Purina is Searching for America's Most Pet-Friendly Companies

Actor John O'Hurley to Visit Top Business, Present $10,000 Donation to Local Pet Organization; Studies Show Bringing Pets to Work Can Reduce Stress, Increase Productivity

ST. LOUIS, Dec. 4, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Fifteen years ago, Nestle Purina PetCare recognized the benefits of allowing employees to bring their pets to work and started a "Pets at Work" program. For a company whose motto is "Your Pet, Our Passion," it seems natural that every week hundreds of dogs and cats are brought to Purina's St. Louis campus, and associates and their furry friends enjoy each other's company every day.

(Photo: http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20121204/CG24142-a)

(Logo: http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20121204/CG24142LOGO-b)

Purina is now conducting a nationwide search to identify America's most pet-friendly workplaces with the "Purina Pets At Work Contest." Pet lovers can submit a story and photos about how their company is pet friendly, and Purina will help one winning business become even more pet friendly and donate $10,000 to a local pet welfare organization.

Award-winning actor John O'Hurley, well known for his role as J. Peterman on the television show "Seinfield," will help pick the winning company and will visit their office next spring to present the Grand Prize – a makeover to outfit the business with pet-friendly materials (valued at $5,000), and a $10,000 donation to a local pet shelter. O'Hurley also appeared in a video that aired during the National Dog Show Presented by Purina on NBC on Thanksgiving Day to discuss the benefits of bringing pets to work.

"I've visited the Purina offices and they clearly believe that spending time with pets can help make life better – for pets and pet owners," said O'Hurley, who serves as co-host of the National Dog Show Presented by Purina. "As a lifelong dog owner and someone who shares Purina's passion for pets, I'm thrilled to celebrate other companies that see the benefits of encouraging pets in the workplace."

Pet lovers can log on to www.purina.com/contest and tell how pets have made a positive impact on their workplace and why their workday is better – for them and their pet – because their office is pet friendly. Entrants must describe their employer's "Pets at Work" program, answer both of the following questions, and provide 3-5 photos that show pets in their workplace:

- How do pets truly have a positive impact in your workplace?
- How is having a pet-friendly office mutually beneficial for employees and pets?

The nominations will be judged by three criteria:

- Does the nomination demonstrate how pets make life at work better for both the employees and the pets?
- Will the nomination inspire other businesses to integrate pets into their own office environments?
- Does the nomination include a description of the nominee's "Pets at Work" program?

Nominations will be accepted until January 15, 2013. The winner will be announced in the spring of 2013.

A recent study* has shown that employees who bring their pets to work tend to have a lower stress level by the end of the day. Stress in the workplace has been associated with negative physical and psychological outcomes, including a general decline in physical health. The study found that interacting with their pets lowered the levels of cortisol in the employees' bodies, a stress-related hormone that can lead to high cholesterol levels, hypertension and depression.

The Center for Disease Control** says that having pets can help reduce blood pressure, in addition to decreasing loneliness, helping to lower cholesterol levels and encouraging physical activity. The better an employee feels on a regular basis, the more they are able to stay focused and produce quality work.

In addition to these health benefits, pets in the office can:

- **Increase productivity and provide inspiration:** Having pets nearby can help keep an employee relaxed and happy – making work more enjoyable.
- **Improve job satisfaction:** At Purina, employee surveys show Pets@Work is a big benefit, and the company also believes it helps with employee retention.
- **Encourage co-worker interaction:** Pets add another layer of interaction between co-workers, and otherwise quiet employees can become more engaged when talking to a co-worker about their pets.
- **Promote healthy break time:** Dog owners tend to spend their breaks walking and caring for their dogs, getting them on their feet. Even just taking a few minutes to play with a pet can help provide a mental break and lower stress.
- **Project healthy work-life balance:** For many people, pets are a huge part of their lives. Companies that encourage pets in the workplace show that they care about their employees and the balance between work and home.

Purina provides five simple steps for pet owners to help create a welcoming, pet-friendly program at their workplace. For more information, visit www.purina.com.

No purchase necessary to participate or win. For complete contest information, visit www.purina.com/contest for the official rules, nomination requirements and eligibility details. Valid in the 50 United States and D.C. Void where prohibited.

About Nestle Purina

Nestle Purina PetCare Company is a global leader in the pet care industry and promotes responsible pet care, humane education, community involvement and the positive bond between people and their pets. The North American headquarters for Nestle Purina is located at Checkerboard Square in St. Louis, Missouri. Nestle Purina is part of Swiss-based Nestle, the world's leading nutrition, health and wellness company.

*_Los Angeles Times_: "Bringing Your Dog to Work Can Ease Stress, Study Finds,"March 30, 2012;

**Center for Disease Control website (http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/health_benefits.htm) "Health Benefits of Pets;" July 28, 2010

SOURCE Nestle Purina PetCare