

Volunteers make success of 'Rockin' for Taps'

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GateHouse News Service

Posted Jul 19, 2010 @ 12:00 AM

PEKIN, Ill. — Pet Lovers abounded at Pekin's VFW Post 1232 Saturday evening as the Tazewell Animal Protective Society held its annual fundraising event, "Rockin' for TAPS" — an outdoor affair with food and entertainment, including comedy by Royce Elliot, music by the band "Loose Shoes," a 50/50 raffle, a dunk tank and a bags tournament.

The event was preceded earlier in the day by one of TAPS' other major fundraising events, "Riding for TAPS," a motorcycle run which left from MacDuff's on Route 29 in Pekin, rolled through Havana, Banner, Canton, Trivoli and Peoria, and ended at the Pekin VFW in plenty of time for the evening's festivities.

Pam Smith, of Pekin, was one of the volunteers working Saturday's event: "It was hot and humid," she said afterward. "But we managed to avoid the rain, so that's good.

"Royce Elliot did really well. The crowd seemed to enjoy him. He signed books and donated some of the proceeds. He said, 'Anything for the animals,' and since that's our philosophy too, we thought that was wonderful. We had kids dancing around with blow-up guitars, singing along with the band.

"Everyone was very generous. The biker who won that cash prize donated part of his winnings back to TAPS, and the 50/50 raffle winner donated it all back. Our turnout was about the same as last year, but the motorcycle run had twice as many people."

TAPS, being a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization funded solely through adoptions, donations, memorials and fundraising events like those held Saturday, depends heavily on volunteers like Smith.

Sheila Borton, volunteer coordinator for TAPS, commented, "None of this would have happened without the volunteers. This was a success because of their dedication and hard work, always willing to jump in and help where needed. Some of them were (at the VFW) as early as 8 a.m., and we didn't leave until 11:30 at night."

Rick Zimmerman is a Pekin resident and TAPS volunteer. "I had a little Dachshund, CoCo, and when she passed away three years ago I donated some money to TAPS in the dog's memory. They sent me a thank-you note, and the note had a P.S. mentioning that they were always looking for volunteers. I've been volunteering ever since."

Rick, who now owns three dachshunds, all of which he adopted from the shelter, is what is called an "offsite" volunteer. "Generally, I walk and socialize the smaller animals; take them to places like PetSmart and PetCo (for adoption opportunities)."

Lamia Smith, of Glassford, was another of Saturday's volunteers. She said she feels the organization and the animals are worth the effort. "I love animals. I have four dogs and an iguana named Little Guy. I adopted one of our dogs through TAPS, and rescued one out of a home."

Founded in 1958, TAPS is a no-kill shelter with a goal to provide a safe environment for injured, misplaced, and homeless cats and dogs until they can be placed in permanent homes. They also provide education to pet owners and the public about overpopulation and pet care. All animals are rabies vaccinated, micro-chipped, and spayed/neutered before they can be adopted.

TAPS can be found online at www.tapsshelter.org.

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