

## Park goes to the dogs for fundraiser



By

**Joni Andrews / Times staff Ricochet, a border collie mix, catches a disc during a demonstration by the Flydogs at the TAPS Tailwaggers Classic Sunday afternoon in Mineral Spring Park.**

[Photos](#)



ADVERTISEMENT



By Pam Keyes  
Pekin Daily Times  
Mon Sep 28, 2009, 05:00 PM CDT

PEKIN, Ill. -

The Tailwaggers Classic, an annual fundraiser for the Tazewell Animal Protective Society, brought dogs and their masters to Pekin's Mineral Spring Park on Sunday for an afternoon of competitions, demonstrations and display booths.

"Our goal for this event is to continue to grow," said TAPS Executive Director Angela Blackman.

"The good weather has certainly helped us today. Just looking around, we are happy with the amount of people that have come out today."

One of the day's demonstrations came from the Flydogs, a group of rescue dogs that have been trained in obedience, agility and the art of catching a disc by trainer Mare Potts.

"You know, 9/11 changed people everywhere," Potts said. "I woke up one day and asked myself, 'What do I want to do with my life?'"

Her answer was to quit her corporate job and focus on training dogs, she said. "Animals are my passion. Certainly, my pay is not the same, but I wake up every morning and am happy to go to work. Life is too short. I am happy where I am, and that says a lot."

Dogs don't just start catching discs and other toys, Potts said — they must be trained first, especially in obedience.

Potts started her demonstration with Ricochet, a border collie mix that ran in and out through Potts' legs and caught almost all of the discs that were thrown.

Another dog, an 18-month-old Labrador mix named Reece, was adopted from a Chicago shelter and is still being trained for world championship. She caught most of the discs and brought them back, even running through a tunnel before one catch.

"We are working very hard and plan to be ready for the world championship," Potts said. "She is going to be somebody — just wait and see."

At the end of the demonstration, children were invited to toss discs to the dogs, and the activity drew smiles from the participants whether the dogs made a catch or not.

The event featured many competitions for dogs and their masters, including smallest and largest dog, best trick, best tailwagger, best costume, and a queen and king contest.

Izzy, a teacup Chihuahua weighing in at approximately 2 ½ pounds, won the smallest dog competition. "Yes, she does fit in a teacup," said owner Kristi Riley-Casper of Pekin.

The tailwagging contest was won by Cocoa, owned by Pekin resident LeeAnn Garlish, whose Girl Scout Troop 4730 just started volunteering at TAPS on Wednesday evenings.

"This is the first time we have come here, and it has been a lot of fun," Garlish said. "We didn't train her to wag her tail, she just does it." Cocoa also isn't shy about shaking hands, as she demonstrated during the best trick contest.

Eli, a 140-pound black and white Newfoundland, was dressed like a big spotted cow, complete with udders, and won the costume contest paws down.

"We made this costume for a Halloween party. I couldn't think of anything to dress him up. Because of his size and color, the cow costume fit him perfectly," said owner Caron Walter, a member of Heartland Dog Training Therapy. Eli is a registered therapy dog.

"This event is so fun and important," Walter said. "It is a great cause. People start socializing with other dog owners. I also like the demonstrations, they are awesome."

Graci, a former TAPS dog owned by Alice Cakora, won the queen contest. Spunky, a Lhasa apso and poodle mix and former TAPS dog, won the king contest, doggie musical chairs and the bucket toss game, earning many treats throughout the day.

"We have had fun today," said Spunky's owner, 7-year-old Brogan Gresham of Pekin. "He is a happy dog. He never got to be a king before."

All proceeds from the event will help support TAPS.

Comments (0)

Login or register to post a comment:

## Login

Username:

Password:

[Forgot password](#)

## Register

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

I agree to the [terms of use](#)

I am over 13 years of age

NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"



WEB BROWSING REDEFINED  FIREFOX 3