's pet! Students that cuddle with dogs have improved well-being and are less stressed, study finds.*

Veterinarian Daily News (2021, Aug. 18). *Animal Therapy Is Basically Medicine For Your Mind, According To A New Study.*

Bahrain Kivazen (2021, Aug. 17). *Cuddling dogs is good for your health, study shows.*

People (2021, Aug. 17). *Study Uses Science to Confirm That Cuddling a Dog Is Good for Your Health.*

My Vet Candy (2021, July 27). *Friends fur life help build skills for life.*

The Ubyyssey (2021, July 6). *Our Animal Friends: More Than Puppy Love.*

UBC In the Field (2021, June 2). *Keep Calm and B.A.R.K. On.*

Radio/Television

Wild Connection: The podcast. (2021, Sept. 26). *For the Love of K9's with John-Tyler Binfet* {Podcast}

Pet Partners (2021, Sept. 15). *Meet the Leaders in AAI – International Society for Anthrozoology* {Facebook Live}

Spice Radio Vancouver. (2021, Aug. 20). *UBCO Study reveals how cuddling with dogs is basically like medicine for your mind.* {Radio}

Global BC (2021, Aug. 20). {Province-wide Television}

Jill Bennett Show, Global News CKNW. (2021, Aug. 16). {Radio}

Psychology Today

Therapy Dogs Provide Virtual Comfort. (2022, Apr. 30).

Lessons Learned from a 3-Legged Mutt. (2022, Jan. 23).

Cops and Therapy Canines: Wagging Tails Reduce Stress. (2021, Oct. 23).

Anxious about Returning to Campus?

Therapy Dogs Can Help. (2021, Aug. 15).

Interaction with Canines Builds Children's Confidence. (2021, June 12).

Presentations

Binfet, J. T., Tardif-Williams, C. Y., Draper, Z. A., Green, F. L. L., Singal, A., Rousseau, C. X., & Roma, R. (2022, April 22). Stress-reduction in college students: Can virtual interactions with therapy dogs bolster well-being? Poster presented at the annual conference of the *American Educational Research Association*, San Diego, California.

Chan, M., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Binfet, J. T., (2022, April). Promoting social and emotional competencies in children and youth through human-animal interactions: A scoping review. Poster presented at the annual conference of the *American Educational Research Association*, San Diego, California.

Symposium at the annual meeting of the *International Society for Anthrozoology*, Buffalo, NY (Virtual). University-Based Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAIs): Theory and Research Toward Identifying Direct and Indirect Effects of Active Components on Stress-Related Outcomes

Paper 1: Pendry, P. (2021, June 23). Touch Expect and Support Theory (TEST): A pathway model describing active components of University-based AAIs on proximal and distal stress-related outcomes.

Paper 2: Vandagriff, J. L., & Pendry, P. (2021, June 23). Teasing Out Effective AAI Components of a University-Based Animal Visitation Program on Students' Physiological Arousal and Regulation.

Paper 3: Binfet, J. T., Green, F. L. L., & Draper, Z. A. (2021, June 23). The Importance of Touch in On-Campus Canine-Assisted Stress-Reduction Interventions: A Randomized Controlled Trial.



Publications

Binfet, J. T., Tardif-Williams, C. Y., Draper, Z. A., Green, F. L. L., Singal, A., Rousseau, C. X., & Roma, R. (in press). Virtual Canine Comfort: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of a Canine-Assisted Intervention Supporting Undergraduate Wellbeing. *Anthrozoös*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2022.2062866>

Rousseau, C. X. & Binfet, J. T. (in press). Publication trends in *Society & Animals* from 2009-2019: A bibliometric analysis. *Society & Animals*.

Green, F. L. L. & Binfet, J. T. (in press). Therapy dogs, stress-reduction, and well-being within the detachment: Interviews with law-enforcement personnel. *Human Animal Interaction Bulletin*, 11(1), 10-35.

Chan, M. C., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Binfet, J. T. (2022) Human-Animal Interactions and the Promotion of Social and Emotional Competencies: A Scoping Review, *Anthrozoös*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2022.2042080>

Binfet, J. T., Green, F. L. L., & Draper, Z. A. (2022). The Importance of Client-Canine Contact in Canine-Assisted Interventions: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Anthrozoös*, 35(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2021.1944558>.

Under the Spotlight



Handler-Dog Team: MacAylee & Zoey

MacAylee and her Boston Terrier x Pug, Zoey, have become popular additions to the B.A.R.K. drop-ins and BARK2Go sessions since they joined the team in 2018. MacAylee volunteered with the B.A.R.K. program and studied at UBC Okanagan concurrently, graduating with a B.A. in Psychology in June 2022. The B.A.R.K. team wishes them all the best for their move back to Manitoba!

