

Dog Splash raises cash for city's pooch park

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PEEKSKILL — Every day Greer Morrison-Vranka walks her golden Labrador Inga through Depew Park, the 2-year-old dog is eager to jump in the park's pond.

On Saturday morning, Inga got her chance.

She was one of a bunch of dogs that were allowed to jump in the pond, paddle after tennis balls and play with one another in a fundraiser for a city dog park expected to open in a neighboring park in the fall.

"She loves it," said Morrison-Vranka, 46. "She's a natural swimmer."

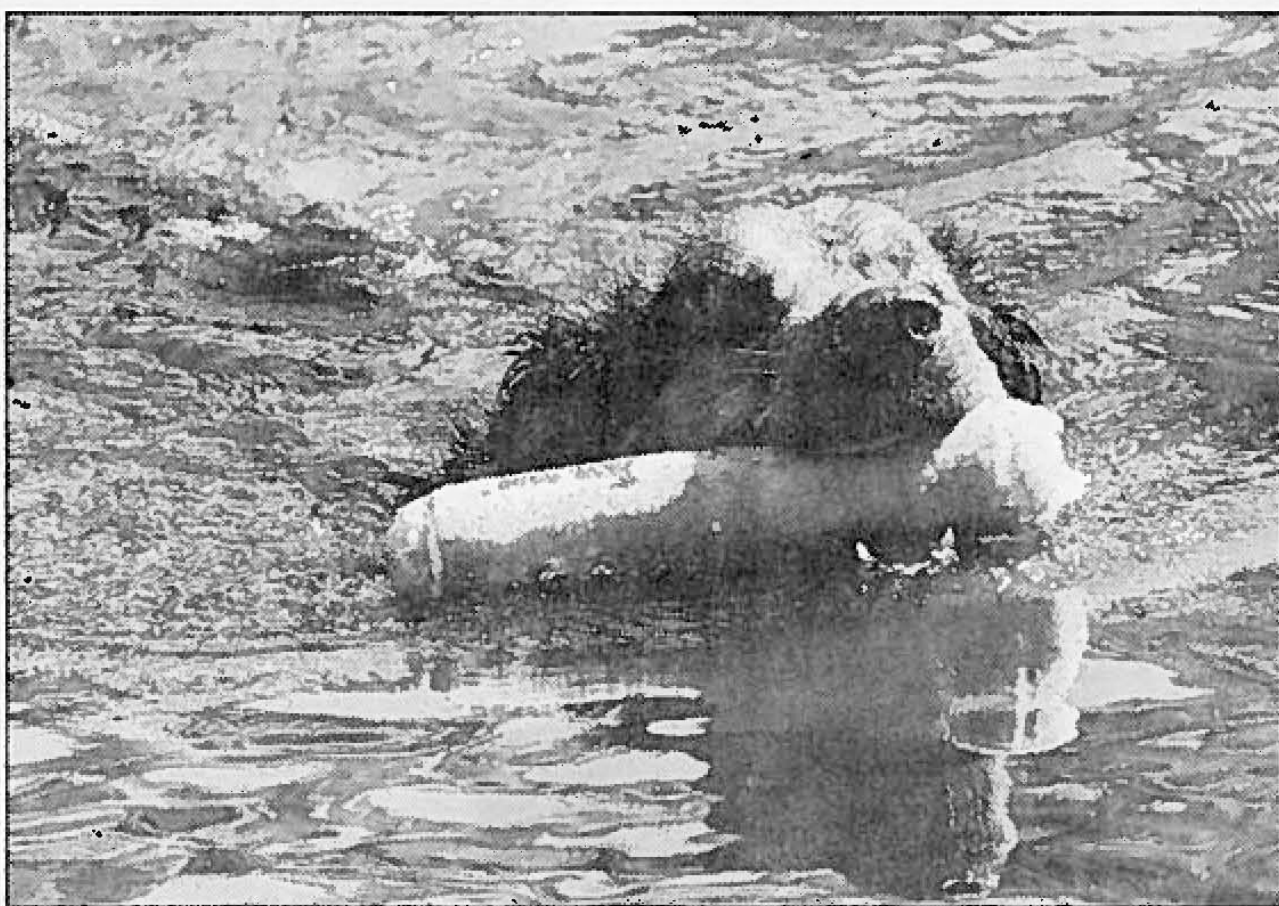
Dixie, who is mostly smooth-coated collie, jumped in because other canines took the plunge, said her owner, Kevin Fisher of Peekskill.

"She'll go in if her friends are going in, so she went in," said Fisher, 45.

