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local news

A fur piece

Some mighty heroic dogs will lead their humans on a July 27 walk to raise funds for the PWA Foundation

story and photos by Will O'Bryan

From Lassie to Under Dog, Rin Tin Tin to Scooby Doo, dogs have always made wonderful heroes. On Sunday, July 27, in Laurelhurst Park, they'll get another opportunity to win admiration at the fourth Best Friends Walk for Friends.

The pledge walk, hosted by Darcelle XV, is a benefit dog walk for the Friends of People with AIDS Foundation. There will also be various booths on site and the ADAPT Canine Confidence Course.

The seven-year-old foundation, a local, volunteer, nonprofit organization, seeks to improve the quality of life for people living with AIDS. Some of the services the foundation provides are emergency food, emergency travel and lodging expenses to unite people with AIDS and their loved ones, and cremation services. The foundation also provides assistance to people with AIDS who would otherwise have to give up their pets for financial reasons. While the foundation has funds earmarked for specific purposes, it is sometimes flexible—its main goal is to help people with AIDS maintain a dignified, fulfilling quality of life.

The Best Friends Walk is the foundation's biggest fund-raising event, but growth over the past four years has been slow. Corey Baker, foundation chairman, says he hopes that the walk will become popular enough to garner a major corporate sponsor, which would provide the foundation with a greater measure of security. Current event sponsors include the DocuMart on Southwest Macadam, Formit Print Management, *Just Out*, Land O'Lakes, Portland Kennel Club and Oregon Entertainment.

The walk continues to raise more money each year, but the number of attendees hasn't kept pace. The low turnout is what keeps the major sponsors away, Baker says.

"I would hope people would start coming out," Baker laments, explaining that the event seems to have peaked at about 150 participants. He adds that many more people donate money to the event than actually participate. He'll be pleased, he says, if this year's walk can muster a crowd of 300 to 400.

Nevertheless, Baker admits that with the recent medical advances in combating HIV, it's getting harder to find support for AIDS charities. Ironically, with many of the foundation's clients becoming healthier, its outlay for services has gone up, necessitating an increase in funding. One example Baker gives is that of buying dress work clothes.

"We never had to buy a suit before," he says, explaining that whereas the foundation once primarily held a hospice-like role, it now often works to help clients rebuild their lives.

As for the new protease inhibitors, Baker notes, "There are still a lot of people who can't take these drugs."

And Baker doesn't want them to fall through the cracks.

The 1996 walk raised roughly \$12,000 for the foundation, not including park fees and other expenses associated with the event. (Compare that to the first walk, which brought in about \$900.) But executing the event is more than just a walk in the park—planning begins in January.

"It's been slow and hard," Baker says. "It's a tremendous amount of work."

With luck, a large sponsor may come into the fray. Baker says that might relieve some of the sense of immediacy associated with fund raising: "It takes a lot of energy. It would be nice to be able to rest once."

Mutt shots

Gracie, Australian Shepherd/Labrador, 80 lbs.

Just a baby at one year, obviously this will be Gracie's first Best Friends walk. This excitable dog, who spends her days romping in the back yard with her pal Rachel, is looking forward to the walk so she can try out her new hobby: paw shaking.



Rachel, Black German Shepherd, 80 lbs.

Rachel, Gracie's "live-in," is a bit more subdued at 8 years old. This year's walk will be Rachel's third.

Sasha, Husky/German Shepherd/Who knows? 110 lbs.

This big boy is a pussy cat—at least that's what his feline housemates, Whoopie and Homer, like to think. While he barely squeaked through obedience school with a "gentleman's D," Sasha is rumored to be good with children; at least, he hasn't eaten one yet. Sasha will probably be on loan for the walk.



Stella, Cocker Spaniel, 27 lbs.

Ten-year-old Stella may not have any teeth left, but she can still gum her favorite treat: bread from Bread and Ink. It must have secret properties, as she's "still going strong," says her human roommate. A well-seasoned veteran, this will be Stella's fourth Best Friends walk.

Shelby, Wire Fox Terrier, 15 lbs.

Shelby, 11, will be counting on the kindness of a stranger as she plans to be a loaner dog for the walk. She hopes potential walkers won't turn their noses up at her graying snout, as she's still full of pep.



Dottie, Jack Russell Terrier, 15 lbs.

Dottie, 9, veteran of the first three Best Friends walks, enters retirement this year. According to her caretaker, being petted by strangers has begun to trigger incontinence, which leads her to shy away from large crowds. Hats off to Dottie for her years of service to the community.

(Thanks to owners Jerry McBride, Bob Schwartz, Oliver Bankester Jr., David Diehnell and Bill Space.)

Registration for Best Friends Walk for Friends is at 9 am; the walk begins at 10 am. Sign-up/sponsor sheets are available at Pet Set, Northwest Animal Clinic, Man's Best Friend, Rose City Veterinary Hospital and Balloons on Broadway. For more details, to volunteer, or if you'd like to borrow a dog to participate, call 245-7428.