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‘Paw and Order’ Program to Make its Debut in Harris County

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(Houston, Tx -- A news conference will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday to announce the start of the “Paw and Order—Special Dog Unit” program of The Harris County District Attorney’s Office and Animal Law Section of the Houston Bar Association.

This twice-monthly program is designed to comfort children and other witnesses who have been subjected to domestic violence and abuse. It offers “dog therapy” -- the comfort of a well-trained dog – to relax them prior to giving statements or testimony.

Paw and Order dogs will be wearing distinctive orange bandanas that identify them as service animals. After visiting with an animal, the children will be given their own keepsake bandana to take home. The program is fully-funded by donations and volunteers, so there will be no cost to taxpayers, participants or the District Attorney’s Office.

Prosecutor Belinda Smith of the District Attorney’s Animal Cruelty Section said she is thrilled to offer this innovative program to people who have been exposed to domestic violence. “Animals have been shown to offer comfort and relaxation to people who are undergoing stressful events,” Smith said. “We hope that this will lead to a better quality of witnesses and statements given in criminal prosecutions.”

Paw and Order representatives, assisted by Shelby the canine, will be available for the news conference at 2 p.m. Tuesday (Nov. 3) on the sixth floor of the Harris County Criminal Justice Center at 1201 Franklin St.

(end)