



Cummins Advocating
for Racial Equity

**MEDIA ALERT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Cummins Invests \$40,000 in Paws & Think's Youth-Canine Program

Investment will restart Youth-Canine Program at Warren Central where at-risk students help train shelter dogs. The grant will also extend our Hamilton County & Marion County Juvenile Detention Center programs.

Central Indiana – Spanish teacher Roberta Kuonen can remember several of her students who have been positively impacted by the Paws & Think Youth-Canine Program at Warren Central High School. As the program facilitator, she's seen students who are traveling down a tough road – whether it be from lack of confidence or a tough childhood – and then become inspired after their interactions with the volunteers and homeless dogs. She particularly remembers one student of hers who rarely spoke or was able to have audible conversations and went through the program. She said the teen's hands-on experience with the dog – training them and bonding with them – sparked something in her.

"This student ran into her teacher's room and barely took a breath as she explained all the things she had learned and done in Paws & Think," said Kuonen. "Her teacher was in tears by the time she finished!"

Now, after a two-year pause on the program due to the impact of Covid-19, the Youth-Canine Program at Warren Central will restart, thanks to a \$40,000 grant from Cummins through its Cummins Advocating for Racial Equity (CARE) program. CARE was launched in 2020 so Cummins could take an active, leading role in the work to dismantle institutional racism and create systemic equity. Juvenile justice is one of many areas where CARE aims to drive sustainable impacts. This funding will also expand the other two programs at the Marion County Juvenile Detention Center with adoptable dogs from Indianapolis Animal Care and Control Services and at Fishers Youth Assistance Program with adoptable dogs from Humane Society for Hamilton County.

"We are excited to receive this dedicated funding to help our at-risk youth across Central Indiana," said Shafali Pillay, Paws & Think board president. "This grant will allow us the opportunity to continue to positively impact the lives of teens in need and homeless dogs in our community, specifically with them working together as a team to learn new skills and share moments of care and trust."

Paws & Think's Youth-Canine programs started in 2013 and have impacted hundreds of teens and saved hundreds of dogs. Our dog trainer and volunteer coaches help the youths train the dogs on basic skills and manners using only positive reinforcement methods. The young people learn responsibility, job readiness, anger management, parenting skills, leadership, and positive life skills. At the same time, the shelter dogs are more likely to be adopted because of the basic skills and manners learned. To date, the program has had a 100 percent adoption rate for the pups who graduate from the program.

Senior Communications Specialist at Cummins, Michelle Reuter, is a volunteer at Paws & Think and a volunteer with CARE.

"As a volunteer with Paws & Think, I have seen firsthand the benefits of the Youth-Canine program and the impact it has on the Indianapolis and surrounding communities," said Reuter. "It has been rewarding to introduce Cummins to the great work of this organization, sharing the impact this grant will have on at-risk youth and allowing its programs to continue throughout 2022."

The program at Warren Central started up this week with students paired with adoptable dogs from IACS.

"We have seen students open up in ways they had not previously. Our students have felt more responsible, confident, and needed," said Kuoenen. "I am so excited to be able to provide this opportunity for our struggling students and for the dogs who want nothing more than to live in a loving home."

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About Paws and Think, Inc.

Paws & Think is a volunteer-led nonprofit dedicated to improving lives through the power of the human-dog connection. Paws & Think partners with schools, health care facilities, the Marion County Juvenile Detention Center, humane societies/shelters and other organizations to improve the quality of life for at-risk youth, seniors, people with disabilities/special needs and others who can benefit from interacting with the dogs in its programs. The organization was incorporated as Paws and Think, Inc. in 2001. To learn more about Paws & Think, please visit the organization's website at www.pawsandthink.org or follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram @PawsandThinkInc.

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