

Students train service dogs on uptown campus

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Tulane sophomore Adam Kline's college experience has been a little different from the average undergraduate. Between attending classes and socializing with friends, Kline dedicates countless hours to raising and training Kipper, a golden retriever that will one day assist people with physical disabilities.



When he isn't in class with his trainer, Tulane student Adam Kline, Kipper attends classes of his own where he learns commands and social skills. (Photo by Paula Burch Celentano)

Last spring, Kline founded the Tulane Service-Dog Training and Education Program (TUSTEP) on the uptown campus. The program works with the Canine Companions for Independence organization by raising puppies to become service dogs.

"We are in charge of puppy raising and that is where we have the dog for about 15 months on average," says Kline. "We teach them 30 commands, we teach them social skills like leash behavior and we teach them potty training."

After puppy raising, the service dogs go to advanced training for about six months. There, they learn how to assist individuals by picking up dropped items, opening doors and opening the refrigerator. Once they master their commands, the canines get placed with a family.

Currently, students are raising two service dogs on the Tulane University uptown

campus. Along with Kipper, a black Labrador and golden retriever mix named Pinbell is getting accustomed to the college lifestyle. Kline and other students train the dogs three times each day.

TUSTEP consists of about 85 students who help raise the service dogs in various ways.

“Some of our members help out with fundraising and others serve as puppy sitters,” says Kline. “They know the basics of training and they take the dogs during a chemistry lab or another time when the raiser is busy.”

TUSTEP also works with a local prison, which has a rehab program where the prisoners help to train the dogs.

Greg Thomson is a junior at Tulane University majoring in communication.