



Photograph by George Sakkestad

Where's the water? Marie Kennedy's dogs Penny, Sadie and Molly were dressed up like mermaids for the Howling Halloween event held at Old Town. Proceeds from the event will go to the Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Department's canine unit.

It's paws for a cause, as dogs raise money for canine corps

By JUDY PETERSON

The town of "The Cats" has gone to the dogs. Literally. Walk down Santa Cruz Avenue any Saturday or Sunday, and there are dogs everywhere. Big dogs. Little dogs. Barking dogs and yappy ones.

There's even a social club for dogs and their people. It's called Society Dog, and it hosts events such as the Howling Halloween parade held Oct. 26 in downtown Los Gatos. Some 350 people and 275 dogs trick-or-treated at more than 30 downtown businesses for doggie treats and other goodies. Some merchants, recognizing humans need to eat, too, put out pizza and cupcakes for the people on parade.

Participants paid between \$25

and \$30 to register their dogs for Howling Halloween. Proceeds from the event, totaling about \$8,000, will be given to the Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Department's canine unit. The unit has one German shepherd, Vendi, currently on patrol. A second dog is in training.

"We liked the idea of supporting the immediate community so much that we've decided this will be our chosen charity for years to come," said Society Dog founder Terri Festa.

The canine unit will also benefit from an online auction that is now under way on the Society Dog website. The Peabody Fine Arts Gallery gave the group an unframed lithograph titled "Snoopy to Remember ... the Salute," valued at \$4,600. Bids must be received by Nov. 10.

Society Dog originated in Los Gatos in 1999 as a singles group. Now the organization welcomes everyone, even people without dogs. "We really do accept all people," said Festa. "We really do try to make them feel comfortable, make the dog feel comfortable."

There are a few rules, though

tered dogs are allowed only with advance permission.

That said, grab the leash and head to the Los Gatos Town Plaza at Main Street and Santa Cruz Avenue any Tuesday night for the group's weekly walk. Festa says between 15 and 20 people show up for the walk, which starts at 6:30 p.m. "We get great exercise and after that we go to a dog-friendly restaurant and eat."

Other activities involve trips on the so-called "Lime Green Party Machine Bus." Sometimes the bus heads out of town to places like Carmel, but next month it stays close to home for runs to the Festival of Lights at Vasona Park. The trips are scheduled for Dec. 11 and 18, with room for 15 humans and their 15 dogs.

The park is the site of yet another popular Society Dog activity.

"Every Easter we do a big event at Vasona where we hide hundreds of plastic eggs filled with dog treats," said Festa. "They sniff 'em out. We put stinky stuff in there."

Society Dog has two membership levels: the basic membership is free while the "premium" is