

Barking up the red carpet: pooches to parade for PTSD support dogs

Erin McCracken

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Red carpet? Check. Treats for pooches? Check. Four-legged friends in costume? That's where you and your dog come in.

All that's needed for Sept. 10 are canines and their human companions to come from far and wide for the inaugural K9s on the Katwalk fashion show for dogs in Alta Vista.

The idea, which Jim Puskas said is relatively unique to Ottawa, was forged earlier this year out of a desire for the Kiwanis Club of Rideau to give back to the community that the club has moved into over the past year.

"We're trying to really connect with our community," said Puskas, president of the club, which meets at the Maplewood Retirement Community in Riverview Park the first and third Thursday of every month at noon.

"It works in both directions, that by making ourselves relevant to the community we're able to grow
"At the same time, you need to be able to relate to that community and see 'What does this comm

With the fashion show right around the corner, he's hoping that with enough community support f
will continue to grow in the coming years into an attraction that can't be missed.

"I think it's unique," Puskas said of the concept. "There have been dog fashion shows, but I have
around here."

Funds raised will allow Boots 4 Pups, the Ottawa chapter of the Citadel Canine Society, to help ra
and training of rescue dogs for military veterans and first responders suffering from post-traumatic
occupational stress injuries.

Not every dog rescued from an animal shelter makes the cut, but for those that do, the cost works
\$5,000. The Citadel has 50 certified dog trainers it relies on across the country.

"It helps us with our cause and our mission here at Boots 4 Pups," said Barbara Boucher, director
4 Pups, which has about 14 volunteers who help with fundraising events. "Everything we do is all

There is growing demand for these support dogs across the country. Two canines have already b
a third in the works, said Boucher.

And that is where community support and business sponsorships prove to be essential ingredien
Puskas' idea for the fashion show immediately piqued her interest and they've been working toge

"Every cent counts," said Boucher.



Jim Puskas, president of the Boots 4 Pups, which generates attention for support dogs, generate attention outside of Herongate's PetSmart. chihuahua Porshia.

The fashion show, which is open to everyone whether or not they own a dog, will feature door prizes, an on-site photographer on Sept. 10, from 2 to 4 p.m. A silent auction will get underway at 1:30 p.m. Cash donations are accepted.

Admission to the event is \$10 for adults and children get in for free. There will be prizes for best costume, most imaginative outfit and most enthusiastic pooch.

Registration for pets taking part in the fashion show is \$20 at the door. Entry forms are available at the event, on the 'upcoming events' page or by calling Jim Puskas at 613-746-1907.

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