



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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POP ANNOUNCES NEW RENT-A-DOG PROGRAM

AUBURN, Ala. – Pups on the Plains, the Auburn based dog rescue group otherwise known as POP, announces a new permanent program to its organization: dog rentals.

Rent-A-Dog is exactly what it sounds like. For \$3 an hour, people can rent one of POP's available dogs for some company. As long as they say where they are going, they can go where they'd like with their new furry friend.

In a college town with stressed out students, having some puppy play time can be a great stress relief. Many students can't afford to have a dog long-term while they are in school, so renting a dog for a day is perfect for those who want to snuggle with a dog but aren't able to adopt.

This new program will provide much needed funds for POP, which is a 100% donations-based group. POP takes in dogs with severe needs that shelters normally would have euthanatized, and with those severe needs come severely expensive medical bills.

POP can't save more dogs unless they have the necessary funds to pay their veterinarian bills, so in a way, if people rent some time with one of their dogs, they are helping save another dog's life.

The dogs available for renting are elated to be with people and get attention whether they're hiking or just watching Netflix. Renting them not only helps students and future POP dogs; socializing with them helps get them used to humans and helps get them ready for their future forever homes.

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Pups on the Plains (POP) is a rescue group that saves dogs on death row in Columbus, Georgia, Phenix City, Georgia, and Auburn, Alabama. They are a designated 501(c)(3) non-profit that is

based in Auburn, Alabama. It is made up of Auburn University student officers who transport and coordinate fostering and medical help for animals in need until they can find someone to adopt them. POP is entirely funded by donations. With the community's help and a legion of student volunteers, they have managed to save 100 dogs in two years. For more information, go to pupsontheplains.com



BACKGROUNDER

Founded in fall 2017, Pups on the Plains is a designated 501(c)(3) non-profit group that rescues animals about to be euthanized at surrounding animal shelters in eastern Alabama and Georgia. POP is based in Auburn, Alabama, and is run by Auburn University students who save the dogs on death row, transport them to foster homes, handle all medical bills and find forever homes for them. They are a 100% donation-based organization that depends on community donors and volunteer staff. As of fall 2019, POP has saved over 100 animals in the two years since it's been active.

POP was started by sisters Sarah and Shelby Stephens when they heard that Columbus Animal Control in Georgia was about to put down six dogs because shelters there were overcrowded. They reached out to fellow Auburn University students and the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine and were able to go pick up all six dogs that day. Asking for help on social media, the Auburn and Columbus communities donated enough to provide medical care and adequate supplies for the dogs until permanent homes were found.

Encouraged by the overflowing support, the sisters decided to keep pulling dogs out of the local shelters whenever they were about to be euthanized. They started an official Facebook page and a post went viral. Soon people from all over the nation were commenting, donating and asking to adopt the dogs they saved. Their group became so large that they

appointed official cabinet officers and filed to become a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Places like All Creatures Veterinary Clinic provided discounted medical services for the POP dogs which usually were in bad shape when rescued.

POP has held large events the past year that worked as large fundraisers for treating parvo in their dogs which can cost around \$1,000 to treat. They have partnered with Auburn University and held events where students can come cuddle with dogs during finals in a makeshift dog park on Cater Lawn. Events like these make it possible for them to go save large amounts of dogs from shelters. With the volume of support they receive, POP now saves cats as well calling it their "Little Tiger" program.

Founder Shelby Stephens has now graduated Auburn University and felt comfortable to retire from her position of president because the organization has grown beyond just two sisters saving a few dogs. New members join the POP family every day, and the student officers Shelby and Sarah trained the past two years now run the organization like a well-oiled machine. POP vet liaison Holly Goodwin says they plan to open a physical facility in Auburn in the near future.



SENIOR STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

RILEY HOVIS – President

Hovis is the current president of Pups on the Plains. She is a junior at Auburn University majoring in animal science with a minor in marketing with the intention of entering the animal marketing career field. Hovis oversees the day-to-day responsibilities of the organization like legal paperwork and spreadsheets as well as assisting on and delegating tasks to other board members. She screens and matches families with POP's foster animals to make sure they are a good fit before proceeding with adoptions.

