

## Celebration to Raise Money for Dogs in Georgia

**Grace's Birthday Party will donate funds raised to help owners with financial need care for their dogs.**

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This September, Georgia's Ashford Manor Bed & Breakfast will play host to hundreds of dogs and their owners for the ninth annual Grace's Birthday Party, a Wild West-themed event to raise money for the University of Georgia's Veterinary Hospital, as well as the Humane Society and local animal shelters.

Dogs – and owners – are encouraged to dress in Western garb while enjoying games, contests, and refreshments. The theme changes each year, and last year's attendees donned circus-inspired clothing.

The party will last from 3 to 6 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 16, 2007, rain or shine, at the bed and breakfast's location on Harden Hill Road in Watkinsville, Ga.

Proceeds from ticket sales and the silent auction will mostly go to the Grace Memorial Foundation, which provides assistance to clients of the University of Georgia's College of Veterinary Medicine Small Animal Teaching Hospital who have demonstrated financial need. The fund also helps dogs owned by the elderly and sick.

All dogs can attend for free, while tickets for adult humans cost \$15, and \$5 for children. Tickets are sold at the gate only, but with ample outdoor space, there's little risk of a sell-out, organizers say.

Last year's event raised more than \$15,000, half of which went to the Grace Foundation. Organizers expect about 300 people and 250 dogs to attend this year's event.

Jim Shearon, proprietor of Ashford Manor, began the tradition a decade ago as a 12-year-old birthday party for Grace, his Airedale companion. Grace, however, lost her battle with cancer and did not live to see the second annual event, but Shearon continued the tradition.

"It's a party that doesn't feel much like a fundraiser thanks to the many creative ways in which money is collected at the event," he said.

Local businesses and individuals contribute items and services to the event and auction, including a local artist who creates a signature watercolor print unique to each year's theme.

"Businesses and individuals alike are eager to help in any way possible, and we are certainly grateful for their contributions," Shearon said.

For more information about the event and the Grace Memorial Foundation, visit [www.gracesbirthday.com](http://www.gracesbirthday.com).