

Paws in the SARC gives your dog the chance to shine

By Brock Weir

If you've ever watched dogs blaze a path to glory through an agility course, or make a splash with some diving and wondered why your four-legged friend can't do the same, you'll have a chance to see how your pooch measures up this weekend at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex.

The Town of Aurora will host the second annual, free admission Paws in the SARC this Saturday and Sunday ? an extra day added this year for added attraction.

Doors open May 11 at 10 a.m. with a day of vendors and entertainment through 6 p.m. Sunday, however, will be a day dedicated to entertainment ? showcasing dog shows and giving local dogs the opportunity to hold their own.

?Last year was our first event and it was a great success,? says Brad Dewar, Supervisor of Animal Services for Aurora, Newmarket and Georgina. ?We saw more than 600 people in attendance and moving forward we would take the opportunity to introduce a little bit more this year and see how our communities respond to the additions.

?We have dedicated May 11 to our vendors and some of the entertainment, with Aqua Dog Dock Jumping, which is a combination of their competition as well as opening the door to community members to allow their pets to try the dock diving. We'll also have a dog luring course, which is something open to the public to try.?

This year's Paws in the SARC will be spread over two arenas, one of which will be dedicated to entertainment and the other left to vendors and community partners.

Sunday's day of entertainment will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with more dock diving and other agility performances.

?It is a great opportunity to see something different, something we don't always see within our community, and it is amazing to watch and see how these dogs just thoroughly enjoy this type of activity,? says Mr. Dewar. ?It is pretty amazing to see how high they can actually jump.?

Part of the reasons behind the decision to separate the vendors from the entertainment was that dogs can get very excited in loud environments. Mr. Dewar says it was important for organizers to strike the right balance between vendors and dogs.

In addition to

entertainment and learning about local businesses that cater to pets, Paws in the SARC is also an opportunity for the Town's Bylaw Department to underscore the importance of what Mr. Dewar describes as responsible pet ownership and ?debunking any myths? that might surround pet licensing.

?We want to help our community understand that when your pets are licensed, the reason why they need to be licenced and [have that license] affixed to their collars is in the off chance your pet does get away from you ? such as if the wind opens up a gate ? that, as officers, we're able to find your pet and we're able to get it back home as quickly as possible. When your pet is licensed and does have its tag on, the officer doesn't take your dog to the shelter; we'll contact the owner right away and get the dog back home. It's a benefit to the animal because they get reunited with their owners as quickly as possible, but it is also a benefit to the owners because they don't have to drive to a shelter and they don't have to pay pound fees.?

Although Paws in the SARC is now entering its second year, this is a year of firsts for the local Animal Control department. It is the first year of a municipal partnership between Aurora, Georgina and Newmarket working together to provide animal services and both additional municipalities are set to take part in this weekend's event.

Also on board are Shades of Hope, the local wildlife rehabilitation provider, and the Ministry of Natural Resources' canine unit, both of which will be on hand to answer questions for the public.

Another first for this event is volunteers will be on hand to collect donations such as blankets, towels, unopened bags of dog and cat food or treats, or even monetary donations to keep local shelters running.

?Anything that can help our shelter provide the best temporary housing for our community animals will be accepted,? says Dewar. ?One of our animal service vehicles will be present and they can load donations right into the vehicle before going into the event.?

For more information, visit www.aurora.ca/pawsinthesarc.