

Organizers 'thrilled' with PAWS at the SARC



By Jake Courtepatte

Normally reserved for ice skates and sneakers, the surface of the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex on Saturday was instead reserved the paws of man's four-legged best friend.

The third annual PAWS event, run by the Town of Aurora for dogs and dog-lovers alike, went off without a hitch in its first-ever indoor production.

Well-timed to coincide with 'Responsible Pet Owner Month', organizer and Town of Aurora Facility Coordinator Louise Dyer said the decision to move the event inside seemed to pay off for the dozens of vendors and hundreds of participants.

'Holding it at the arena gives us the chance to not only allow our vendors ample space, but to show off the events sponsors, who are instrumental in putting an event like this together in the first place,' said Dyer, pointing out the Pfaff Motors vehicles on the arena floor.

Using the vehicles to show pet owners how to get their dogs in and out of the car, Dyer said it was key to marry the ideas of sponsorship as well as the ultimate goal of orientation in the event.

'It's all a key part of pet ownership. Canadian Tire is also a huge sponsor, as well as getting the names of local pet businesses out there through the vendors and sponsorships.'

Dyer said she was 'thrilled' about the turnout for the event.

'Even though it's technically the third year of the event, we are considering this our first year.'

With an initial goal of procuring twenty vendors, the organizing team, which included Dyer and Animal Control Officer Brad Dewar as well as dozens of volunteers, was able to round up 44 vendors in total to fill the floor.

This year also marked the first year of partnering with RuffSport, a travelling training and agility company based out of New Tecumseth. Their team of dogs kept guests entertained with live demonstrations of racing, jumping, and obedience throughout the day.

'We interviewed a handful of animal organizations,' said Dyer. 'These guys were hands-down the best. We're hoping to expand upon that idea next year.'

If all goes well, according to Dyer, next year's event will have two separate, but connected facilities, one each for the vendors and for entertainment.

'The plan is to grow the event every year from here on out.'