

Town's Name Goes to the Dogs – for a Day

Mayor proclaims California town named after cats to be renamed in honor of dogs.

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More than 150 dogs will parade into California's town of the cats this weekend, grabbing the spotlight for one day out of the year. The town's mayor, Barbara Spector, will proclaim Los Gatos ("The Town of The Cats") as Los Perros ("The Town of the Dogs") on Saturday, May 17.

Not that Los Gatos ignores canines the rest of the year, said town manager Greg Larson. There are an estimated 9,000 resident dogs in Los Gatos, a town of about 12,000 households in the South Bay part of the San Francisco Bay Area.

When pet owners walk through downtown, their dogs are welcome at a variety of animal-friendly stores and cafes, Larson said. Shop owners are known to keep drinking bowls on the sidewalk.

"The town already has a strong image as being pet-friendly," he said. "We honor cats 364 days a year, and this is one day to play on the name and honor dogs."

The event will center on a dog parade led by the First Dog of Los Gatos, Monty, as well as a silent auction featuring dog statues made of fiberglass resin painted by local artists. Merchants will display the artwork in their storefronts.

The artwork display entitled "How much is that doggie in the window?" runs through June 5. Visitors to the participating downtown shops and restaurants will be able to bid on the dog statues, with the proceeds going to an off-leash dog park initiative, according to Kim Daly, a volunteer with Los Gatos Unleashed, a local animal group.

"This has been the kickoff to our unleashed dog park project that we've been working on for four years," Daly said. "These dogs and their owners need a safe place to exercise and socialize off-leash within the town limits."

The town council has not taken a position on the dog park proposal, Larson said. The community-driven plan has not been formally presented to officials for approval.

The free event also creates more business for area merchants, Daly said. Visitors will receive a list of dog-friendly restaurants where they can dine and sit outside with their furry friends.

Other participating animal groups include the Humane Society Silicon Valley and Petpals Animal Assisted Therapy. The Los Gatos Police K9 unit will also be on hand to greet two-legged and four-legged guests.

"Our town is called 'The Cats,'" Daly said, "But we are so dog friendly."

For more information, go to www.losgatosunleashed.org