

WOOF TO WOOF 2013

# K-9s and their owners have a dog-gone good time



JON WEIAND/SENTINEL

Dogs and their owners partake in the 'Best Hair Parade' at Woof to Woof in Scotts Valley on Saturday.

## Event benefits Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

*Events*  
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SCOTTS VALLEY — Scotts Valley went to the dogs Saturday as dozens of canines cruised around the Skypark soccer field for the ninth annual Woof to Woof. A fundraiser for the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Santa Cruz, the event drew canines and their companions from all over the county and beyond.

Dogs of all sizes, shapes, ages, breeds and mixes wandered around with their owners, snacking on dog treats given away at many of the vendors' booths, and socializing with other canines at the watering stations. Their two-legged companions entered their best friends in dog parades, purchased raffle tickets, met with like-minded animal lovers and perused the display booths rimming the field.

The event has grown in popularity each year, according to Nels Westman, a board member for the Vista Center and co-founder of the Woof to Woof with his wife, Susan.

"The Vista Center was looking for an idea for fundraising nine years ago, and we knew nothing is more popular in Santa Cruz County than dogs," said Westman. "Santa Cruz has the Wharf to Wharf, so we have the Woof to Woof."

This year's event is expected to bring in \$35,000 for the Vista Center, said executive director Pam Brandin. "It's wonderful and it also raises awareness," Brandin said. "We put it (the proceeds)

into our operations budget to provide services in Santa Cruz County."

The Vista Center is a nonprofit organization that empowers individuals with vision impairments to embrace life to the fullest. It offers vision exams, classes in adaptive daily living skills, support groups, counseling, instruction in braille and other services. The Santa Cruz center also operates a consumer store that provides products that help clients adapt to life following their vision loss.

The Guide Dogs for the Blind had an informational booth set up to let people know about their program. Cheryl Anderson, who heads the Santa Cruz County chapter, teaches people how to train guide dogs.

Anderson, who has been involved with the organization for 25 years, and her husband Art Anderson talked to people about how guide dogs can improve the life of the visually impaired while their yellow labs Pompeii and Rosella napped.

"It changes their lives, because they can go out into society," said Art Anderson. "These dogs are placed by Guide Dogs for the Blind at no cost to the blind. It's all free, which is pretty awesome."

Other booths provided information about dog training services, pet portraits, dog supplements, canine massage, pet therapy, vet services and other dog related products. Dogs were drawn to the Kindred Spirit dog training booth by the cake made out of frozen dog food, biscuits and broth set out

for them to sample.

"This is dog tested and dog approved," said Lori Katz, as she watched a dog take a taste of her creation. Katz, who gave a demonstration on dog training at the event, said she's been participating in the Woof to Woof since its inception.

"It's such a good cause, and it's so much fun to participate," Katz said. "And it's nice to see the positive relationships people have with their animals."

The Woof to Woof also featured individuals and agencies looking for people interested in adopting dogs. Cathy Townsend, a volunteer with the Center for Animal Protection and Education, more commonly known as CAPE, strolled around the field with Walter and Peter, two small young dogs from the same litter who had been together all their lives.

"I came here looking for a home for them together," said Townsend, who is fostering the pups.

Many others came to the Woof to Woof primarily to have fun with their dogs. Trish Branges of Ben Lomond, who visits the Scotts Valley Dog Park regularly to socialize with like minded individuals while her dogs play, was enjoying the afternoon. Her pug, Abby, whom she adopted from the Central Coast Pug Rescue service, was relaxing with volunteers in the booth while Branges walked Kira, her 9-month-old Boxer and American Bull Dog Mix.

"I just like being around dog people," Branges said. "Dog people are great."

6-2-13