

## A Dog Show to Benefit the Community

*Allan Reznik*

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Photographs by Veronique Bos/BowTie Inc. Last Friday, we held a “demo dog show” here at the office in our parking lot that several of the dog-magazine editors at BowTie had organized. It was an unqualified success, providing both entertainment and education to a dog-friendly audience of employees who warmly embraced the opportunity to learn about purebreds and what dog shows are all about. It was a demo that would be just as successful hosted in a public park for the residents of your community.

We used the AKC’s seven Groups to anchor the show and give it structure. We wanted one breed to represent each Group and ended up with a Cocker, Smooth Dachshund, Boxer, Westie, Toy Poodle, Miniature Poodle (the Frenchie and owner we’d lined up had to back out a few days before the show) and Sheltie, all owned by BowTie employees. Two additional entries signed up that morning so we also had a pit bull and a Maltese. We actually had three Toy Poodle bitches to start with so we could demonstrate how a class of multiple entries is judged, before we switched to Group judging.

Part of the final lineup That morning, we used orange safety cones and rope to designate our ring. Our paperwork was in order and looked very official, right down to the catalog, the judge’s book and arm bands. Rosettes had been ordered so all owners would receive a memento of their dog-show debut and no one would leave the ring empty-handed. An editor who comes from a conformation background gave a handling tutorial to all the excited owners. A one-page handout explaining how dog shows “work” was printed on brightly colored paper and distributed to all attendees. We expected interested staff to sit on the grass and watch but we ended up with lots of spectators on both sides of the ring.

I was the judge, assisted by an efficient editor/ring steward, and explained what I was doing as I assessed the dogs. I spent a minute or two on each dog as it entered the ring, discussing the purpose of its Group and the traits of the breed. I was especially pleased to have the pit bull to talk about as I examined this sweet white-and-tan girl who is a familiar face in our IT department. The judging was recorded so it could be played on our DogChannel website.

Our owner-handlers showed very confidently and some of our dogs, especially the seniors, were total hams.

Best in Show, an apricot Miniature Poodle! had an impressive, well-groomed lineup to evaluate and in the end, chose a second Runner-Up (Westie), first Runner-Up (Dachshund) and Best in Show (apricot Miniature Poodle).

Appreciative comments are still flowing in – and this from an audience that I’d consider more knowledgeable than most, considering the breadth of publications we produce at BowTie.

We breeders and our quiet, well-behaved show dogs tend to keep a low profile in our respective neighborhoods. However, while we do a good job of damage control, why shouldn’t we take a more pro-active approach by organizing a demo dog show? Invite the local kids to bring their dogs ... and have a few extra dogs on hand that enthusiastic-but-petless kids can borrow for a Junior Showmanship class.

A local handling-class instructor or experienced exhibitor can give youngsters and adults alike a pre-show handling tutorial. Invite a few local politicians and media personalities to hand out the prizes and boost the cachet factor. An obedience or agility demo is always a crowd pleaser. Photo ops with a few well-socialized members of the bully breeds – perhaps some therapy dogs – will open many eyes.

Don’t forget to notify the local newspapers and cable TV stations, and choose one articulate breeder who is comfortable doing public speaking to liaise with reporters and explain the proceedings in succinct, non-technical sound bytes. With multiple TV reality shows currently focusing on groomers, why not capitalize on that trend by inviting a mobile groomer to



attend and groom some of the neighborhood canines?

It's important that our communities know the good that breeders accomplish. Let politicians and politicized neighbors put a face to breeder-exhibitors in the community. Network with them, hand out business cards and invite them to contact you and your kennel club for knowledgeable input when there are dog-related bylaws pending. We are the experts after all, so let's not hide our light under a bushel. Let's make ourselves the go-to people for community pet issues, not the shelters whose employees may have an ax to grind against breeders.

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