

A howling good time at canine Halloween party

By Kathryn Reed

Kiss, sit, dance, do a trick, eat fast – oh, and look really cute.

Halloween games aren't just for kids. They aren't even just for humans. Dogs got into the act Saturday during the second annual Howl'ween Party at Tahoe Best Friends in South Lake Tahoe.

Owner Paige Rice loves Halloween almost more than she loves dogs. And she isn't the only one.



Susan and Ernie compete in the Oct. 27 dancing competition at Tahoe Best Friends. Photos/Kathryn Reed

More than two dozen four-legged critters showed up at Oct. 27 party. And most were in costume.

According to the National Retail Federation, pet owners will

spend more than \$370 million this year on costumes for their dog or cat. Considering this is an increase of about \$40 million from 2011, people clearly have money for their animals. And this compares to the \$80 million people spend on candy and decorations for Halloween.

Chelsea found a hot dog out fit for Shiloh in San Francisco. This seemed appropriate for the wiener dog.

And the Dachshund had lots of kisses to give her owner – enough to tie for first in the licking contest. Tony and his “Angora Brindle” Ollie were the other winners at Tahoe Best Friends. The contest was to see whose dog gave their owner the most kisses. A few people took Rice’s advice and rubbed bits of hotdogs on their face to entice their dog.

The afternoon started with a form of dog musical chairs. As soon as the music stopped dogs had to sit. Not only that, they had to stay. Each round one dog would have to step aside. The last dog sitting – AJ – came away with a coupon to make her stay at Tahoe Best Friends a little cheaper next time. (AJ, who was dressed as a San Francisco Giants fan, is this reporter’s dog.)

But when it comes to tricks, sitting is ordinary. Just say “touch it” and Hailey, a 1-year-old pocket beagle, will do that. Pixie the Chihuahua jumps and jumps like a yo-yo. And with her costume, that is just what she looks like – a yo-yo. The two won the trick contest.

Many of the dogs enjoying the fun aren’t even regulars at Tahoe Best Friends, but instead have owners who love to have a good time. TBF is a doggie day-care center that offers “dog sitting” by the day or overnight. And a human is always on site.

People definitely are making their pets a member of the family. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, families spend an average of \$58 per month on their pets. That is an increase of

99 percent since 1999. All together, \$50 billion is what Americans are expected to spend on their pets (not just dogs) this year – from grooming, boarding, pet hotels, pet-sitting and day care – according to American Pets Products Association.

While the afternoon was all about Halloween fun for four-legged family members, Oct. 31 can be stressful for them. That is why the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals offers these tips:

- Limit treats to trick-or-treaters. Chocolate – especially dark or baking chocolate – can be dangerous for dogs and cats. Candies containing the artificial sweetener xylitol can also cause problems.
- Pumpkins and decorative corn are considered to be relatively nontoxic, but they can produce an upset stomach in pets.
- Wires and cords from electric lights and other decorations should be kept out of reach of pets.
- Use battery powered lights instead of candles. Pets can easily knock a candle or candlelit pumpkin over and cause a fire.
- Don't put your dog or cat in a costume unless you know he or she loves it. For pets who don't like them, wearing a costume might cause undue stress.
- If you do dress up your pet, make sure the costume isn't annoying or unsafe.
- All but the most social dogs and cats should be kept in a separate, quiet room away from the front door during peak trick-or-treating hours. Too many strangers can be scary and stressful for pets.
- When opening the door for trick-or-treaters, take care that your cat or dog doesn't dart outside.

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