

The Glengarry News

Hilltop's Dog Agility Trials a 'huge success'

July 10 2019 BY TARA MACDONALD News Staff

Hilltop K-9 Agility Club hosted their annual Agility Association of Canada (AAC) and Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) sanctioned agility trials this weekend at the Williamstown Fairgrounds.

It was a busy weekend for the club with 24 events taking place from 8 am until 6 pm on Saturday and Sunday. According to event organizers, 395 runs took place with competitors coming from across Ontario and Quebec to participate in the trials.

"It was very successful weekend, with many dogs earning their first qualifying scores, and also many titles being earned," said event volunteer and Hilltop board member Marianne Muller.

Heat doesn't dampen dog's spirits

Soaring temperatures didn't phase competitors or their dogs who were well prepared for the event. "What is very impressive is that these dogs still want to run and play in the heat that we had this past weekend," Mrs. Muller who has been involved with the club and volunteering for the agility events for about twenty years. The dogs were kept cool over the heat wave through the addition of shade tents, portable fans, cooling jackets, water hoses and a small doggy pool.

It was dog-gone fun

"The trials are like a fun dog obstacle course," explained Hilltop board member and competitor Jenn Baker of Cornwall. "It's a competition where you earn qualifying scores, titles and ribbons," said Ms. Baker who explained how competitors need to earn qualifying scores before advancing to the next level of difficulty. "You also get bragging rights!"

"It's a lot like horse jumping," added Chris Hansen from Oxford Mills who participated in the trials with her five year old Belgian Shephard 'Irena du Volant'. "You have different types of games to play," she said. "If you pass, you get your qualifying ribbon and if not you get your name in for a draw to win a bottle of wine."

Ms. Hansen started out doing 'Super Dog' shows in Vancouver before relocating to Ontario where she competes in a number of dog sports and also trains dogs in scent detection. "It's good for building a relationship with your dog and it's good exercise too," she said. Describing herself as 'uber-competitive', Ms. Hansen and 'Irena' have titles in nine different dog sports and are Master champions in scent detection. Ms. Hansen spends at least four hours a week training with her dogs and attends two or three trials every month during the summer and a few times in the winter as well.

Better Together

"I've been doing agility for twenty years," said Lyse Savard from Montreal who was competing with her four year old German Shepherd 'Jackie'. "The relationship with your dog, running with the dogs, it's time spent doing something as a team. It's teamwork. You really have to be connected with your dog."

Bonnie Sowiak and her Australian Shepherd 'Djinn' from Bourget, Ontario agreed. "It helps you connect with your dog and build a special bond," she said. But for Ms. Sowiak, agility training has also reminded her to take better care of herself.

"I train at home with my dog three days a week for short periods of about ten to fifteen minutes," she said. "You also do conditioning every day because there's a lot of fitness needed." Ms. Sowiak and 'Djinn' exercise six days a week. "Because of the dogs, I started to look after myself better," she said.

"My diet and exercise is better because of them," Ms. Sowiak explained. "For example, I started cooking meals for my dogs but I realized that I was grabbing processed foods to eat for myself. Now I cook for myself too. I eat better, I exercise more, I spend more time outside, and I sleep better too."

It's all about 'Community'

While the competition is fierce with some of the more advanced competitors, all agreed on the camaraderie and friendships they've made in the agility community.

"It's a great way to meet new people and make new friends," explained board member and competitor Anne Viau. Ms. Muller agreed. "It's a whole community," she said. "You already have something in common – you love your dogs!"

Upcoming Events:

The next AAC Trials will be held on August 3rd and 4th at the Williamstown Fairgrounds with guest judge Lona O'Reilly. The event also features 'OUT' which is a special 'Over Under Through' obstacle course which is an all ages event open to all types of dogs. Benefits from 'OUT' will go towards Hilltop K-9 Agility Club and the local cat rescue.