

**(Left)** Students from Mount St. Mary Academy in Kenmore take a few minutes to destress before exam week by playing with therapy dogs from the SPCA. Valentina Moscato, Alexandra Albin and Michaela Johnson are all smiles with one of the dogs from the SPCA's Paws for Love program.

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OF MOUNT ST. MARY  
ACADEMY**

**(Below)** Julia Philipps and Heather Forster look forward to exams after destressing with therapy dogs from the SPCA's Paws for Love. The program brought the dogs to Mount St. Mary Academy in Kenmore. The program also brings dogs into nursing homes and Hospice locations to help relieve stress by having people pet and play with the animals.



## Therapy dogs visit Mount St. Mary during exam week

**KENMORE** — Therapy dogs with the SPCA's Paws for Love program visited Mount St. Mary Academy on Monday, June 17 to help relieve stress during exam week. Three dogs from the volunteer program came to the high school with their trainers to give students an opportunity to pet the dogs, which has been found to reduce blood pressure and be relaxing.

During Mount St. Mary Academy's 2018-2019 mid-term exams week in January, students had an opportunity to participate in this program for the first time. That first visit from the therapy dogs was a marked success, inspiring administration to

extend the program from one hour and 20 minutes to two hours and 30 minutes for the second program. The visit in January came just ahead of the school's announcement of its New Academic Vision which places an emphasis on wellness.

Research shows students can reduce stress levels by spending time with dogs, making it the perfect remedy during exam week. Studies indicate that the positive effects are both immediate and long-lasting for students. Leaders at Mount St. Mary Academy have seen these positive effects in action and look forward to continuing to offer the program to students.