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Dear Yvonne,

Throughout 2012 and now in 2013 we have been conducting the 'Griffith University – Novel Treatments of Phobia in Children and Adolescents'. This study aims to improve access to treatment, and improve outcomes for children and adolescents with specific phobias, through an intensive one session only treatment. As part of the project we offer children and adolescents free state-of-the-art psychological therapy if they have a diagnosis of a specific phobia.

To date we have had 35 children and adolescents enrolled in the study. One of the most common phobia types we see are dog phobia. Dog phobias can be extremely debilitating and lead to significant interference in children's day to day lives (e.g., avoidance of visiting friends houses, walking to school and going to the park) and if untreated can lead to adult anxiety, depression and substance use problems.

We have been fortunate to work with 'Pets for Therapy' to assist dog phobic children and adolescents in overcoming their fear. The wonderful volunteers we have worked with have educated the children about how to interact successfully with dogs and have conveyed to them the significant benefits of owning a dog (e.g., companionship, good health). We greatly appreciate all the volunteers who have assisted us. They have been warm, caring and understanding when working with the children. The children and adolescents who have completed therapy thus far have made significant progress with children now able to visit friends and go to parks without worrying about meeting a dog. Recently, one of the families contacted us to let us know how well their daughter was doing and to inform us they had in fact purchased a dog for her for Christmas! This is a testament to good work of the 'Pets for Therapy' volunteers.

In addition to 'Pets for Therapy' assistance with phobia treatments in August they also volunteered to host a stall with us at National Psychology Week. This week is designed to promote mental health and well being in the community. Considerable research has demonstrated the relationship between dog ownership and physical and mental well being. This was a wonderful event to create awareness regarding the benefits of pet ownership to the local community.

Thank you once again and we are looking forward to continuing our work together in 2013.

Yours sincerely

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