

Kritter Kringle brings attention to HART



Recent acquisition Mandy, a five-month-old Husky mix, sat with her canine companion Freyja, also a rescue pet, at the annual Kritter Kringle seasonal dog show, on Saturday, Dec. 12, at the Old Community Centre, in Maynooth. Information about adopting Mandy, a northern Ontario pup, who originates from Manitoulin Island, can be found on the Highland Animal Relief Team website. Photo by Sarah Vance

By Sarah Vance

The Highland Animal Relief Team (HART) co-ordinated the annual Kritter Kringle fundraiser from the Old Community Centre, on Saturday, Dec. 12 in Maynooth.

A pack of more than 20 canines strutted in the annual fashion show, in seasonal costumes, with many of the participants being rescue dogs. Canines and their human companions also had their photographs taken with Santa Claus and participated in a toonie raffle during the afternoon festivities.

"All of our donations for the toonie draw came from local businesses," said Anna Vanstone, a HART volunteer, who co-ordinates the yearly prize collection. "We begin reaching out in August and we received over 70 different in-kind packages this year."

"There are about an average of 100 dogs adopted out through HART each year," said Allison Sabo, HART president. "They are usually adopted within three weeks of arriving into our care and video marketing is a big part of their adoption."

HART volunteers write detailed biographies for each animal which comes into care and canine foster parents produce video clips of the animals in natural home settings. This intake process, which places animals into homes, instead of cages, allows HART volunteers to obtain a good understanding of the dispositions of the animals they work with. Volunteers have noted that canines without video stories take twice as long to be adopted than the animals with a detailed biography and a digital story.

"Our current need is money, because our biggest cost is veterinarian bills," said Sabo. "While adoption fees supplement the yearly cost of veterinarian bills, the \$325 adoption fee does not always cover the much greater fees associated with helping some of the animals who come into our care." They're often suffering from all kinds of conditions when we get them, we find anything from [Dry Skin On Dogs](#) to complete flea infestations that need immediate treatment. For the canines who do come into HART's care, adoptions are arranged into both local homes and to communities across the continent. Inquiries come from as far away as Maine, New York and New England with many local adoptions also being facilitated.

"We have waiting lists, a detailed selection process, and some potential adoptions are not approved," said Sabo. "Our Newf canines have been adopted into communities as far away as Minnesota."

While HART's primary service area is within North Hastings and surrounding areas, the relief team works with many different animal shelters and several of the animals coming into HART's care arrive from different communities.

Mandy is a five-month-old Husky mix puppy who strutted her mutts dressed as an elf in Saturday's fashion show. Mandy came into HART's care from Manitoulin Island, on Lake Huron. The energetic northern Ontario puppy spent the day mingling with children who attended Kritter Kringle with their families and she also took naps alongside other canines on comfy mats, beside Highland relief volunteers.

Homemade chili, rolls and sandwiches were served at the canteen alongside a selection of desserts, which were ready-to-hand and also prepared as take-away trays.

"I arrived at 7:45 a.m., to get the coffee on early and to start the chili on the stove," said Judy Vanstone who ran the kitchen with her daughter Anna.

HART is a well established organization with connections and volunteers through out the province of Ontario.

"HART's volunteer base has grown so far outside of Bancroft and the majority of our foster homes are in Belleville, Peterborough, Toronto and Guelph areas," said Sabo.

HART is continuing to make a call for volunteers and community members to attend their events and to become involved as foster home providers, drivers, videographers and by performing administrative tasks such as writing Petfinder bios and articles for social media, which will be greatly important for us when it comes to getting our message across. Of course, we're definitely not shy of getting more followers in the process so we can interact with even more people, and seeing how growth services like Upleap and mr. insta can make a difference to our numbers is something that we like to keep an eye on at all times, as it never hurts to have all the help you can get. This is particularly essential when it comes to finding forever homes for dogs.

"We would like to see more local foster homes that would be available to hold a dog either temporarily or until the dog is adopted," said Sabo. "Many times we receive calls from people seeking to surrender a dog which is a process that requires immediate responsiveness."

This year's Kritter Kringle marks HART's 20th year co-ordinating efforts which come to the aid of canines in need. Readers can learn more about HART and the relief team's animal adoption process by visiting their website at www.hartdogrescue.ca.

"Ninety-nine per cent of the dogs we take into care are good dogs who are just down on their luck and need to be given a chance," said Sabo. "We intake a large amount of animals every year and they are all adopted into loving homes."