

MICROSOFT'S LATEST VENTURE--THE "PAWS ROOM"

From Ken and Linda Greason, Team Leaders, Brampton

If employees at Microsoft Canada's headquarters in Mississauga happened to see a trio of dogs in the office in the middle of January, their eyes weren't playing tricks on them. They were here for a good reason.

TPOC had partnered with Microsoft Canada to set up a "Paws Room" in their Meadowvale Boulevard offices. The pilot program was meant to raise awareness of TPOC's mission, to help Microsoft improve the quality of its workplace, and to provide its employees with an informal, middle-of-the-day break. The room was open over a two-day period, and employees were allowed to drop in whenever they wanted to.

The three therapy dogs representing TPOC were Josh, Kaylee, and Rufus, owned and handled by members of the Brampton Team, Maureen Harper, Jane Mason, and Ed Whiteside respectively. The dogs happily greeted a steady stream of Microsoft employees. Even Microsoft Canada's President, Max Long, dropped in for a pat.

The visit to Microsoft Canada was organized by Sumeet Khanna, Microsoft Canada's Director, Business Planning & Operations, TPOC's Chair and Founder, Judy Sauvé, and the Brampton Team Leaders, Ken and Linda Greason. The program's goal was to assess the potential for therapy dogs to help Microsoft employees better handle day-to-day stress, and to introduce innovations in creating an even more positive work environment. The pilot also served to enhance TPOC's brand awareness within the Microsoft community, and gave Microsoft an ideal opportunity to expand its community outreach initiatives with organizations like TPOC

"Microsoft has always been a leader in creating a great working environment for its employees," says Khanna. "The 'Paws Room' is an ideal example of how we're always looking for creative ways to keep raising that bar."

Over the next few weeks, Microsoft's pilot team will be assessing the program's performance to determine whether the dogs will make a return visit to its offices. In the meantime, keep checking the TPOC website - <http://www.tpoc.ca> – for more information on this initiative and other TPOC pet therapy programs.

