

Dog About Town

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“Members of Ruff Revue Dance into our Hearts”

Man’s best friend is learning new tricks and building new friendships through The Ruff Revue, a Spokane-based doggie dance troupe.

The Ruff Revue provokes smiles, cheering applause and lots of tail-wagging as the canine performers and their handlers entertain audiences through the Inland Northwest. Dancing, twirling, jumping and other fun activities can be seen during a Ruff Revue show.



“The Ruff Revue was born to nurture that human-animal bond within our community and within our own group and within the lives that we touch,” said Diane Baker, coordinator and one of the founding members.

The freestyle dance group is a cleverly named offshoot of Diamonds in the Ruff, a dog academy established to train dogs and the people who love them. Located at 2925 N. Monroe, Diamonds in the Ruff encourages positive reinforcement and cooperative relationships between dogs and their humans while teaching dogs and people alike to be better to one another. All the canine members of the Ruff Revue have excelled as students of Diamonds in the Ruff.

A rich mixture of sizes and breeds can be found within Ruff Revue. Canine entertainers include Cinderella, Oliver, Murungu, Mia, Aspen, Dewey, Anna, Lexie, Mina, Dezzi, Sadie, Rio, Scout and Schuyler. These dynamic dogs range from Dachshunds and American Eskimo to larger varieties such as herding dog mixes, Australian Shepherds and Rottweilers.



Three-year-old Border Collie mix Scout belongs to Karen Jurasin. He’s the skateboarder of the bunch.

“We found out about Ruff Revue,” she said. “It’s a nice way to get out and show off what he can do.”

Teri Beeman, also a founding member and performing arts instructor, said Scout is a big crowd pleaser.

“He loves to show off,” Beeman said. “His energy just spills over.”

Beeman said she originally taught her Entlebucher (Swiss herding dog) Gretchen how to ride a skateboard seven years ago, but now Scout is the skateboard star. Beeman handles Lexie, a Decker Rat Terrier, and another Entlebucher, Anna, who is 12 and totally deaf. Anna is one of the last remaining original members. Beeman said Anna used to be afraid of people and other dogs, but after a while in the Ruff Revue, she loosened up and actually enjoys saying hi to everyone in the audience.



“The most important thing is enabling the dogs to interact with the audience,” Beeman said. “It makes you feel happy.”

Ruff Revue performs at a variety of venues, including retirement facilities and care centers, where the presence of the canines makes a huge impact.

“We come in and the dogs get to say hello to everybody,” Beeman said. She said the canines enjoy the love and attention they receive from the elderly, and those living in the retirement centers enjoy them just as much. They have a special place in their hearts for dogs, as many of them have had to give up their beloved four-legged friends.



Gretchen and her Skateboard

“They always tell us stories, or say ‘I used to have a dog that looked like that,’” Beeman said.

The dogs of Ruff Revue offer entertainment as well as some pet therapy for their audiences. “It’s so good for them,” she said.

Baker and Beeman are trainers at Diamonds in the Ruff. They got the idea for Ruff Revue from a seminar they attended in Corvallis, Ore. They witnessed about 20-25 free and happy dogs engaging in dance routines and tricks with their handlers.

“We decided it would be fun to bring the joy we saw there to our community,” Beeman said.

Ten years after it was formed, The Ruff Revue is still extending the joy of music and canine companionship to the greater Spokane area.

So, can an old dog learn new tricks?

“If a dog still likes to eat, you can teach him to do anything!” Beeman said with a laugh.

The Ruff Revue’s homepage is www.ruffrevue.org. The group was featured on the KSPS program “Northwest Profiles” and can be viewed on www.youtube.com, search “KSPS NW Profiles Dancing with Dogs.”



Written by Devin Heilman

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