

Strut your mutt's stuff

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It's going to be dog heaven in Suffolk this weekend.

This Sunday is date of the Mutt Strut Dog Walk and Festival over at Sleepy Hole Park.

I don't know how many of you out there are pet owners, and I don't know how many of you have a free weekend, but either way Mutt Strut is definitely worth stopping by.

For those of you who don't know, the Mutt Strut is a fundraising event for the Suffolk Humane Society. It includes all sorts of pet-related fun, from performing animals to nutrition workshops.

I never would have classified myself as an "animal lover" when I was growing up.

I enjoyed my family's pets, but they could have come and gone and I was fine.

I rarely liked anyone else's dog or cat or hamster or whatever other odd animal they had kept in captivity. After seeing it for two seconds, I was ready to move on.

And the people who referred to their pets as children? Forget about it. I can't handle that kind of madness.

But a lot of that changed a year and half ago.

While covering the Suffolk Humane Society's Midnight Adopt-A-Thon, I found myself at the Suffolk Animal Shelter staring into the eyes of a 9-month-old black-and-white pit bull puppy.

Despite the fact that I never really was passionate about pets, I just knew that dog and I were meant to be.

Within a week, Gatsby moved in (I named him in honor of the F. Scott Fitzgerald classic, but it was a second choice, because I had been dead set on naming him Matt Damon. Unfortunately, it never took).

I guess getting a new pet is like being a first-time parent because the moment you have one of your

own, you automatically want to share photos with others, swap stories about your little guy's accomplishments and get tricks to help with their teething.

And sure enough, I was sucked in.

I now love meeting other people's dogs, want to set up walking buddies and play dates and have even supplied an entire wardrobe for my dog, including a Santa outfit that used to light up until Gatsby chewed out the battery pack.

When work is frustrating, guys are disappointing and life just seems to be piling it on, I can always come home to one happy face, thanks to the Suffolk Humane Society.

So, if you have some time, go check out the Mutt Strut and support the work they do. And, hey, while you're there, you can make fun of the people who call their pets children, because even with Gatsby, I still think that's taking it entirely too far.