“MacAylee and Zoey have brought such positivity to their roles in B.A.R.K. and their infectious energy will be missed at our drop-in, BARK2Go, and VEDA sessions. We applaud MacAylee for her determination to support her UBC community throughout her own studies and wish them both all the best in their future endeavors!” – Freya Green



Handler-Dog Team: Carri & Finn

Carri and Finn have been integral members of the B.A.R.K. team since 2014 and many will recognize these two from BARK Drop-ins, VEDA sessions, BARK2Go, or from their involvement with the Southern Medical Program. We are so grateful for their loyalty and dedication to the B.A.R.K. program and wish Finn a very happy and well-deserved retirement!

“We can’t thank Carri and Finn enough for their tireless dedication and commitment to B.A.R.K. for nearly 10 years! They have brought smiles to the faces of many students, staff, and faculty (as well as B.A.R.K. volunteers) in their time with us and they will be sorely missed.” – John-Tyler Binfet



Student Volunteers: Molly & Josh

Molly began volunteering with B.A.R.K. in 2019 and quickly became a senior volunteer. She assisted with Friday drop-ins, special events, and research projects. In 2022, she took over the position as session leader for our VEDA program until her graduation in June 2022 (BSc Zoology). She has now swapped the Okanagan Valley for the beautiful coastlines of Western BC to pursue a career in conservation.

“In her time with B.A.R.K., Molly proved herself reliable, dedicated, and enthusiastic. She has always been willing to help with any tasks no matter how big or small and has been an integral member of our programming and research team. With her excellent work ethic, we know she’ll do well in her future endeavors but will miss her presence on the team!” - Freya Green

Josh began volunteering with B.A.R.K. in 2018 and has demonstrated his skills in a variety of programs including Drop-in and VEDA sessions as well as several research projects. In 2022, Josh took over the position as BARK2GO program leader and successfully introduced our new UNC station to our roster! Josh will complete his BSc in Chemistry and Psychology this summer.

“We are thrilled that Josh will be continuing with B.A.R.K. as an alumnus next year. He is a dependable, hard-working, and energetic member of the team and is always willing to step-in to support students, fellow volunteers, and B.A.R.K. handlers!” - John-Tyler Binfet

Comments from Visitors

“Dogs are my favourite animal and having a resource to pet/hang out with them is amazing, especially when I’m feeling sad or anxious.

Thanks for everything you do. “

– UBC Student, March 2022

“Loved it! This was my first time, but it won’t be my last!”

– UBC Student,
November 2021

“Keep this operation going! I love it” –

UBC Student,
November 2021

“Amazing to have people organize a beautiful way to heal people’s mind” –

B.A.R.K. attendee, March 2022

“Even a few minutes makes a difference” –
RCMP Member, March 2022

“B.A.R.K. never fails to help me feel better. Thank you so much!” – UBC Student,
October 2021

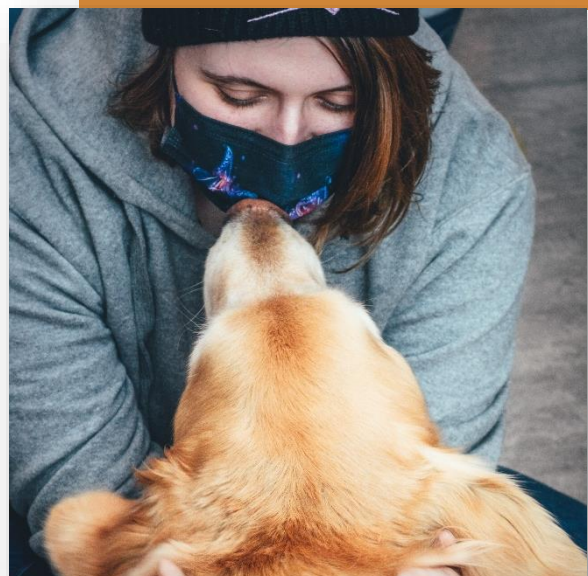
“A relief of unbelievable tension” – City employee, April 2022

“Such a great, calming experience” – B.A.R.K. attendee,
April 2022

“I’ve been struggling with depression this whole month and found few things that could drag me out of a low mood.

“This is such an amazing program!” – B.A.R.K. attendee
March 2022

Engaging with therapy dogs helped the most out of everything else I’ve tried” – UBC Student, March 2022





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Twitter/Instagram: BARKUBC



CONTACT

Freya Green, Program Coordinator

As Program Coordinator, Freya assists with the administration and implementation of on-campus and community-based B.A.R.K. programs. Any questions regarding volunteering for B.A.R.K., requesting B.A.R.K. visitation, or general inquiries should be directed to Freya Green at bark.dogtherapy@ubc.ca