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Don't PAWS on This; Unique Fundraiser Coming to the Lafayette Reservoir

By Diane Claytor



Lafayette's Shelly Valerio and her dog, Curry, will be marching in Saturday's PAWS de Tutu PAWRADE. Photo provided

and event chair. While costumes are certainly not required - even dogs are not required - "we're hoping to have an incredibly visual spectacle of creative costumes. People can - and hopefully will - go a little crazy" when coming up with costume ideas, Silverstone added. Her dogs, Ricky and Lucy, will be there and "you can guess how they'll be dressed," she stated, with a twinkle in her eye.

"We plan to start promptly at 10 a.m.," Silverstone explained, and suggests participants arrive at the Reservoir by 9:30 a.m. to check in and get ready to PAWrade in front of the judges.

Judging the comPAWtition will be Renel Brooks-Moon, public address announcer for the SF Giants (and Major League Baseball's only female public address announcer); Pam Kessler, publisher of Walnut Creek Magazine, and Scott Ostler, the San Francisco Chronicle sports columnist for the last 25 years. Prizes will be awarded, with the grand prize winner receiving a \$500 VISA gift card and \$250 gift basket from Pet Food Express. Refreshments will be available and all human participants will receive a tee-shirt and goodie bag.

Following the comPAWtition, everyone is invited to take a walk around the reservoir before returning to the stage area to learn which innovative and adorable canines get to take home one of the three PAWards.

Coordinated by Diablo Ballet's Teen Board with input and help from Silverstone and Diablo Ballet's Artistic Director, Lauren Jonas, this unique fundraising event benefits PEEK, the only arts education program of its kind offered by a local professional dance company. PEEK provides in-school movement curriculum and free dance performances for students and families in underserved areas; last year it began a program within the Contra Costa County juvenile justice system bringing creative movement classes to incarcerated young women.

In the ballet world, a pas de deux is a dance performed by two dancers. In the world of dogs and the humans who love them, a PAWS de Tutu is a fun-filled beautiful June morning, replete with a dog PAWrade, costume comPAWtition, music, celebrities, prizes and a stroll around the picturesque Lafayette reservoir.

On Saturday, June 18, dogs and their human companions are invited to the Lafayette Reservoir stage at 10 a.m. to walk the red carpet and kick off the PAWS de Tutu event, which benefits Diablo Ballet's PEEK (Performing Arts Education and Enrichment for Kids) outreach programs. Charley Kayle, KOIT radio personality and self-professed dog lover, will emcee the PAWrade of pups and the costume comPAWtition which follows.

"People are encouraged to think 'outside the box,' perhaps even be a little outrageous," said Kerry Silverstone, former Diablo Ballet board member

Teen Board president Marissa Lapointe is so excited about PAWS de Tutu. "Everyone loves dogs," she said. "Who isn't going to want to watch dogs in cute costumes and then walk around the reservoir on a summer morning?"

This feeling is echoed by Isabella Gravano, secretary of the Teen Board and a Miramonte sophomore. "It's a beautiful venue, a fun and unusual event with fantastic prizes and PEEK, which makes a huge difference in the community, will benefit," Gravano said. "It doesn't get much better."

Don't PAWS another minute. To register, go to diabloballet.org. The cost is \$30 for adults, \$20 for those 17 and under.



Edward Steg, Diablo Ballet's PEEK Outreach Associate Director, and his dogs Tess and Zina, are ready for June 18's PAWS de Tutu.

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