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Pooches Take Center Stage at Parade

Morgan Park in Perris went to the dogs March 11.

There were diving dogs, disc-catching dogs, diva dogs, disabled dogs, a police dog and family pets. A plethora of pooches, all strutting their stuff.

The event was the City of Perris' "Pets on Parade and Pet Expo," which gave canine parents a chance to show off their dogs, receive low-cost vaccines, get a photo and microchip to keep track of pets.

There were demonstrations by Perris Police Officer Tim Quick and his canine, partner, Renzo, a three-year-old Belgian Malinois trained to detect people and narcotics. The American Diving Dogs put on a show, sometimes leaping more than 20 feet before landing in a pool of water.

Dogs from Pawcific Crush FlyBall entertained the audience by snatching flying discs and tennis balls out of the air as their owners and onlookers took in the skills competition. A team from the Riverside-based K9 Disc Thrills featured dogs leaping into the air to snag Frisbees and other flying discs with their teeth.

Perris Mayor Michael Vargas came to the Pet Expo to judge the various categories of canine competition, which included best pet costume, cutest critter, best bark, doggie diva and most talented. Before the day was over, he had adopted a long-haired Chihuahua named Penny.

"I gotta confess, we fell in love with her," Vargas said. "She's the spitting image of our dog, Twinkle, who passed away a couple of years ago."

The mayor said the new addition is adapting well to her new home.

"She adopted us as much as we adopted her," Vargas said. He added that he spoke with many vendors in attendance and they were "very pleased with the event."



Kelsey Hoesman from the San Jacinto Valley Animal Campus, part of the Riverside County Department of Animal Services, with Perris Mayor Michael Vargas and his wife, Julie, who adopted a Chihuahua and named her Penny, during the March 11 Pets on Parade event in Morgan Park.

Tiny but tough

The award for the toughest mutt could well have gone to "Choo-Choo," a four-pound, 6-year-old Chihuahua who lost both front legs when she flew through a window in a car accident. Choo-Choo gets around on two wheels mounted on what her owner Betty Kear calls her "happy van."

"She doesn't let her injury bother her at all," Kear said. "She is something else."

Kear's friend, Marguerite Herman, echoed that sentiment, saying of Choo-Choo: "She's a toughie."

"This is a fun event because pet owners get to let their animals out to have fun," Herman said. "There's a lot of talented dogs in Perris."



Choo-Choo, a disabled Chihuahua, struts her stuff during the Pets on Parade festivities March 11 at Morgan Park. Choo-Choo lost both front legs in a vehicle wreck. Owner Betty Kear and her friend, Marguerite Herman, accompanied Choo-Choo to the show.

There were plenty of activities for spectators and pet owners to witness. The American Diving Dogs flew through the air into a pool of water, sometimes hurling themselves more than 20 feet before plunging into the wet stuff.

American Diving Dogs is based in Costa Mesa and this year's appearance was the group's first ever, said Thanh Nguyen, one of the event organizers.

Nguyen said any dog "that enjoys swimming and fetching" can become a diving canine. The event features a pet owner who stands at the edge of the pool and tosses a ball or other toy, which the dog follows into the water. Nguyen said the record dive is held by a Whippet mix who flew 30 feet.

Nguyen said 90 percent of the dogs who participate in diving are rescued from animal shelters. He said the group was pleased to open its 2017 with a stop in Perris.

"Perris is great," he said. "It's great to have an event in March when the weather is perfect."

American Diving Dogs have been featured on ESPN. Winners receive medals for their efforts.



A flying canine leaps through the air before landing in a pool of water during an "American Diving Dogs" demonstration March 11, part of the Pets on Parade festivities in Perris' Morgan Park.

Stuffed animals are the reward for dogs who score well at Pawcific Crush FlyBall competitions.

The Murrieta-based group sponsors competitions, which involve dogs running down a 51-foot chute, hitting the "flyball box" and racing back to the starting point where they are rewarded with their favorite toy or snack. The winners complete the course in the fastest time.

"It's very intense," said regular competitor Amanda Ricks. "The environment is extremely competitive and energetic. It's like competing with your best friend."

Ricks said it usually takes 18 months to two years until a pet becomes Crush Flyball master. Any breed of canine can excel in the competition. Training involves routine practice sessions and lots of repetition.

Ricks said the Pawcific crew liked performing in Perris.

"It's nice to show the community how much fun we can have with our dogs," she said.



A four-legged competitor in Pawcific Crush FlyBall bounces off a wall as part of a competition routine during the Pets on Parade in Perris on March 11.

Catching flying objects, criminal suspects

Julia Kosobucki and her daughter, Lylaclare, are experts at training dogs to catch frisbees and other flying discs. The pair are part of the group "K9 Disc Thrills," which put on a crowd-pleasing show by tossing discs long and short distances, which the dogs usually caught with seemingly little effort. Other times the tricks included catching a flipping disc.

Both Kosobrouckis have appeared at Perris' Pet Expo before and both praised the City for its "very well-organized plan" in making the 2017 version an unqualified success.

"It's a fantastic event, a great day, there are a lot of dog demonstrations taking place," said Julia Kosobucki, who is part of the group "K9 Disc Thrills."

"It's great to be out here," she said.



Dogs snagged discs out of the air as part of demonstration of K9 Disc Thrills.com at the Pets on Parade in Perris.

Perris Police Officer Tim Quick and his canine partner, Renzo, went through their paces, demonstrating to the audience how they work together. Renzo quickly caught, tackled and bit a fleeing suspect upon a command from Quick. Three times in his three years on the force Renzo has bitten a fleeing suspect. Most of the hundreds of other calls Quick and Renzo have responded to have ended with the suspect surrendering without any incident.

Renzo, a Belgian Malinois, understands more than 15 commands in Dutch. Quick said his partner has been trained to detect human scent and narcotics. He weighs 80 pounds, has a nose that is a million times more sensitive than a human's, wears a bullet-resistant vest in extreme emergencies and can locate a suspect in a large building many times faster than two-legged cops.

Quick said Renzo saves the Perris department 1,000 man-hours of service each year. To stay in shape, Quick said Renzo runs with him as he rides his bicycle off-duty. The dog can run about two miles at speeds approaching 20 mph, Quick said.

"He's a great dog," Quick said.



Renzo, the Perris Police Department's canine, puts the clamps on a fleeing suspect during a demonstration during the Pets on Parade March 11 at Morgan Park.

Parade winners

- Best Pet Costume: Dracula with owner Deborah Andelin
- Cutest Critter: Luna - Adopted onsite
- Doggie/Owner Look-alike: With owner Lyla Clare Kosobucki
- Best Costume Duo: Mia and owner Jozilynn Covarrubias
- Best Homemade Costume: Pancho Villa with owner Liana Valenzuela
- Best Costume Group (3 or more): Shotgun, Murphy, and Splash with owner Tracy Ramirez
- Best Bark: Mickey with owner Mandie Arron
- Doggie Diva: Choo-Choo with owner Betty Kear
- Most Talented: Mackenzie with owner David Procidia
- Honorable Mention: Lolly with owner Matthew Allee

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