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## Perris Pets on Parade at Paragon Park

Pets and people.

Those were the dual themes on display March 29 during the City of Perris' first annual "Pets on Parade and Pet Expo" at Paragon Park, an event that drew dozens of critters and 500 people.

The expo, part of the ongoing Live Well Perris health initiative, offered people the chance to bring their dogs, birds and in one case a pig for a fun day to meet with other pet owners and get in a little exercise. That came in a walking "parade" around the perimeter of the park.

There was also an appearance by Rosie the Asian Elephant, who lives at the Perris-based shelter "Have Trunk Will Travel," who wowed the crowd with her agility, strength and proficiency at the artist easel. Canines of various breeds showed their dexterity by catching flying discs thrown to them. Veterinarians administered vaccines to 120 dogs and performed 20 spaying and neutering procedures.



Trainer Joanne Smith puts Rosie the Asian elephant through her paces at the Perris "Pets on Parade and Pet Expo."

Vendors handed out healthy animal snacks.

"What a great day!" Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said. "It's a great day to get people involved in a great community event. They can meet other pet owners and learn more about their own pets. It's a great day for two and four-legged residents to enjoy themselves."

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough came as both an elected official and a pet owner. He brought his American bulldog, Champ, and his South American Conure, Sprite, along for the festivities. He said Live the Well Perris initiative continues to expand with events like the Pet Expo, which grew out of the City's "Strutt Your Mutt" event staged for dog owners. The next major Live Well event takes place on April 26 at Perris City Hall, 101 D Street, when the City hosts its second annual Community Health Fair. The event features health screenings, healthy eating and cooking techniques, the final weigh-in for the Biggest Loser competition and includes prize giveaways.

"Live Well Perris is about what it says—living well," Yarbrough said. "Getting out and talking your dog for a walk is great exercise. I want to thank all the people who made this event happen and all those who are here to enjoy it."



Kim Berlee pulls a wagon with the family pet, Hazel the Vietnamese pot-bellied pig. Also riding is Berlee's daughter, Joey.

While most of the pets on parade walked the parade route, Hazel the Vietnamese pot-bellied pig rode in a wagon, pulled by her owner, Kim Berlee. Berlee said Hazel has been trained to perform tricks. She sits up like a dog and walks in a circle.

Berlee said she appreciated the opportunity to bring her pet out to interact with other animals.

"It's good for pet owners to get together, it's good for the community," Berlee said. "It's good for our pets to get some exercise too. Hazel's not getting any exercise, but I am! I appreciate the City of Perris for sponsoring events like this. It shows they care about people and pets."

Sandra and Jeremy Contreras brought a pair of family dogs that took home prizes. Charlie, an Australian shepherd, Shar-Pei and Labrador mix won the most talented award while Misty, a Chow-Chow-terrier mix was named the canine with the best bark.



Perris residents Jeremy Contreras and his wife, Sandra, with their award-winning dogs, Misty and Charlie.

"It's great the City of Perris gives us the opportunity to be with other pet owners and our dogs," Jeremy Contreras said.

Representatives of the Disc Dog Empire put on demonstrations, throwing the objects into the air and encouraging their pets to run under and catch them. Group president Julia Kosobucki said any breed—from toy poodles to Great Danes--can master that trick. The crowd clapped its approval while several dogs caught plastic discs, completing tricks with names like "weaves," "vaults," "twists" and "spins." The group performs at shelters throughout Riverside and San Bernardino counties.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough and Mayor Daryl Busch stand with members of the City's Youth Advisory Committee, who volunteered at the pet expo

"We are very excited to be at an event like this," she said. "It's about education, entertainment and encouraging exercise." She congratulated Mayor Busch and City staff for putting on what she labeled "an amazing event!"

"We don't often see this kind if turnout," she said.

Dogs weren't the only performers.

Rosie, a 29-year-old, 8,000-pound elephant showed off her power and dexterity by using her trunk to pick up single rose, then used the same appendage to pick up trainer Dave Smith, the grabbed a paint brush and created her own expressionistic masterpiece. She also stood on one leg and twirled around to show off her agility.

Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez said the success of the inaugural Pets on Parade and Pet Expo could spawn more activities pairing animals and people.

"We are a pet-friendly City," he said. "Live Well Perris is not only about keeping ourselves happy but keeping are pets happy too!"



Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez chats with Brittany Burch, a member of the City's Youth Advisory Committee.

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