The Dog Splash — expected to become an annual event — raised money to buy benches and other equipment for the 23,000 square-foot dog park, being built at Tompkins Park. The city provided the land and wood chips and is building the fence, organizer Michael Sellers said. The funds raised would go to buy benches for owners to rest and mingle, and "agility equipment" such as ramps "to really keep the dogs involved," he said.

Music played, including "Puppy Love," the theme to television show "Underdog," and "Me and You and a Dog Named Boo."

The dogs included a beagle, Portuguese water dogs, Labradors and a small Brussels Griffon with the nickname Griselda the Pirate



Photos by Joe Larese/The Journal News

Willie, owned by Lowry Reinauer of Peekskill, fetches a bone in Lake Mitchell at Depew Park in Peekskill on Saturday during Dog Splash 2009. The event is a fundraiser for the new Peekskill Dog Park, which is to open in the fall in Tompkins Park.

Queen. Diane Collier, 63, said her dog took on the name because her scraggly teeth make her look like a pirate.

"If she had a patch on one eye, it would be perfect," said the Peekskill resident. "She may for Halloween."

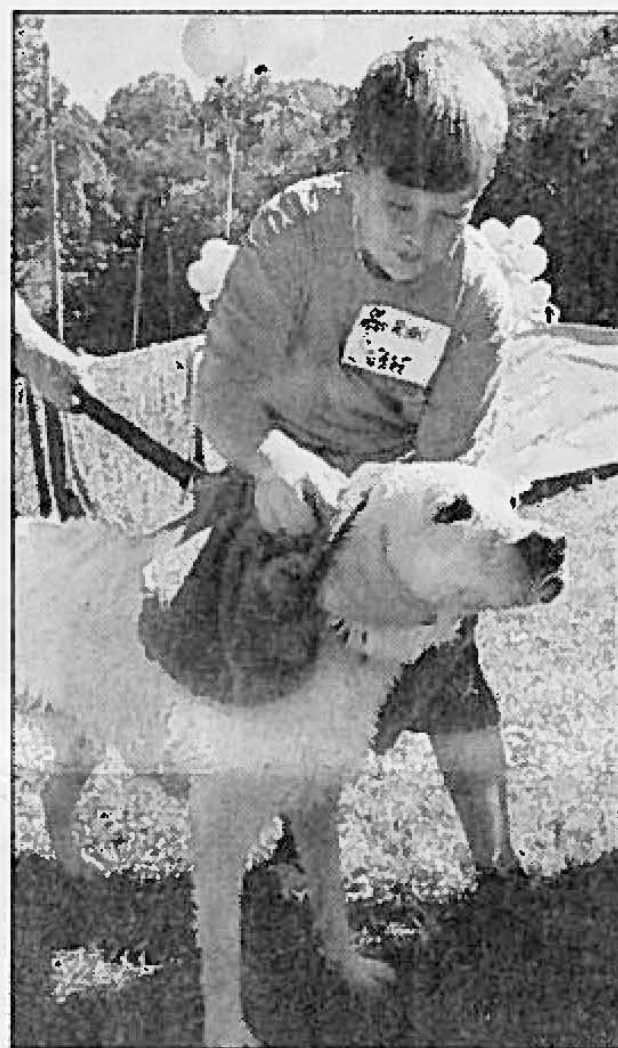
The area where dogs played yesterday was bordered by plastic temporary fencing, so the organizers asked owners to keep their pets on leashes except when they were swimming. But the dogs took some liberties with the rule, and occasionally ran around free. Tatiana D'Angelo of Cortlandt stood on the leash holding Bullet, her pit bull-boxer mix, who had made a run.

"He's excited," D'Angelo said. "His birthday was yesterday. He got a whole bunch of gifts. I think he's still in a frenzy."

Peekskill Dog Park merchandise was for sale — small towels, mugs and such — and a dog wash area was set up for owners to hose off the lake water.

Dog parks offer a chance to socialize for both dogs and their owners. People who use the parks often say they form groups of friends there, and their dogs are healthier, happier and better behaved for time they spend romping with other canines.

"Most dogs with some socialization are great dogs," Fisher



Volunteer Ryan Ray dries Sam after the dog took a swim in Lake Mitchell at Depew Park in Peekskill.

said. "You've got to live in a human world."

Morrison-Vranka said Inga was having fun now, but she predicted her pet will be even more eager to go for a swim now that she's been allowed to do it on one day.

"It's going to be really tough to keep her out," she said.

For information on the park, visit www.peakskilldogpark.com.