

The Pearl Launches Study with Texas State University Examining Benefits of Canine Presence in Addiction Recovery

Resident French Bulldog "Bougie" Becomes Full-Time Member of Women's Treatment Community.

AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, July 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Pearl, a women's residential addiction treatment program within Foundation

Stone Family of Programs, has partnered with Texas State University on a groundbreaking research study exploring the spiritual benefit of canine presence in substance use disorder treatment.



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The study will examine how the daily presence of a resident canine influences connection, emotional regulation, hope, purpose, and spiritual engagement among women in early recovery. While animal-assisted therapy has demonstrated benefits in mental health settings, little research has explored how living alongside a permanent resident canine may affect the recovery experience within residential addiction treatment.

At the heart of the study is Bougie, a French Bulldog who will live full-time at The Pearl. Unlike a therapy dog who visits periodically, Boujee will become part of the community itself, sharing daily life with residents and offering consistent companionship throughout their treatment journey.

"This study explores something we've observed for years," said Marsha Stone, Founder and CEO of Foundation Stone Family of Programs. "Healing happens through connection. We know that addiction isolates people, while recovery restores relationships with ourselves, with others, and often with a Higher Power. We're excited to partner with Texas State University to better understand the role a resident canine may play in helping foster those connections."

The research will evaluate participants throughout their treatment experience using both qualitative and quantitative measures, examining whether consistent interaction with a resident canine enhances emotional safety, trust, community engagement, and spiritual well-being.

Morgan Gaither, the study's principal investigator and a graduate student at Texas State

University, brings both academic research experience and personal insight to the project.

"One of the greatest struggles in early recovery is reconnecting not only with other people, but with yourself and something greater than yourself," said Morgan Gaither. "My own recovery experience showed me how meaningful the presence of a canine companion can be during the healing process. This study gives us an opportunity to explore that experience through research and contribute meaningful knowledge to the addiction treatment field."

Dr. Jonathan Stone, veterinarian for Bougie, emphasized the unique role companion animals often play during periods of healing.

"The human-animal bond has an incredible ability to provide comfort without expectation," said Jonathan Stone. "As a veterinarian, I've witnessed the therapeutic value animals bring during life's most difficult moments. I'm honored to support this research and Bougie's role within The Pearl community."

If the findings support what clinicians have long observed, the research could help inform future treatment models and encourage broader integration of resident companion animals within behavioral healthcare settings.

"This partnership reflects our commitment to continually advancing the field of addiction treatment through innovation, research, and compassionate care," said Marsha Stone. "Our goal is to combine clinical excellence with meaningful human experiences. If we can better understand what helps people feel safe, connected, and engaged in recovery, we have an opportunity to improve outcomes for families everywhere."

The study begins on July 22, 2026, at The Pearl's residential campus in Texas.

About The Pearl

The Pearl is a premier women's residential addiction treatment program specializing in substance use disorders, trauma, and co-occurring mental health conditions. As part of Foundation Stone Family of Programs, The Pearl provides individualized, evidence-based care while addressing the emotional, relational, and spiritual aspects of long-term recovery.

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