



photo by [R.E. Spears III](#)

More than 275 walkers and their dogs joined the march on Sunday to support the Suffolk Humane Society during the organization's second annual Mutt Strut.

Strutting their stuff

Humane Society event raises more than \$53,000

By [R.E. Spears III \(Contact\)](#) | Suffolk News-Herald

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More than 275 walkers and a few thousand onlookers took advantage of great weather Sunday on the last day of summer to join their canine friends for a day of fun at Sleepy Hole Park.

The Suffolk Humane Society's Mutt Strut raised more than \$53,000 for use in the organization's mission of assisting companion animals in the city of Suffolk, and more money is expected from various sources in the days to come, according to Kay Hurley, the society's director of community

outreach.

The money raised is lower than last year's total, she said, "But it's not just about the money. It's about awareness and promoting responsible pet ownership."



Photo by R.E. Spears III

One of the dogs available for adoption on Sunday from Suffolk Animal Control strikes a pose onstage during the Mutt Strut, the namesake event at the Suffolk Animal Control's function Sunday at Sleepy Hole Park.

And considering the economic situation, she added, "I think any animal welfare organization would be thrilled with (the results)."

"We had 13 people who raised \$500 or more in donations," Hurley stated in an email on Monday. That group raised a total of \$8,790.85.

Vendors set up shelters around a field at the park for the event. Some sold their pet-friendly products and services, while others distributed information about animal rescue organizations or introduced dogs (and some cats) that were up for adoption.

Hurley said that Suffolk's animal control department had brought 12 dogs for adoption, and seven went home with new owners by the end of the day.

"I think it's wonderful that Suffolk and our community are supporting an event like this," she said.

The day's namesake event featured dogs up for adoption through the Suffolk organization as they strutted across a "catwalk" set up on the main stage under the guidance of Humane Society volunteers.

Farmers Bank 4 Paws was the top fundraising team, with \$2,125 in donations. Andrea Saunders of

that team raised \$1,170 on her own, making her the top individual fundraiser.

The top youth fundraiser was Chelsey Atkinson, who gathered \$1,150 in donations. Goose Creek Animal Hospital won the Vet Challenge, with \$1,980 in donations.

Those who raised more than \$500 in donations were eligible for special prize drawings. Ruth Rountree won the Pet Portrait by Fran Martin Dixon, and Heather Noell won a glass sculpture by Neil Duman.

With music playing and food and beverages available, the event had a party atmosphere. There were plastic wading pools scattered around the park, where dogs could stop for a drink or just step in — or even lie down — and cool themselves down a bit.

A costume contest, a Frosty Paws eating contest and a Race the Wind contest gave four-legged visitors with a competitive streak a chance to go for the gold.

There were also demonstrations by police dogs, agility dogs and the crowd favorite, Purina Incredible Dog Team, which featured dogs catching flying discs while doing back flips and other acrobatic maneuvers.

Canine participants also were able to take advantage of free pet health screenings, a rabies clinic, microchipping, the Neuter Scooter and an emergency veterinarian, or they could try a walk-through of the agility course, which included tubes, ramps and slalom sticks.

Even those who arrived without their dogs, though, were able to enjoy watching a variety of dogs ranging from the smallest teacup poodles to at least one 218-pound bull mastiff whose owners said it was still growing.

Park rangers estimated that there were 3,000 to 4,000 people on hand for the event, based on the number of cars that were parked in Sleepy Hole's fields, Hurley said.