

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Austin Dog Alliance Youth Association Assists Bastrop County Animal Shelter**  
*Building elevated orthopedic beds for dogs and scratching posts for cats among projects tackled by youth volunteers from local therapy dog training organization*

**March 13, 2012 – AUSTIN, TX** – While spring break might mean a trip to the beach for some students, for other youngsters it means spending some time in the doghouse.

And they wouldn't have it any other way.

The Austin Dog Alliance Youth Association will be at the Bastrop County Animal Shelter on Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup> building Kuranda-type orthopedic cots for dogs as well as scratching posts for the shelter's feline population. The association is a student-led youth volunteer group comprised of teens 13 to 17, with a mission of improving the lives of children and their families while providing fun and rewarding leadership and volunteer opportunities for students.

The special orthopedic beds are designed to elevate dogs off hard surfaces, thereby relieving the joint stiffness and pressure sores experienced by canines confined to kennels for extended periods. The elevated cots also help keep the dogs cooler in hot weather – a significant comfort measure for any shelter in Central Texas. Kuranda, a popular retailer of such special beds, sells similar cots with prices ranging from \$80 to more than \$100. However, with materials purchased through fund-raising by "Urgent Animals at Bastrop County Animal Shelter", combined with the enthusiasm, energy and engineering provided by the students, the Bastrop shelter will save hundreds of dollars while adding to the well-being and comfort of the pets in their care.

"It's such a joy to watch how enthusiastic our Youth Association volunteers are about giving back to the community and helping local shelters. We believe this is a win-win project for our young volunteers and the animals at the shelter; they both benefit from the project," stated Debi Krakar, executive director of Austin Dog Alliance, a local non-profit organization that trains therapy dogs and provides handler/dog teams to local hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, as well as schools and libraries through its reading dog program.

"It's heartwarming to see today's youth and young adults spend their time on projects that help our animal companions. It teaches our youth to care for others, something they will carry with them into adulthood. This display of compassion and care is a role model for others," said Troy Walters, Bastrop County Animal Shelter Director. "It beats a high score on angry birds and any other video game each and every time."

"Some of our projects, like our dog washes, are fundraising projects for Austin Dog Alliance to help support their programs like K-9 Kids Club, which is a therapy dog program for children with autism. Others, like our work with therapy dogs at nursing homes and in school reading programs and our work with local animal shelters, are simply our way of giving back to our communities," says Hannah Zeevi, a freshman at Austin Community College and the current leader of the Youth Association.

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**About Austin Dog Alliance**

Located in Austin, Texas, Austin Dog Alliance, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, is the only organization in Texas providing group social skill development programs for children with autism spectrum disorder that incorporate the use of canine-assisted therapy. Austin Dog Alliance also provides handler-dog teams to local hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, as well as schools and libraries through its Bow Wow Reading Dog program.

Austin Dog Alliance was created to provide an accepting and supportive environment where dogs and humans can improve health and wellbeing. Human-dog training classes provide a solid financial foundation to support the training and office facility, donations and fundraising events are used to sustain and grow community outreach programs such as autism enrichment, dog therapy services, Bow Wow Reading Dog, rescue and youth programs. For more information, visit <http://austindogalliance.org/>

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