



Strutting Ahead Toward *Strut Your Mutt*

Volunteers mobilize to promote adoptions

By Julie Stuart – *Strut Your Mutt* coordinator

So, here we are, sitting in a quiet corner of a busy Salt Lake City restaurant, starting to plan this year's *Strut Your Mutt*. We've been doing quite well, and have just gotten around to deciding some of the Finish Line contests (Best Dressed Dog, Biggest Lap Dog, Dog with Waggingest Tail, etc.) when someone chimes in with: "How about a prize for the pooch with the best trained owner?" The meeting promptly dissolves into uncontrolled hilarity, with confessions all round of all the things our dogs at home have trained us to do.

Strut Your Mutt is a fundraising run for dogs and their people that's scheduled for May 17. Our volunteer team includes Karen, marketing director of a Utah bank; Mark, a regional sales director for NAPA auto parts; Janet, a graphic designer who does promotional material for Universal Studios; and Sara, a university student. Each of us brings at least two things to a volunteer meeting: professional expertise and a love of animals.

Before we dissolved into hilarity, we did, at least, manage to cover most of the practical stuff:



Last year, we organized everything except the weather!

- 🐾 Handling registrations for the run. ("No, Ma'am, horses can't take part.")
- 🐾 Designing and printing brochures and posters.
- 🐾 Getting promotional materials out. ("KSL-TV says they'll do about 50 spots for us. Williams & Rockwood ad agency is doing the creative." *Cheers all round!*)
- 🐾 Setting out the course (a tricky matter on city streets; large number of poop scoops needed).
- 🐾 Recruiting volunteers, raising sponsorships, and getting corporate contributions.
- 🐾 Planning pre-event promotions (KUMT-FM promotional truck at PETsMART stores).

I have a marketing background myself, but I never realized how much work can go into an event like this if it's going to be a real success. All of us on the team have agreed that it's worth every minute when you think about what it's for. This year's *Strut Your Mutt* is a fund raiser for the adoption program here in our home state of Utah.

Our aim is to bring an end to the need for killing any homeless animals in shelters anywhere in the state. This would take a big change in public awareness, as well as major cooperation between all the shelters, spay/neuter programs, adoption services, and animal control authorities.

So, please keep us in your thoughts. What a triumph for the animals this would be!

We'll keep you posted in this column. If you'd like to take part in our activities, please call me at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, or our Salt Lake City number (801) 297-2194. And if you're thinking of doing something similar in your own home state, city, or neighborhood, let me know and I'll be happy to keep you up-to-date with what works and what doesn't work as we progress.

Julie Stuart is descended from Charles Stuart, King of England. King Charles was executed in 1649 for insisting on the divine right of kings – especially at volunteer meetings.



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News from Best Friends



Strut Your Mutt!

By Beth Elmer

"Ready, set, STRUT YOUR MUTT!"

The police sirens screamed, their motors revved, and they led the participants in the start of the second annual Strut Your Mutt.

Nothing prepares you for the sight of 700 dogs careening around a street corner, and heading straight for you. As pre-promotional leader for Strut Your Mutt, I knew we were expecting lots of dogs and their people to be walking and running in support of the animals at Best Friends. But nothing could possibly come close to the breathtaking experience of watching the result of all my hard work come charging at me in a sea of legs and tails. And so many of them!

I suspect it had much the same effect on Mayor Deedee



Antoine "Big Dawg" Carr of the Utah Jazz in a promotional TV spot for Strut Your Mutt.

Corradini. The mayor of Salt Lake City was still standing on the folding chair after starting the race. I saw her expression and went over to help her down...but there was nowhere to step. There were dogs everywhere!

I loved this race. It was humorous and heartwarming at the same time. My favorite was the basset hound and his owner. The two-mile course to Liberty Park and back must have gotten a little strenuous

for the low-slung dog, as the owner carried him to within five feet of the finish line. Then it was time to finish the race under his own power, and the dog wobbled over the finish line just ahead of a Chihuahua.

A team of working dogs pulled a sort of sled-on-wheels over the finish line. In the sled was a young, physically disabled child – all smiles. He wasn't the only one grinning.

If the dachshund contingent gets any larger next year, they may get their own zip code. I thought my next door neighbor was a little strange. Carol has three of the little wieners. I figured she might have a corner on the market, but I was wrong. There was a small army advancing on the finish line. (Incidentally, they crossed the line ahead of the St. Bernard. Don't mess with them!)

The much coveted Golden Biscuit award, for the corporate team raising the most funds for the event, went to Questar, who came to the race in matching burgundy T-shirts, and who raised \$2,500 for the animals.

Strut Your Mutt is a family affair. I cheered my son across the finish line in fifth place (first place in the "too dense to wear shoes" category) and watched a small toddler being pulled in a red wagon by a proud set of parents. Just before the finish line, Dad scooped the child out of the wagon, and handed the dog's leash to the young girl. Then he stepped across the finish line, and encouraged dog and daughter to complete the race. They crossed in the cutest tangle of leash, legs, and laughs. I'll bet this family continues to teach compassion and love for animals in their home.

I guess that's what touches me the most. I was surrounded by more than 900 people who love animals as much as I do; people who recognize animals as special and valuable. Animals add so much to our lives as companions and healers. It's nice to give something back to them. 🐾



2001 NO MORE HOMELESS PETS

Start your own 2001: No More Homeless Pets program

You can help bring an end to the killing of homeless animals by starting or joining a spay/neuter or foster/adoption program in your own neighborhood.

For a **2001: No More Homeless Pets** folder, plus regular news updates, please write, fax, or e-mail Best Friends.

A donation of \$5 will help cover the cost of printing and mailing the folder.