

## Dog days of autumn

### 'Bark in Park' all about pets

By: Bitsy Kemper  
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Jessie jumps high for a catch in a game of Frisbee with owner Peter Campbell on Sunday at the fourth annual "Bark in Community Park" in El Dorado Hills. Robert Scott/The Telegraph



Talk about barking up the right tree. More than 400 participants at Sunday's fourth annual Bark in Community Park in El Dorado Hills turned out for a doggone productive day.

The non-profit kicked off the day with about 100 people and their pets registering for the Furry Friends Fitness Walk, a PAWED fundraiser. Proceeds from the event went to a mobile spay/neuter and disaster response clinic.

Heidi Valenzuela's Chihuahuas made her trip from Sacramento profitable. The dog owner read about the event on Craig's List. Thanks to her 1½-pound dog Electra, and just 2-pound Peanut, both winners of the "smallest dog" contest, Valenzuela went home with a large Starbuck's gift basket and jar of dog treats.

Every dog and dog owner went home with something, from the gift bags upon registration to the ample free samples.

"We went through about 150 free toys and at least a hundred pet food samples within the first three hours," said Matt Sinclair, a Folsom Petsmart employee.

Some owners went home with free dog obedience lessons. CompliantK9 owner Ann King offered on-the-spot training tips and tricks.

"One woman came by with a 6-month-old lab that immediately jumped up and plowed me on the chest," King said. "I spent 10 minutes demonstrating the proper way to correct it, let her spend a few minutes on it, and the woman was so excited you'd think she won the lottery. It was a trigger for her to do more training."

To another owner, King explained the difference between training a behavior and the need to manage a pet's environment. A Whippet that continually gets into the owner's peanut butter, for example, is doing what comes naturally - enjoying a treat.

"You can't really make her understand that one food is off limits but other foods in the pantry aren't," King said. "It's a matter of managing the environment."

King came prepared with Kobe steak in her training bag to offer dogs walking by.

"Many dogs were over-stimulated," King said. "Most dogs aren't used to being on leash, and are not used to seeing so many people, to the point many of them didn't eat." King was overall impressed with the other 36 vendors. She was happy to add value to the event, and said she had seen a lot of traffic in her tent.

Like with Kathi Kridler-Bartlett, who owns a pooper-scooper business, they will wait and see if the four-legged foot traffic will turn into more business.

"A lot of people seem interested (in our service)," Kridler-Bartlett said. "We'll see."

Loran Wagener, who recently opened his own scooping service, was hoping to both build awareness and his client base.

"Most of my current customers found out about me from my website," said The Dung Beetle owner and fulltime landscaper.

First-time Bark in Community Park vendor Melissa Levy, owner of designbymelissa.com, said business had been very good for her at the event. Levy makes original dog-themed note cards, jewelry, key chains, and matching people/dog outfits. "It's been a perfect day, we've had fun and everyone is enjoying themselves," Levy said.

Marla Spector came from Cameron Park when her friend called from the event and told her to come right down. She hopped in the car with dog Petunia, her daughter, and son, to look at the other dogs and check out the vendors. The family had to scoot out of the way when Chance, the trained search and rescue dog, went flying by looking for a person hidden in the woods. The mock hunt was part of the El Dorado County Search and Rescue demonstration, one of five sets of demonstrations throughout the day.

"It's been a really good day, I'm very impressed with attendance and feedback," said Rebecca Velasquez, employee of the El Dorado Hills CSD that put on the event. "Everyone is saying how good it is this year."

Ken and Robin Mizell, owners of event co-sponsor Bark Avenue, said they participated with a tent to build more awareness of their new shop at Town Center. "We've had great turnout," Robin said. "A great day of dog."