

Published June 14, 2017

PAWS de Tutu: A fun PAWrade and ComPAWtition on four legs

By Diane Claytor



There's no place like Paws de Tutu for this group of 2016 participants. Photos Diablo Ballet

A beautiful Saturday morning at the Lafayette Reservoir; dogs in costumes walking the red carpet as they approach the stage, proudly PAWrating across it, PAWsing for the cheers - and laughter - from the audience and, then, of course, waiting for the best part: their doggie treat for a job well done. This is what both two-legged and four-legged participants and onlookers will have the opportunity to enjoy when Diablo Ballet hosts its second annual PAWS de Tutu from 9 a.m. to noon on June 24 from 9 a.m.

Last year's event attracted dozens of costumed dogs, dressed in outfits both simple and intricate. Kerry Silverstone, former Diablo Ballet board member and event chair both years, encourages attendees to think "outside the box" when creating costumes. And last year, many did just that. There were dogs dressed as ballet dancers, cowboys, aviators and campaigning politicians. One even arrived riding atop a pony.

The winning entrant was Peggy Bradley, dressed as the Wizard of Oz's Dorothy, along with her dogs, costumed, of course, as the cowardly lion, scarecrow and tin man, as well as sidekicks Glenda, the good witch and the "Lollypup" kids. Silverstone knows what Bradley is planning for this year's PAWrade and promises that it will wow the audience.

This year there will be two categories for the costume compAWtition: one for best individual costume and one for best group (two or more dogs) costume. A third compAWtition has also been added: dog tricks. Winners in each of the three categories will be awarded great prizes, including gift baskets provided by Pet Food Express, a WHISTLE GPS dog tracker and gift cards from a variety of local retail outlets.

Judging the compAWtition will be Pam Kessler, editor of Walnut Creek Magazine, Rosie Allen, former KGO news broadcaster, Amanda Kuiper, wife of Glen Kuiper, TV broadcaster for the Oakland A's, and Renee DeWeese, co-founder-co-artistic director of the Lamorinda Theatre Academy. Radio personality and self-proclaimed dog lover Charly Kayle, most recently with KOIT radio, will be the guest emcee while Brian Fitzsimmons of 21st Century Sounds will serve as the DJ, playing his custom "Walk the Red Carpet" music for all the PAWticipants.

K-9 units from both the Concord and Oakland police departments will be on hand, demonstrating what they can do, how they are trained and how they protect our communities. ARF and Rocket Dog Rescue will be there with dogs available for on-the-spot adoptions. And then, ensuring that none of the furry friends are stressed, as well as giving a whole new meaning to "downward dog", there will be DOGA (Dog Yoga), led by internationally known fitness guru, Molly Fox.

Snacks and coffee, provided by Don Francisco's, will be available for the humans while doggie treats will be available for their pets. Following the compAWtitions, a Pup PAWrade around the scenic Lafayette Reservoir will offer exercise for all.

While it may seem that this particular Saturday morning will go to the dogs, it will also benefit Diablo Ballet's PEEK (Performing Arts Education and Enrichment for Kids) Outreach Program, 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 under-served areas, most of whom would never be exposed to the arts in any other way. In 2015, Diablo Ballet expanded the program to provide creative movement classes to teenagers incarcerated within the Contra Costa County juvenile justice system. All proceeds from PAWS de Tutu go to fund these incredible programs, which have reached more than 65,000 underserved children in the past two decades.

Lauren Jonas, co-founder and artistic director of Diablo Ballet, is so grateful for all the PAWticipation. "I love the creativity that dogs and their owners showcase," she said. "I am so very appreciative of the support that PAWS de Tutu provides. Our underserved youth get so much from our PEEK program and this is the perfect vehicle to support it."

No dog? No problem. Come watch, laugh and have fun while helping to support PEEK. Admission is only \$5 per person; to enter any (or all) of the compAWtitions, it's \$20 per adult and \$10 for those under 17. To

register, go to diabloballet.org/events/.



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[back](#)

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