

March to honor rescue dogs from 9/11

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By [Linda Wilson Fuoco](#), Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Ted Warren/Associated Press file photo

Rescue workers, including a dog trained to sniff for survivors, take a break near the wreckage of the World Trade Center on Sept. 24, 2001.

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Many dogs standing at attention will line a walkway in Liberty State Park in Jersey City, N.J., Sunday. Walking past them will be a small group of very special dogs in a processional march that will end at a site just across the water from Ground Zero in lower Manhattan.

On the 10th anniversary of 9/11, the event will honor the search and rescue dogs and handlers who labored mightily in the rubble left when the Twin Towers fell at the World Trade Center.

Dogs and people worked in conditions that were dangerous and ultimately heartbreaking, for there were no living survivors for them to find. Their keen noses did alert first responders to the location of bodies that were recovered and returned to the families of victims.

An estimated 300-350 dogs searched at Ground Zero. Many were owned by civilian volunteers. Others were trained and utilized by police and military officers.

About 48 of those dogs are still alive, and 27 of them are expected to be at the Recognition Ceremony Sunday, said Abby Gary, a Mt. Lebanon native who is a spokeswoman for Finding One Another and Tails of Hope Foundation, co-sponsors of the event.

About 2,000 handlers have said they will bring their dogs to stand at attention along the route. The highly trained dogs work or volunteer in a variety of ways, including search and rescue, police and military service and therapy dogs.

Included in this honor guard will be a Rottweiler named Anastasia, who lives in Baldwin Borough and works in North Versailles for Three Rivers Hospice and Palliative Care.

"I am very honored and excited to be a part of this," said Laura Sokolovic, director of public relations and pet therapy at the hospice.

Anastasia, 5, is certified by Therapy Dogs International, lives with Ms. Sokolovic and goes to work with her every day. At least two to three days each week they visit hospitals, nursing homes, schools and other venues.

Adding to the cachet of a therapy visit from Anastasia are the costumes she wears. She has a closetful, including hats, sunglasses, feathery boas, ballet-style tutus and black-and-gold Steelers garb.

Three Rivers Hospice is sending Anastasia to the 9/11 commemoration because it's part of the organization's mission of giving back to the community, Ms. Sokolovic said.

Finding One Another seeks to educate the public and raise funds to support search and rescue dogs, their handlers, and the veterinary medical assistance teams that treat them.

Tails of Hope Foundation works to advance the fields of veterinary and human medicine "through a comparative medicine approach."

Prize-winning project

Video of Kitty, Kody, Ziggy, Meeko and Micah frolicking in their "catio" could win \$10,000 for John and Cheryl Szostak of Leechburg, Armstrong County. But they need our votes.

Mr. Szostak and his wife, Cheryl, were looking for a way to keep their cats entertained in a safe way. He's a machinist whose hobby is carpentry, and he built the catio in his spare time in about a month.

A catio is an outdoor patio/playground for cats. The Szostak cats romp and climb and watch wildlife, but fine-meshed netting keeps them from straying or coming in direct contact with roaming wild animals, cars and other outdoor dangers.

The Szostak catio is one of 20 finalists in the Purina Tidy Cats "Pet Projects" Design Challenge. Finalists have already won a year's supply of kitty litter. The top two winners will get \$10,000 each and a trip to New York

Kitty, Kody, Ziggy, Meeko and Micah have 24/7 access to their catio. They leave the house through a second-floor window and walk down a covered ramp into the catio.

The couple was cat-less until three years ago when a tiny stray kitten wandered onto their seven-acre property. They took her in, named her Kitty, and then adopted four more cats from local shelters.

Go to www.tidycats.com/PetProjects to see -- and vote by Wednesday -- for Mr. Szostak's "My Catio" video.

Low-cost rabies shots

Pet owners can comply with state law that requires rabies inoculations while helping to raise money for the Beaver County Humane Society.

The shelter is offering rabies shots for \$10 per pet next Saturday and Oct. 15, noon to 3 p.m. both days, at the shelter on Route 18, adjacent to the Beaver Valley Mall in Center.

Pets must be at least 3 months old and be on leashes or in carriers. Information: 724-775-5801.

Helping homeless cats

FosterCat's annual spaghetti fundraising dinner runs from 4 to 7 p.m. today at Wallace Memorial Presbyterian Church, 1146 Greentree Road, Green Tree.

Tickets are \$9 for adults and \$4 for children and can be purchased at the door. Take-out orders are also available. The all-volunteer organization has rescued and placed more than 1,000 kittens and cats since 1999.

Pet Tales appears weekly in the Saturday Home & Garden section. Linda Wilson Fuoco: lfuoco@post-gazette.com or 412-263-3064. Got a pet health question? Email it to petpoints@post-gazette.com. It may be answered in an upcoming Pet Points column by veterinarians at the Point Breeze Veterinary Clinic. [More articles by this author](#)

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