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### PTSD Dog Gets Student Booted From Class

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**ANKENY, Iowa** -- Des Moines Area Community College administrators issued a public apology Monday after a two-time Iraq war veteran was turned away from his class on the Ankeny campus because he had a service dog with him.

The dog helps him cope with post-traumatic stress disorder and is, by law, allowed in class.

“Right now, based on interviews we've done so far, it appears it was a misunderstanding,” said DMACC Executive Dean of Student Services Laurie Wolf.

Last Friday, which was Veterans Day, the former soldier walked into DMACC building 6 with his service dog. He was prepared to watch a production in the auditorium in order to write a paper on it over the weekend. The student's instructor told him that the dog could not come to class and they would have to leave.

Wolf said the instructor was concerned the dog might be a distraction.

“The professor told him the production was open to the public, but he was a little concerned about having a service dog. He didn't know if other people might be allergic or might be sensitive to having a dog there,” said Nicole Shumate, the executive director of Paws and Effect, a local nonprofit that trains dogs and teams them up with veterans who have PTSD.

More than anything, Shumate said, the dogs help with the psychological after-effects of war.

“A lot of times what the dog will do, is sometimes they will stand right in front of you so no one can approach too closely. They will watch behind you so if someone approaches behind you they will wag their tail, so the recipient will only see the tail wagging and it's just awareness that someone is close behind you,” Shumate said.

“The dogs are going to give them that confidence to go out in public and to be around people because they have their companion with them,” said Darren Price, the operations director of Paws and Effect.

In March, the American with Disabilities Act was changed to include PTSD dogs.

“I think a lot of people out there, they see the service dog, but they see a person who is not broken. They don't look broken, or disabled, so they feel the need to self-police, to stop and ask the questions,” Price said.

The ADA states that the only way a service dog can be removed from a public facility is if it is acting inappropriately.

“Everything I understand is the dog was perfectly in control and had really, really good manners,” Shumate said.

In a meeting Monday morning, the student, his instructor and Wolf talked about what happened.

“It was obvious he regretted the mistake,” Wolf said about the instructor.

The school will now use what happened as a tool to teach others about PTSD and the dogs that help sufferers cope.

“I think we got the best possible outcome we could've gotten from it,” Shumate said.

DMACC had already been trying to spread awareness about PTSD dogs -- there are two dogs already on campus. Students and staff had been writing articles in the school newsletter and were already putting on a production about it for next spring.

The student did not want to talk to News Channel 8 about what happened. Wolf said he will be able to complete his assignment because the performance was videotaped. The student was back in class on Monday.

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