

Pets take over Bridge Street in Bancroft

By Nate Smelle

Defying the soggy weather forecasted for Saturday, May 10 the sun shone brightly upon the town's animal lovers and their four-legged friends gathered on Bridge Street in downtown Bancroft for the first ever Bancroft Pet Fest. Taking advantage of the bridge closure and the temporarily carless street the event was organized by the BBIA and local merchants to encourage people to spend time downtown and especially spend money in the businesses in the vicinity of the closure.

"It sends a message to groups in the community that the BBIA and the Town are open to using unique and creative ways of generating activity on the street," said Councillor and chairman of the BBIA Peter Whitehead.

"Whether it's because I think it's great to see other groups step up. That's what it's all about. The BBIA cannot do it all. We need the community and the business community in particular to help out."

"We are trying to take what could possibly be seen as a negative [the bridge closure] and turn it into a positive," added executive director of the BBIA Chris Drost.

"That's the whole premise of this series of events. We have another one coming up next weekend."

On Saturday, May 17 the BBIA and the Bancroft Eatery and Brew Pub will be taking it to the streets of the Bancroft theatre district with their Ice Breaker Street Dance.

The Pet Fest was also intended to give a helping hand to local animal rescue organizations. Home Again animal shelter was one of the animal welfare organizations taking part in the furry festival.

While the meteorologist may have made a wrong call on the predicted rainfall, they got it right in terms of the strong winds that persisted throughout most of the day. The winds were so strong at times that Home Again volunteer and foster pet-parent Mary Freeman actually had to stand holding the tent from going airborne. Although the wind made for a more physical day than usual of volunteering with the group, she was happy to be able to help out her fuzzy friends in need.

"I have been fostering animals for a year now," said Freeman.

"In that time I have fostered 13 different dogs. There always seems to be a need to find homes for animals."

The paparazzi also had their work cut out for them at the festival as they competed with the crowds, trying to get a shot of celebrity pig...Sparky. Known best for his starring role in the TELUS commercials he is now retired and living with his co-managers Dave and Beverly Nauls in Coe Hill.

"We have had pet pigs for about 25 years and they are amazing," said Dave.

"George Clooney had the same type of pig as Sparky and he said it was the best friend he had because it never squealed on him. He is such a great pet, it's a shame but they won't allow them in some cities, and they are cleaner than dogs. Because he is a vegan and doesn't eat meat you can just rake his droppings into the garden as a fertilizer."

"Oink, oink," Sparky said.

"We have a cat as well and the two of them have really bonded," said Beverly.

"Our cat won't leave him alone. She follows him around and rubs against him while he is eating."

Volunteers from HART and Newf Friends brought some the foster dogs that are in need of permanent and loving adoptive homes.

There were also many previously adopted dogs enjoying the day with their new owners. Both Home Again and HART will be taking part in the BBIA's annual Tailgate Yardsale on Saturday, May 24. Home Again will also be hosting their annual charity golf tournament again this summer at the Bancroft golf course.

For information on how to adopt an animal from HART contact 613-338-3333, and for Home Again call 613-332-5253.