



Saving Mastiffs, One Picnic at a Time

Cheeseburgers. It's the first thing I smell as I walk towards the large Pavilion that houses the 11th Annual Northeast Ohio Mastiff Picnic. On this beautiful Saturday morning in September, Buckeye Woods Park in Medina, OH is bustling with activity.

Everywhere I look, something is happening. Volunteers collect admissions, they sign up dogs for Health Testing (PRA/CMR and Cystinuria), they enlist as many participants as possible for the Fun Match being held later this afternoon, as well as the AKC sanctioned "B" match that will be

judged by Ms. Liz Simon. Volunteers are directing us to the booths selling Picnic merchandise, from sweat-shirts to tie-dye T-shirts, to water bottles. I keep looking around. Friends who haven't seen each other since the last picnic are hugging each other and laughing. Families are walking towards the area to have their professional portrait taken. Most importantly, though, there is a very long line forming to buy raffle tickets, because this year there are nearly 65 baskets containing thousands and thousands of dollars worth of donated dog-related merchandise. All of this is going to be raffled later in the day, and I want in on that!

Sponsors are the Mastiff Picnic's lifeblood. Every single year, the work starts in the spring for the Picnic volunteers, as they pick up the phone and start calling last year's Sponsors to find out what they will be able

to send along this year. The race is on to find new Sponsors. It's not easy making these phone calls, especially in light of the economy, but the sponsors never fail to surprise the Picnic staff with their amazing support and generosity.

Founded in 2002, and now in its eleventh year, the Northeast Ohio Mastiff Picnic raises most of its money for Mastiff Rescue, often splitting the proceeds between two or more 501(c)(3) non-profit Mastiff Rescues each year. But that isn't all. Some of the proceeds are donated to causes related to health, such as Cystinuria or Cancer or sometimes, a portion of the proceeds is simply set aside to be used at a later date, often for a dog who needs a life-saving surgery and in normal circumstances would not have been able to get it. Last year, Picnic proceeds helped Rosco, a mastiff in Alabama, get a TPLO operation for torn anterior cruciate ligaments. Rosco is now healthy, happy, adopted, and running circles around everyone!

The Picnic is staffed by a very dedicated group of Volunteers who come back year after year just to prove that they can raise just one more dollar than they did the year before. It's a true passion for every single one of them. Leading the effort is the tireless Kim Fish. In addition to coordinating the entire picnic, planning the agenda, gathering sponsors, and doing a little bit of everything else, Kim works non-stop throughout the entire year, spending hundreds of hours of her own time making the



Picnic a success. Along with the many event volunteers, the core Picnic staff includes: Natalie Buck, Kristine Newton, Todd and Monica Baughman, Webb Boyles, Marissa McFarland, and Deb Evangelisto. They are, as always, supported by the wonderful members of the Mastiff Club of Northern Ohio (MCONO).

High noon. The raffle will be starting soon and the line to buy raffle tickets isn't getting any shorter. Kim looks at the line and smiles. She watches as people pull out their checkbooks, and she smiles even wider when a volunteer runs by with an iPad logged into to PayPal, so that payments and donations can be made at the touch of a button. The people who attend the picnic save all year for this event. Before the Raffle, the Picnic holds the Annual Art Auction, where (usually) six original priceless pieces of art are auctioned with proceeds going to one of six rescue organizations, including Garden State Mastiff Fanciers, Friends of Rescued Mastiffs, OEMTF, Great Lakes Mastiff Rescue, Mastiffs United with Guardians and Big Dogs Huge Paws. The Art Auction is what really gets the fun started. But before even that can begin, the Health Seminar starts in the center ring. This year's Health Seminar covers two incredibly important topics: "How to Recognize the Symptoms of Bloat" and how to perform CPR on your Giant Breed Dog.

Speaking of Giant Breed Dogs, I look around and they are here in force! Yes, it's called the Northeast Ohio Mastiff Picnic, but Mastiffs



are not the only dogs represented. Looking around, I see Mastiffs, Bullmastiffs, a Neapolitan Mastiff, a few Cane Corsos, Presa Canarios, a Great Dane, too many Bulldogs to count, a single St. Bernard, a Dogue de Bordeaux, and I swear I saw a Newfoundland running around. Dogs of all shapes and sizes are welcome!

Getting back to those Cheeseburgers, all food and drinks are included in the price of admission. Hamburgers, hotdogs, chips, and soda, are offered and each family is encouraged to bring a dish to share. As the aroma pulls me closer to the Pavilion, I am assaulted by the smell of over 100 dogs and 250 humans I have never had the pleasure of meeting. Well, that is definitely going to change. I wag my tail and rush forward.

~ Debra Evangelisto



Words of encouragement for Mary Elliott in her battle against cancer. Mary lost her battle in October.




Save the Date!

The 2013 Northeast Ohio Mastiff Picnic
 will be held on
 Saturday, September 7th, 2013
 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM
 Buckeye Woods Park, Medina, OH

Admission: \$8.00 per adult at the door
 (\$5.00 prepaid)
 Children and dogs are always FREE!

For more information
 check out the website:
www.mastiffpicnic.com
 or find us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/mastiffpicnic