

*Puttin' on the Dog*  
By Alice Levine

What better way to enjoy the approaching fall weather than to attend Adopt-A-Dog's annual festival, *Puttin' on the Dog*. The event will be held on September 25<sup>th</sup> (rain date: September 26<sup>th</sup>) from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. at Roger Baldwin Park in Greenwich, Connecticut.

*Puttin' on the Dog*, now in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year, is a great family event. It features a dog show with 17 categories for your dog, including "Biggest Lap Dog" and "A Pooch Who Can Smooch". There are also over 40 vendors selling dog and cat products, dogs and cats available for adoption, entertainment, and food.

Adopt-A-Dog, a non-profit dog and cat rescue sanctuary based in Armonk, was founded in 1981 by three women with a special vision. Donna Nives, Gloria Scheuer, and Pam Fahnestock were concerned about the increasing number of animals living in shelters without much hope of adoption. They organized an agency originally based in Greenwich to advertise dogs and cats in need of homes. In 1999, a two-acre kennel was purchased in Armonk that enabled the organization to provide a temporary home for the animals. Since then, Adopt-A-Dog has come to the rescue of animals, including pets abandoned after Hurricane Katrina, dogs and cats from shelters that have no room, pets surrendered by owners, and puppies from puppy mills that have closed. Typically, about 40 dogs and 10 cats reside at the sanctuary.

Adopt-A-Dog has a very unique adoption policy. The staff asks that the prospective family make a minimum of two visits to the sanctuary and spend time with the dog being considered for adoption. President Allyson Halm explained, "It's key to evaluate the dynamics of the household to match the personality and energy level of any dog to have a successful **lifetime** commitment with the family." She emphasizes the word lifetime with the prospective families so they know they are making a 15-year commitment, and are prepared to see it through. This approach encourages happy pets and families, and explains the small number of dogs that are returned.

One surprise to many is the availability of purebred dogs at the sanctuary. Allyson explained, "Believe it or not, we will have families bring us nine-month-old puppies that were purchased from breeders, because the families didn't understand the commitment they were making. Adopting a dog gives the owner a loyal, loving companion, but it also means being home to walk the dog and give him exercise and play time. We see too many impulsive adoptions." Purebred puppies are a great option for families that can't incur the expense of going to a breeder or devote the time to house-break a puppy. Of course, there are also many adorable mixed-breed puppies available for adoption.

Adopt-A-Dog also created a half-acre park for resident dogs to enjoy and get the exercise and outdoor time they need. The cats usually relax and play inside with the staff and the growing number of volunteers. Adopt-A-Dog also enlists the support of the Byram Hills Senior Internship Program, which provides two students who spend the last six weeks of school working at the sanctuary.

While Adopt-A-Dog organizes several events throughout the year to raise funds and awareness for the dogs and cats they rescue, *Puttin' on the Dog* is the largest fundraiser, attracting about 5,000 people each year. If you can't attend the event and are interested in scheduling an appointment to visit the sanctuary, call 273-1674. Donations are always welcome, and are tax-deductible. Please visit the website, <http://www.adoptadog.org> for more information on adoption, volunteer opportunities, and *Puttin' on the Dog* show.