

Three new breeds are ready to run with Westminster pack

By JENNIFER PELTZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A winsome but hardworking Hungarian herding dog, a swift and ancient African hound and a playful, fur-free terrier are about to get their first shot at the most famous U.S. canine championship.

The pumi, the sloughi and the American hairless terrier will be newcomers at this month's Westminster Kennel Club dog show, competing among as many as 202 breeds and varieties for the coveted best in show award.

More than 2,800 dogs are expected at the show, set for Feb. 11, 13 and 14. Besides the traditional breed judging, it has added agility and obedience competitions and a non-competitive "meet the breeds" event in recent years.

This year's "meet the breeds" even will include some really rare breeds for a dog show: pedigreed cats. Felines were featured when the event was held separately from Westminster a few years ago, but their return this year gives them a chance to share the spotlight of the 140-year-old dog show.

"The club has maintained its traditions while expanding to accommodate an ever-changing, dog-loving public," Westminster spokeswoman Gail Miller Bisher said at a Madison Square Garden news conference Monday previewing the show.

This year's new breeds vary from the American hairless terrier, a compact canine developed in the American South in the 1970s, to the lanky sloughi, which dates back thousands of years in North Africa, according to its fanciers.

Then there's the pumi (pronounced POOM'-ee), which has a "whimsical expression" built right into the standards,



AP Photos/Bebeto Matthews
Candy, 2, left, Rodney, 7, center, and Johnny, 2, three American hairless terrier breeds owned by Virginia's Sue Medhurst are shown at a news conference on Monday in New York. The dogs are among three new breeds competing in the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show at Madison Square Garden.



AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews
LEFT: Toby, 5, left, and Izzy, 4, both sloughi breed from Illinois owners, are pictured Monday in New York. RIGHT: Zsa Zsa, a pumi breed owned by Nancy Nelson from Norwalk, Conn., is shown at a press conference, Monday in New York.

or official judging guidelines, for the bushy-coated, curly-tailed, big-eared breed. Owners hear "your dog's so CUTE!" so often that they've turned it into an acronym.

"We say they're 'Curious,' 'Unique,' 'Tenacious' and 'Energetic,'" Nancy Nelson of Norwalk, Connecticut, said as

her 5-year-old pumi, Zsa Zsa, lent a paw to the gathering.

But prospective owners need to consider that the pumi, originally bred to herd cattle and other animals, needs more activity than simple walks, Nelson said.

The sloughi (pronounced SLOO'-ghee), or Arabian

greyhound, is also an athletic dog, with a history of hunting game as big as gazelles. Sloughis retain a yen for chasing yard animals and often are shy with strangers, but they bond closely with their human families as pets, says owner Julie tenBensel of Bolingbrook, Illinois.



A card player studies her hand during a bridge game at a restaurant in St. Paul, Minn.

Jean Pieri
Pioneer Press

Games, crafts and other activities may safeguard aging brain

By LINDSEY TANNER
Associated Press

ONLINE

Journal: <http://bit.ly/2kMWXU9>

CHICAGO — Even in your 70s and beyond, simple activities including web-surfing, playing bridge and socializing can stave off mental decline, new research says.

Benefits were greatest in computer users and in those without a gene variation linked with Alzheimer's disease. But even among seniors with that trait, mental decline that sometimes precedes dementia was less common among those who engaged in mind-stimulating activities.

The results don't apply to costly, computer-based games that purport to keep the brain sharp — those were not studied. The benefits were found from activities that many seniors have access to.

"They don't have to spend their life savings" on fancy gadgets, said Dr. Yonas Geda, the study's senior author and a neurologist at the Mayo Clinic's Scottsdale, Arizona, campus.

The study was published Monday in the journal JAMA Neurology. The researchers noted that the statistical link they found with reduced risk does not prove the activities were responsible.

Still, said Heather Snyder of the Alzheimer's Association, the results support the idea that "being engaged mentally is good for brain health."

The study looked at five types of activities that are

thought to help keep the mind sharp: computer use; making crafts; playing games including chess or bridge; going to movies or other types of socializing; and reading books. The idea was to see if these activities could help prevent mild cognitive impairment. That condition involves problems with memory, thinking and attention that don't interfere much with daily life but which increase risks for developing Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

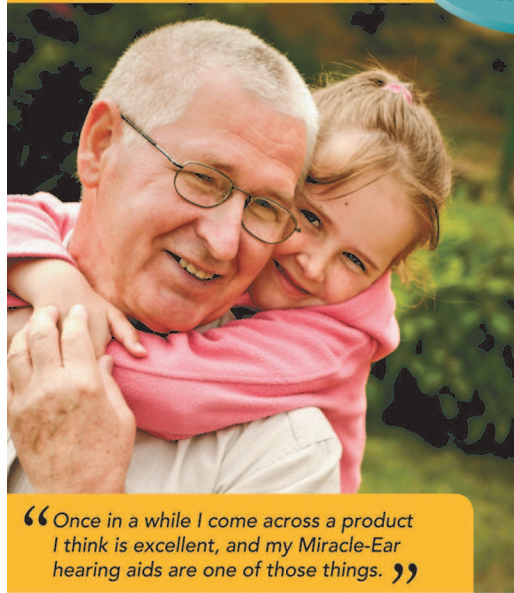
Almost 2,000 adults aged 70 to 93 without any memory problems participated. They lived in Minnesota's Olmsted County, where the Mayo Clinic in Rochester is located.

They were asked whether they had engaged in any of the five activities during the previous year and if so, how often. They were tested for the condition in mental exams at the beginning and every 15 months for about four years. During that time, 456 study participants developed the mild impairment.

Analysis found a protective effect from each activity except for reading books. Study participants who engaged in any of the other activities at least once weekly were 20 percent to 30 percent less likely to develop the condition over the four years than those who never did those activities.

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