Before she became the POP president, Hovis served as the POP social media director from the beginning of POP in fall 2017 to summer 2019 when former President Shelby Stephens stepped down. As social media director, she had to learn to market a business and build a website. She promoted and marketed adoptable dogs through social media campaigns alongside communications officer Sarah Stephens. She was able to use her previous experiences from when she was a product advisor for Dover Saddley in 2017.

BREE BENNETT – Event Coordinator

Bennett is the event coordinator for POP. She plans all the big fundraising events that POP offers throughout the year including recruiting volunteers and getting donations for event supplies.

Bennett is also a veterinary technician assistant at Red Barn Animal Hospital. She graduated Auburn University with a Bachelor of Science specializing in wildlife ecology. She formally taught at the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center to bring awareness to wildlife problems. With these rich experiences and widespread connections in the animal world, Bennett is well equipped to plan events surrounding POP rescue animals.

SARAH STEPHENS – founder, Communications and Design Officer

Stephens is the co-founder of POP and has been the communications and design officer since its start in fall 2017. She promotes POP's social media campaigns, designs and updates their website, creates digital art for all their events, and creates all POP brands like logos and business cards.

In fall 2019, Stephens was a graphic design intern for Auburn University's Office of Communication and Marketing where she created newsletters, mock-ups and story boards. She is majoring in graphic design at Auburn University and plans to graduate in 2020. As a co-

founder, she also advises the POP board on legal proceedings and offers her assistance and connections in saving more rescue animals.

ERIN FOLK – Foster Coordinator

Folk has been POP's foster coordinator since spring 2019. She recruits, organizes and manages all the fosters and makes sure they have everything they need to provide for the POP rescue animals. She also works with President Hovis to screen and match families with rescue animals since she collects notes from fosters about the personalities of the rescue animals.

Folk has worked part time as a student associate at Auburn University's Harbert College of Business since January 2020. She provides customer service and consultation advice on software and resumes. Before becoming a student associate, she worked as a kennel technician at All Care Veterinary Hospital where she was a customer service representative and a technician assistant checking up on the animals. She is currently majoring in business administration at Auburn University and plans on graduating in spring 2022.

PUPS ON THE PLAINS

Blog post

RENT A DOG, SAVE A LIFE

By: Emily Clasen

College can be incredibly stressful, especially around finals. To deal with alleviate stress at home, I used to sit with my family's dog, but unfortunately Buster doesn't live in Auburn with me to snuggle right now. That's where POP can help out. POP, a rescue group based in Auburn, has a new rent-a-dog program which works exactly like the name implies. For only \$3 an hour, you can rent a dog to get some furry company and unwind. Whether they just sit in your lap while you study for finals or go on a hike with you for some fresh air, POP's dogs are just happy to spend some time with you. Harvard University is one of many colleges that has researched the effect petting dogs has on people. Playing with an animal increases levels of stress-reducing hormone oxytocin and decreases the production of stress hormone cortisol. I feel like a personal testament to these studies because hanging out with a puppy is definitely therapeutic for me. I can't own a dog because my college life is too hectic right now with school, work and clubs, but now whenever I need a breather, I can go rent a dog from POP. All the money raised from the rent-a-dog program goes to medical bills and fostering costs of saving dogs from surrounding shelters. POP saves animals that are about to be euthanized and pays for their expensive surgeries. So, not only is renting a dog great for you and great socialization for the dog, it also helps save more dogs in the future. I rented a dog from POP during finals week and took an hour to just watch Netflix and snuggle with him. I've never slept so well before a test like I did after hanging out with Camo. I'm planning on renting again next week because it was nice to have a dog to play with without the commitment. I would definitely recommend renting a dog from POP because it can make college struggles a lot less 'ruff.

PUPS ON THE PLAINS

CUTLINES



Abby Jacobs rented out Corn for some inspiration for her annual pumpkin painting. Corn was happy to get some extra attention and be treated like the work of art he knows he is.



Boris is pictured napping on the drive back after an exciting day of exploring. Anne Landau wanted to rent a hiking buddy, and Boris was very elated to investigate Chewacla State Park with her. He may not have the longest legs yet, but he loves site-seeing so much that you'll be the one trying to keep up with him and not the other way around.



Duke is shown fighting sleep off in Nick Schott's room. Nick rented Duke out to have a buddy while he studied for his physics final. Duke doesn't understand how anyone could stay awake looking at all those numbers. He recommended just taking a nap instead, and Nick was only too happy to comply.