

Wagging on without Muttzanita

Tillamook animal advocates raise money in the absence of popular festival

BY ZOË BUCHLI

Although organizers cancelled Manzanita's annual canine festival, Muttzanita, for a second year in a row, fundraising efforts to support local animal rescue efforts are thriving in Tillamook County.

Four Paws on the Beach and Animal Haven Rescue have raised about \$7,000 since September to provide funding for animal needs along the North Coast.

Matt Ruona co-owns Manzanita's dog and cat supply boutique, Four Paws on the Beach, with his wife, Meghan, and has been one of the people spearheading fundraising. The couple also owns a second Four Paws on the Beach location in Cannon Beach.

Muttzanita is a yearly fundraiser to celebrate canines. It has been put on for 13 years, and attracts hundreds of people from all the North Coast every year, according to Ruona.

While the event typically is held the weekend after Labor Day, it was canceled in 2020 and again in 2021 after the Manzanita community decided to put off events due to

the pandemic.

The festival was initially started by the previous owners of Four Paws on the Beach. Over time, it has transitioned into a fundraiser for Animal Haven by the Sea Rescue, the north Tillamook County animal rescue.

"In the economic times and the community we live in there's tremendous need for folks where they have animals but can't put food in front of them or have medical procedures done," Ruona said.

Animal Haven is a one-stop for animal needs in northern Tillamook County. The nonprofit, supported by local volunteers, gives aid to animals that are lost or in need of food, housing or medical attention. The nonprofit operates multiple pet food banks to ensure animals always have access to food, and keeps an open tab at Nehalem Animal Healing to help individuals in need to cover their vet costs.

Early in the planning process for the 2021 Muttzanita event, the fundraising goal was \$10,000. When the event was canceled, Ruona didn't know how it would be possible to still meet the fundraising goal. In September, Four Paws hosted silent auctions and put out a donation jar that brought in some money.

The fundraising efforts continued through



The 2019 Muttzanita parade, led by the 2019 Mayor of Muttzanita, 'Stella'

October with more auction items, goodie bags and increased publicity efforts. More people started coming in with cash donations, and eventually the owner of the Bayway Tavern in Nehalem wrote two separate \$1,000 checks.

"That was a huge boost, the owner, Suzie Gruver, has been one of our top sponsors," Ruona said. "The fact that she did that on her own was just remarkable."

Four Paws on the Beach raised around \$5,000 and Animal Haven raised about \$2,000, a combined \$7,000 for the year, surpassing what Ruona thought might be possible without Muttzanita.

Ruona noted that it's wonderful to see the outpouring of support from people in the Manzanita and Nehalem area.

"The community really stepped up and did some amazing things," he said, and added that everyone rallied to help raise the money.

Ruona said the shelter's founder and director, Lee Blackmon, is thankful for the support.

"(Blackmon) was so excited by the fact he was able to get some of the supplies and repair materials for some of the facilities he has," Ruona said. "Temporarily, it's really taken the burden off of him financially."

Ruona isn't sure what 2022 will hold in terms of the festival, but is hopeful it can return next year.

"We feel lucky we can be a conduit for it," Ruona continued. "This has been one of the great rewards of running Four Paws, is that Muttzanita has been part and parcel of it."

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